

IDENTIFYING VALUES OF CONSTRUCTIVIST HOUSES AND PALACES OF CULTURE IN LENