

# ARCHITECTURE OF ESTONIA - OLD AND NEW TOGETHER

Iulius CRISTEA

Lecturer, Ph. D., architect, “Ion Mincu” University of Architecture and  
Urbanism Introduction in Architectural Design Department,  
e-mail: iulius.cristea@cristearhitectura.ro

**Abstract.** The presentation aims to bring some clarification about the relationship in Estonian old-new architecture. Estonia has a very valuable historical and architectural heritage, bringing together works and urban ensembles from different eras and styles. The medieval period is represented by monuments dating back from more than 800 years, with Germanic and Norse influences. From Tsarist rule (1721-1920) has left important neoclassical buildings. Estonia's independence period between the two world wars (1920-1940) was particularly prolific in modern architecture, from Art Nouveau to International Style. Soviet occupation period (1944-1991), has left, outside of the dwelling houses some reference works. After regaining its independence, Estonian architecture oriented towards Scandinavian and Western models, while keeping in it the local spirit, which has led to some remarkable achievements.

**Key words:** integration, conservation, restoration, reconversion, environment

## 1. Introduction

Estonia is on the same meridian with our country, at a distance of approx. 2000 km, being part of the Northern Europe, both geographically and culturally. Although our countries have gone through similar experiences in recent history, the links between the two countries are rather weak and mutual knowledge about each other quite limited. It can be said that there are common features but also important differences between the two cultures.

This presentation aims to bring some clarification about the relationship in Estonian old-new architecture. First of all, it must be said that Estonia has a very valuable historical and

architectural heritage, bringing together works and urban ensembles from different eras and styles. The medieval period is represented by monuments dating back from more than 800 years, with Germanic and Nordic influences. From Tsarist rule (1721-1920) has left important neoclassical buildings. Estonia's independence period between the two world wars (1920-1940) was particularly prolific in modern architecture, from Art Nouveau to International Style. Soviet occupation period (1944-1991), has left, outside of the dwelling houses some reference works. After regaining its independence, Estonian architecture oriented towards Scandinavian and Western models, while keeping in it the

local spirit, which has led to some remarkable achievements.

For a better understanding of local conditions it should also be mentioned that Estonia has an area of 45,227 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of just 1.3 million inhabitants. Estonians are a Finno-Ugric people, whose language resemble to Finnish (Alak *et al.*, 2008).

## 2. Traditional architecture

Estonian folk architecture consists generally of households of homes and dependencies, located around a central place. The villages have rare housing, the buildings are in the middle of the agricultural land belonging to the household. Distances between households are generally a few hundred meters. Mostly wooden buildings are constructed using beams and sloping roofs. Generally, reed roofing materials and wooden tiles were used. Houses, furniture and working tools are very much alike those in our popular culture (Vaiksoo, 2011). In Tallinn there is a similar open air village museum as in Bucharest, the museum at Rocca al Mare, exhibiting farms and other peasant buildings. Traditional architectural typologies can be found in Estonian villages also today. Wood, being found in abundance, remains the main construction material in rural areas.

## 3. Medieval architecture

Tallinn is the oldest capital in Northern Europe and the largest city in the country, with a population of approx. 424,000 inhabitants, is an important port on the Baltic Sea. The city was founded in 1050 on the site of a settlement dating from ca. 5000 years by building a wooden fortress on Toompea hill. Ever since then, the city's main activities

were trade and navigation. The city was known as Reval, from XIII century until 1917. In 1219, the city was conquered by the Danes, and in 1346, it entered under the domination of the Livonian Order, which was a part of the Order of the Teutonic Knights. Since 1583, Estonia came under Swedish domination, until 1721, when it was conquered by the Russian Empire (Zobel, 2001).

Between the XIII and XVI centuries, Tallinn was part of the Hanseatic League, the alliance of large commercial port cities of northern Europe, which contributed significantly to its economic and cultural development.

Tallinn preserved historical relics of various historical eras. Defensive fortifications and bastions of the town have been mostly kept. The old city is marked by the presence of many medieval towers, including some of great slenderness.

Church of St. Olav (Oleviste Kirik), built in 1549, which tower reached 159 m, was the tallest building in the world, a record that was kept until 1625 (Tänavsuu, 2010). Then, due to a fire caused by lightning, the church burned completely. Tower that exists now only reaches up to 124 m, still dominating the old town (Dubovik and Liivik, 2011).

Town Hall Square (Raekoja Plats) is marked by the old Town Hall buildings (1402-1404), now a museum, and surrounded by impressive medieval buildings. The square is used for concerts and events, and in summer, the restaurants take out their tables, attracting a lot of tourists. Pointy Hall tower has a wind vane on top in form of a guard, nicknamed Old Toomas (Vana

Toomas). The building of the Town Hall (Raekoda) has been restored during decades and was ready for its six hundred years birthday. In 2005, it received the EU/Europa Nostra medal. The project began in 1958 and was held by the historian and architect Teddy Bökler. The limestone gothic structure is the oldest town hall in Europe still in use (Stubbs and Makas, 2011).

Along the narrow streets of the old town the fronts of medieval buildings are lined up, some dating from more recent historical periods (Jürgen, 2010). Old city walls, with defensive towers, were in the Middle Ages one of the strongest defensive structures in northern Europe, with thickness of 3 m, height of 16 m and a length of about 4 km.

The defence tower for cannons was built after the bastion system of the Netherlands, in the years 1518-1529. Its role was to defend the city against possible attacks from the sea. Its name, Large Margaret (Paks Margareeta) was given to the tower in 1842, before the tower was known as Rosenkrantz (Gustavson, 1994). The tower was designed by architect Clemens Pale, in 1520, and the site master was Gert Koningk from Münster, who was in charge also of the construction of the St. Olav church. Large Margaret tower was the last of its kind built in Tallinn. Its diameter is 25 m, and the walls have a thickness of 4.5-6.5 m, being thicker at the base and thinner on top. The tower has 5 floors, of which 3 for cannons and fourth and fifth floors having openings for riflemen. The height of the tower, due to uneven terrain, is 16 m in west and 22 m in east. Along with the tower the defensive wall was built with thickness of 3 m and 7 m high. In 1830 the tower

was used as a prison in 1884 a prison office building was built. In 1917 the tower was burned, and prisoners, mostly political, freed. In 1930 the building became a history museum. Since 1978, the building houses the Estonian Maritime Museum.

Apart from ground fortifications, Tallinn has an important network of underground tunnels, also built for defensive purposes. In the twentieth century, these tunnels were rebuilt for civil protection. It seems that there are tunnels forgotten nowadays, last one was discovered in 2003 during the works for the Museum of Occupations.

Long Street (Pikk Tänav) is one of the main streets of the old town, along which were the headquarters of major commercial guilds. From the architectural point of view, there is to remember the three merchants houses known as the Three Sisters (Kolm Õde), built in XIV century. The houses were renovated in 2003 and converted into a hotel. Another valuable building is the headquarters of the Brotherhood of the Blackheads that draws its name from the fact that the guild patron was St. Mauritius. Guild, made up of unmarried German merchants was responsible for organizing the defence of the city and spring festivals. Renaissance style facades with Flemish influence date from 1597. Portal, in red, green and gold, dates from 1640 (Raudkivi, 2009).

The old town is very well preserved, all the buildings being restored. If in the 1990s the wearing some of the buildings in the old city was obvious, by now all buildings are emphasized, resulting a coherent architectural ensemble. The streets are rehabilitated with historic

paving, commercial spaces, not too many, are situated on the ground floors of the buildings and decorated with taste and respect for historical architecture. Automobile traffic is very limited in the old city, where many streets are pedestrian. Tallinn's old town was included in 1997 on the UNESCO World Heritage List. As Tallinn was considered a bastion, no housing was allowed hundreds of meters from outside the city walls. Only in 1858 the city was taken off from the list of active fortifications and new houses could be built. The ditches were covered and trees were planted on both side, forming alleys that we can see also today, known as Estonia, Kaarli, Mere and Põhja avenues (Olander, 2011).

Outside the old town there are the ruins of Pirita Monastery (Pirita Klooster), dedicated to St. Birgitta, built in the XV century. The first monks of the monastery were amongst the traders who had contributed to its construction. In 1577, the building burned and turned into ruin. Today, the ruins of the monastery serve as the setting for classical music concerts outdoors, or other cultural events. In 2001, after an architectural competition, the Order of St. Birgitta built a new complex near the old monastery. The building, designed by the architects Ra Luhse and Tanel Tuhala, is divided in two parts: the closed monastery and open part, which contains the guesthouse, the chapel and conference halls (Raam and Tamm, 2005).

Apart from Tallinn, vestiges of medieval architecture can be found in other parts of Estonia. For instance, in the city of Paide, situated in the centre of the country and known as the „Heart of Estonia”, the remains of the Teutonic Order castle, built in 1265, can be

admired. With an octagonal plan, the Hermann Tower, also known as Vallitorn, was the only one of the castle that had been preserved until 1941, when it was destroyed by the Red Army. The tower was rebuilt in 1993 to commemorate 650 years of the uprising of the night of St. George (1343-1346), when Estonians tried to free themselves from the domination of Danes and Germans. The rebellion was defeated by the Teutonic Knights. The tower houses a history museum called Wittenstein Time Centre. The museum is set in a modern fashion through an elevator that travels back through the centuries as a time machine, presenting in an interactive form, with installations, images and sounds, representative issues of various historical eras. The project was realized with the EU contribution.

On the island of Saaremaa that is Estonia's largest island in the Baltic Sea, in Kuressaare town, Episcopal Castle was built in the thirteenth century, one of the best preserved military construction in the country (Aluve, 1980). Originally, the castle was built to protect the Bishop of Saare Lääne, in German Osel-Wiek. In 1559, the castle was captured by the Danes, who modernized the fortifications. In 1665 the castle was taken over by the Swedes, who continued the modernizations. As the result of the Great Northern War (1700-1721), the castle of Kuressaare and Saaremaa island passed into the ownership of the Russian Empire. The castle was restored in 1902-1914, in 1968 and in 1980 and today houses the Museum of Saaremaa Island. Castle plan is simple, rectangular, built in late Gothic style. The central part, so-called monastery, is a square building with an inner courtyard. The defence tower at

the corner of the enclosure has a height of 37 m. At centuries XVI and XVII, Swedish architect Erik Dahlberg built outer fortifications, Vauban type, with bastions and ditches with water, most of them we can see also today.

On the island of Hiiumaa, the second largest among the islands of Estonia, after Saaremaa, in Käina town, there are the ruins of a church built in the late fifteenth century, beginning of the sixteenth century. The church, the largest on the island, was built in Gothic style and could accommodate 600 people. The church was destroyed by the war, in 1941. Several tombstones and a stone cross located above the entry are protected as heritage items. The remains of the church are well kept and it will be rebuilt. Majestic trees surrounding the church form a very pleasant park, loved by locals.

Tartu, located in the south-east of the country, is the second largest city in Estonia. If Tallinn is the economic and financial centre of the country, Tartu is the intellectual and cultural centre. Here are the oldest and most important universities of the country, founded in 1632 by King Gustav II Adolf of Sweden. The city was known in ancient times as Dorpat. Tartu Cathedral, today in ruins, was built in the Gothic style, of brick, in several stages between centuries XIII and XVI. The building was severely damaged in 1520, by some reform followers, Protestant iconoclasts. After deportation to Russia of the last Catholic bishop of Dorpat, Hermann Wessel, in 1558, taking in consideration the wars that followed: the Livonian (1558-1583) and the Polish-Swedish War (1600-1611), the cathedral fell eventually into ruin.

In the north-east of the country, bordering Russia, is the town of Narva. In the eighteenth century seven bastions were built by the plans of the architect Erik Dahlberg: Honour, Gloria, Victoria, Fama, Triumph, Fortuna and Spes. The bastions had also rooms (cells) inside. In 1930s, visits of the bastions were organized and during the Second World War, the cells were used as civil protection (Kriiska and Ivask, 2006). Currently the cleaning of the façades of the bastions is in process.

#### **4. Neoclassical architecture**

Kadriorg Palace in Tallinn, was built on the orders of Peter the Great, already in 1718, even before the end of the Great Northern War (1700-1721), the tsar being convinced that he would emerge victorious in that war. The palace was designed as a summer residence for his wife, Catherine I, on the Baltic Sea. The Baroque style building was made by Italian architect Nicola Michetti, it was surrounded by a park with French style gardens, lakes, wooded areas, etc. After the death of Catherine I, the palace was visited sporadically by other Russian queens and became in nineteenth century the Estonian governor's residence. After the Estonian independence, in 1921, the palace was transformed into Estonian Art Museum. In 1934, the palace became the official residence of the state president, Konstantin Päts (Murre, 2006).

During the Soviet occupation, the palace did not receive proper maintenance work, being in 1991, when Estonia's regain its independence, in a deplorable state. Restoration began in 1991 with funds provided by Sweden, the palace was reopened to the public in 2000. Also a new building was

constructed in 2000, to house the museum's collection of modern art.

Tartu City Hall building was built in 1789 in Baroque style with elements of Rococo, by Johann Heinrich Bartholomäus Walter from Rostock, then the chief builder of the city. In terms of style, the building includes elements of Neoclassical architecture, the style which began to manifest its influences in the Nordic countries at that time. The combined three-storey building of the town hall, with its highly inclined roof, having a clock tower situated on the centre of the roof, and slightly trapezoidal shape square takes after the Dutch City Halls. After the same model was built also the City Hall of Narva (Üprus, 1984). The building still functions as the seat of the Municipality. In 1998, a fountain was built in front of the building with a bronze sculpture depicting a young couple kissing under an umbrella.

Angled House or 'Tower of Pisa' of Tartu, was built in 1793 in the old city. Because of the fact that a portion of the house was founded on remains of the city defence wall and half on some poles, which in time sank, it was tilted on its side. The building is functioning as the Museum of Art in Tartu, displaying the section of Estonian art.

The main building of the University of Tartu was built in 1804-1808, by German architect Johann Wilhelm Krause, on the location of the former Maarja Church. The construction was damaged by fire in 1965. The building is secluded from the street and a little taller than neighbouring buildings, which highlights the monumental character of it, but the architectural

scale fits in the surrounding built environment.

Mansions of the German Nobility are spread throughout the territory of Estonia and they are an architectural category itself. Mansions, built during centuries, depict different trends. Most are surrounded by beautiful gardens (Maiste, 1996). One of the most beautiful mansions is considered the mansion of Palmse, built in Baroque style. The main building, park and dependencies are in an open-air museum, the first one fully restored in Estonia after 1991 (Sakk, 2006). The restoration of the Kiltsi manor, made by architect Nele Rohtla, won in 2011 the Endowment for Architecture's Restoration Prize for manor restoration, which united the colourful history, various architectural layers and the needs of a modern school building (Mutso, 2012).

## 5. National Romantic Style

Besides the public buildings made from stone, most residential buildings were built in XIX century Estonia of wood. Their style adopts neoclassical lines creating an order transposed to the wooden constructions. Even though Estonia was under Russian rule, no apartment buildings were built at that time in Tallinn as it was done in Helsinki or Riga. The profit made by Russian traders was not invested in Estonia, leaving most of the houses made from wood (Niskanen, 2002). A good example of this is Beer House, from Tartu, built in 1869. In Tartu, as in other cities, the train stations were also constructed from wood, dating from 1875. The station from Tartu has three units, one central, higher, and two side ones, joined by a double sloping roof.

Nearby the depot, water tower and two apartment buildings for railway workers were built. Currently, the station is closed and under restoration, as it was classified as a historical monument.

The same style is used, built also from wood, at the sanatorium building in Haapsalu city, major port and greatly appreciated by Russian aristocracy of the nineteenth century resort on the Baltic Sea.

The areas with wooden houses were connected with the large-scale process of industrialization that the Tsarist empire started at that time. Several factories were started in Tallinn, which grew to be a major transit harbor (Gierow, 2000).

The building of the Student Union of Estonia in Tartu was built in 1901, by Estonian architect G. Hellat, in National Romantic style. It was one of the first examples of national architecture in Estonia. Student Union of Estonia was founded in 1883 by former students of the University of Tartu. Another student organization, Student Fraternity Neobaltia built themselves a beautiful German-style office building in 1902 by architect R. von Engelhardt.

A constructive typology commonly found in Estonia, but also in other Baltic countries is that of windmills, similar to those in the Netherlands. On the island of Saaremaa, there are many of these mills, the assembly near the village of Angla being one of the most representatives. Built in the 1920s, the mills are properly protected and preserved, being part of a newly created Centre of Traditional Culture, where visitors can practice their skills in

pottery, felting, or in making of peasant bread. Mills were renovated in 2009-2011 and in one of them tourists can see a miller at work, grinding flour traditionally.

### 6. Estonian Art Nouveau - Jugend style

National Opera House of Estonia, in Tallinn, was built in 1913 by Finnish architects Armas Lindgren and Wiwi Lönn, in Nordic Art Nouveau - Jugend style. Sumptuous building was the largest building in the country at that time. The two wings are used until today, in one Estonian National Opera and in other the Estonia Theatre. The building was destroyed by the Red Army bombing in 1944, but was rebuilt after the war and reopened in 1947. The restoration works of the period 1997-2005 have put in value the landmark so loved by the people of Estonia, it is here where the first meeting of the new parliament of independent Estonia was held in 1919. Concert halls have an exceptional acoustics (Hallas-Murula, 2006).

Situated in the Old Town of Tallinn, the building known as the Dragon Gallery (Draakoni Galerii) was designed by architect Jacques Rosenbaum, who studied in Riga Polytechnic Institute and was influenced by the Latvian capital's Jugend style. The building was designed in 1909, for commercial purpose, trying to attract the passers by its spectacular stone facade with mystical figures such as two Egyptian women and two oversized bronze dragons. At the ground floor, a large glazed arch allows to see the whole interior from the street. Being the first building of this kind in Tallinn Old Town, the building drew attention, yet

without disturbing the general image of the town.

The Buschi apartment building, situated in Tallinn, 21b Tatari Street, was designed in Jugend style by architect Karl Burman, for editor, journalist and librarian August Busch. The building has a Romantic entrance built of large stones that could fit a medieval castle. The upper floors have different textures, with various shaped windows and elegant bow-windows, making every floor unique. The last floor shelters an artist's loft with a big semi-circular window.

The Credit Bank of Tallinn has been built in 1911-1912, by the famous Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen, as a result of an architectural competition. This house was supposed to be an example for the other commercial buildings to be built in the city centre. The style is between Jugend and the German Warrenhausstil, with big regular windows emphasising verticals, which proudly showed the use of concrete as a finishing material for the façades (Hallas-Murula, 2012).

### **7. The Functionalist Style**

Although he participated in several architectural competitions in Estonia, the great Finnish architect Alvar Aalto could not build a public building in this country. He built instead a functionalist style villa in 1932 for the family of A. Tammerkann, professor of geography at the University of Tartu. Aalto's influence on Estonian architects and others, was very high, it is noticeable in the works of many twentieth century architects.

The seven floors building of Tallinn City Hall, located in Liberty Square

(Vabaduse Väljak), was designed by Estonian architect Robert Natus, the first graduate of the faculty of architecture in Tallinn. The building was built between 1929 and 1931, and it was by that time one of the highest buildings in the city. Reinforced concrete frame structure allowed flexibility of organizing space. The technology used was very advanced, including lifts, also for cars that transported them to the garage and the basement. The façades are made of brown brick with art-deco style designs. Sculpture at the entrance of men holding lanterns in their hands, were made in national style by Estonian artist Jaan Koort. Another representative building of Robert Natus is an apartment building at Pärnu road (Pärnu maantee) no. 36, in Tallinn, built also using the brown brick, between 1935 and 1936. These brick facades (clinker Oldenburg), were inspired by German expressionist art-deco style, with some of the Chilehaus building allure built in Hamburg, in 1924, by architect Fritz Höger.

The Urla House (Urla Maja), built in 1933, was the first modern apartment building in Tallinn. Even for its architect Eugen Habermann, it was the first time to draw a building in modern style. The façades are flat, the only exception being the first floor, which advances above the entrance as a drawer. The main entrance has a glass ceiling, spectacular at night, when lit. The inner courtyard built in steps, takes over the Eliel Saarinen's idea from Credit Bank building. The first two floors were for commercial and office, and the upper floors sheltered 35 apartments.

The Beach Hotel (Rannahotell) of Pärnu, was built in 1937 by architects Olev Siinmaa and Anton Soans. The building was considered flagship of Estonian

functionalist style and became a symbol of the Pärnu city as a resort. The aesthetics of the hotel uses a modernist language, the building resembling a white boat. In 1994, after decades without repair, the hotel was in a state of ruin. Fortunately, he was taken by Scandic hotel chain and restored, now functioning under the name Scandic Rannahotell. Not far from Rannahotell architect Olev Siinmaa built in 1938, the beach house, for leisure purposes. The building was made for the celebration of 100 years of resort function in Pärnu. Its architecture is very similar to Beach Hotel's one. Attention is drawn by a suspended mushroom shape balcony, with a very bold console. The building now houses several cafés and a disco, functional mostly during the summer period. After a competition held in 1925, where Finnish architects participation was very big: from 43 participants 20 were from Finland (Hallas-Murula, 2004). Here also Finland's most known architect Alvar Aalto participated unsuccessfully, estonian Olev Siinmaa was granted the design of the Pärnu Bathing Establishment (Laurik, 2004). The bathing became part of Estonian modern culture, not being reserved only for older people and for their treatments. Many resorts, such as Haapsalu, Kuressaare and Narva-Jõesuu beachhouses were rebuild (Kalm, 2004).

### **8. The soviet period**

The decision to build a Polytechnic University in Mustamäe area of Tallinn was made already in Stalin period, in 1952. The project, similar to the Lomonosov University in Moscow was postponed until 1959, when a new project was presented, which abandoned the Stalinist image, for new

aesthetics, inspired by the rationalist and pragmatic trends of the Khrushchev era. First, the 800 places dormitory was built, from 1959. In 1962, when the construction of the main building was started, the dormitory was already the first operational building in Mustamäe area.

The architects of the main building were Henno Sepmann, Uno Tölpus and Olga Konchajeva. The building was completed in 1968. Other buildings were added to the ensemble in 1964-1967, and the library was built in 1971. The main building, with a zigzag roof is taller than the others and its importance is enhanced by a square with a metallic sculpture.

Tallinn City Concert Hall (Linnahall) was built in 1976-1980, by architects Raine Karp and Riina Altmäe. In 1971, when Tallinn centre was planned, no one could imagine that many big buildings would be constructed to comply with the status of an Olympic city. Situated near the port, despite of its big dimensions, the building does not spoil the Old Town skyline, being built mostly underground. Thus, its roof was conceived as a large public esplanade. The limestone is used for the façades and esplanade (Lindpere, 2012). The building has received the Grand Prix at the biennale 'Interarch 83' and the golden medal from the president of the International Union of Architects. Raine Karp extensively used the limestone as an Estonian national symbol, when he designed important public buildings, such as the Tallinn National Library, Sakala Centre (demolished), or Estonian Post main building in Tallinn.

Another good example of integrating new buildings into historical environment is the infill of the Flower Shop in Tallinn Old Town, 6 Väike-Karja Street, by the architect Vilen Künnapu, who used to be the leader of the postmodern movement in Estonia. The house has a double façade, separated by a void 1 m wide. The first one continues the front of the street, having openings which refer to the historical architectural shapes, while the interior façade is very simple, modern style (Hallas-Murula, 2012).

### **9. The architecture of recent years**

Part of the Estonian Art Museum, Modern Art Museum KUMU was built in 2006 by Finnish architect Pekka Vepaavuori. The design was awarded after an international architectural competition held in 1994. The construction was carried out between 2003 and 2006. It is the largest museum in Estonia and one of the largest in Northern Europe. The building contains permanent art collection, temporary exhibitions and museum offices. In 2008, the museum received the honour of the „European Museum of the Year”.

Liberty Square (Vabaduse Väljak) is located south of the old city, bordered by the church of St. Jaan (1862-1867) in the east, Kaarli Boulevard from south and by a monument commemorating the War of Independence of Estonia in the west (Mutso, 2011). The monument, which is called „Victory Column”, was built in 2009. In the 1990s, the city held an architectural competition for market planning. The works were executed in 2007 by Estonian architects Andres Alver and Tiit Trummal, and consisted of building a pedestrian pavement instead of existing parking lot. Parking

was moved to the basement (Alver, Kaasik and Trummal 2009). During the works for the underground parking, archaeological remains were found. Then, the project has been changed in order to keep and integrate the old walls into the parking layout (Kadakas, 2008).

A great example of urban conversion is the Rottermann district in Tallinn. Located in the heart of the city, between the old town, port and Viru Square, a former dock area with industrial buildings was rehabilitated, by renovating old structures and functional retraining, which were added new contemporary architecture buildings. It is particularly attractive, with its commercial character with cafes and fashionable boutiques (Sandrini, 2012). It is an area where office and commercial functions dominate. The juxtaposition between the old and the new architecture is very appreciated (Askur, 2009). The Museum of Estonian Architecture was created by conversion of Rottermann Salt Storehouse, near the port, built in 1908 by a German engineer. The project was realised in 1995-1996, by the architects Ülo Peil and Taso Mähar.

Another example of creative use of industrial built heritage is that in turning seaplane hangars built in 1916 into a museum. Located north-west of the old city, near the Patarei barracks, in Kalamaja district, these three hangars were built by Danish contractor Christiani & Nielsen, having three concrete vaults with the opening of 50 m, which was very high at that time. In the early 2000s, hangars were in an advanced state of decay, threatening to collapse. Reconstruction began in 2010 and the museum was inaugurated in

May 2012. The project belongs to Estonian company KOKO Architects (Lige, 2012). The museum exhibits various boats, submarines and seaplanes, in a contemporary way, becoming the most visited museum in Estonia in 2012. KOKO Company already had experience in architectural remakes having in their representative projects also a conversion of a factory in Tallinn into office buildings, apartments and commercial spaces. The building is known as Fahle building (Fahle maja).

New medical college in Tartu was built in 2011, after the project of an Estonian company Kavakava. The building in steps has vegetal gardens at each level. The interior spaces thus created have natural light. By its volume, shape and materials, the building fits between neighbouring homes, dating from the 1980s. Towards the student homes, the building is heavily glazed and towards the street, it displays a sober look, mostly red brick is used here. The heart of the complex of buildings is the library, along with the IT centre and a café. Interesting is the staircase that visually connects all floors and activities in the building. The ensemble of dormitories and schoolhouse, by volumes and materials, offers an impression of warmth specific rather to a home than to an institution (Ruudi, 2012).

The Library of Tallinn University of Technology was built in 2009 by architects Agabus, Endjärv and Truverk (AET Architects), from Tallinn. Building shape is a box, with facades of a translucent screen which texture suggests a wooden or stone material. Architects ambition was to provide the necessary storage space, reading and relaxing spaces required in a modern and ecological building, whose design is

comparable to that of the best libraries in the world. In 2010, on the beach at Kuressaare, not far from Episcopal Castle, the Asum Arhitektid built the fourth beach house in Estonia. The first beach house was built in Pärnu 170 years ago, in 1838, marking the beginning of resort activities in Estonia (Vunk, 2004). The building contains a lifeguard station, showers, changing rooms, toilets and a bar. Concrete roof with wide centre console poles aligned in a row evokes the allure of the balcony of Siinmaa house from Pärnu, dated from 1938 (Koppel, 2011). From the shelter of the canopy seascape can be admired, also the castle, without the threat of the building disturbing the historical site. Architects believe that even if the functions under the roof can change in time, probably the concrete umbrella created by them is likely to last another 170 years (Mutso, 2011).

The contrast between old and new can sometimes take surprising forms in Estonian architecture. The Ajamaja residential building (Timehouse) in Tallinn, is from historic residential neighbourhood, with a pointy shapes unleashed, like shattered glass. Black façades of the building emphasize the contrast. However, the size and careful articulation of the adjoining building, the construction does not harm the quality of the built environment, but rather enhances the spatial richness and typology. It was built in 2003-2009 by Kosmos, architects Ott Kadarik, Villem Tomiste and Mihkel Tüür.

Pärnu City Library received in 2008, the year of its foundation, the Estonian Cultural Capital Award for Architecture. The project was realized by the company 3+1 Arhitektid,

architects Markus Kaasik, Andres Ojar and Ilmar Valdur. Building with glass facades, has the idea of total communication between inside and outside, bringing culture to the city and vice versa, the city inside the library.

In recent years, Estonia has invested heavily in constructions for Culture and Sports. Estonia is a country where the sport is widely practiced by all ages and is appreciated both professional sport performances and leisure sports.

This explains the extraordinary results of Estonian athletes in international competitions, if we consider the small population of the country. Examples of support given to sport by the authorities may serve gymnasium of Life Sciences, University of Tartu, built in 2009 by Salto Architects, from Tallinn. In addition to the facilities offered, the building is interesting in urban terms and its landscape solution, trying to give urban sense to the campus otherwise quite disparate. Its form is rectangular with corners slightly stretched, which gives birth to the concave facades from large wood and glass, creating interesting spaces inside and a unique, but subtle shape. Creative use of wood as a building material is continued by Salto Architects in conception of Sõmeru Community Centre, in the northwest of the country, near the town of Rakvere (Lige, 2011). The Centre combines the Parish Centre with a library and a club with a festivity hall. The centre provides a new identity for a heterogeneously built environment, inherited from the Soviet period. Building's interior and exterior are intertwined, through courtyards and

gardens, interior and exterior at the same time (Mutso, 2011).

## 10. Conclusions

The list of outstanding buildings could be much longer than the size of this work permits to present. However, from the examples above a picture appears, showing the architecture and lifestyle in Estonia. There is a strong sense of belonging, a national feeling that has allowed Estonian people to cope with successive invasions, but also the capacity to absorb the truly valuable elements of different cultures that they came into contact with. Respect for the past is evidenced by how they have kept and preserved its relics. In the absence of an extremely rich heritage as in the Mediterranean countries, Estonians keep with pride all their old and new monuments. Caring for heritage is not, in Estonian architecture demonstrated by a retrograde *passeisme*, but they appreciate *avant-garde* architectural solutions, using original and leading technologies and they are concerned for sustainable development of the monuments.

Estonia is proud of its status as one of the most advanced countries in terms of technology, where the Internet is used in large scale. For example, all taxes are paid electronically by 98% of the contributors, also Skype was created in 2003 by three young Estonians. Social component is very important, the accents are on areas such as education, health and sport. Tourism is an important driver of the Estonian economy, exploited efficiently. Tourism infrastructure is modern and the quality of services very good. Most tourists visiting Estonia are citizens of Finland, Sweden and Russia, and local

industry strives to meet the highest demands, but to provide quality services with competitive prices. Estonians pay great attention to the environmental issues, protecting the nature and developing sustainable construction (Murutar, 2010).

In Estonia, cultural heritage played a very important role in the movement for national identity and independence in the late Soviet period, through the efforts of the Estonian Heritage Society (EMS – Eesti Muinsuskaitse Seltsi), founded in 1987. In addition to supporting architectural conservation, the EMS played an important role in regaining Estonia's independence, in the late 1980's when it lobbied for the release of political prisoners and in 1988, when it flew the historic Estonian flag for the first time, in defiance to the Soviet Union, for the Tartu Heritage Days. After the independence, numerous intellectuals joined the EMS, including the first Estonian prime minister, the historian Mart Laar (Stubbs and Makas, 2011).

Today, the Estonian cultural resources are protected by the Ministry of Culture and managed by the National Heritage Board (Muinsuskaitseamet). The cooperation of Estonian and Danish authorities lead to the creation of the Survey of Architectural Values in the Environment (SAVE), based on the Danish know-how concerning the conservation of historical values.

The attitude of Estonian society towards the past is marked by respect, thus all new buildings integrate carefully into the existing environment. Nevertheless, creativity is highly encouraged. In this regard, architectural competitions, with a long

and rich history in Estonia are mandatory for all public commissions.

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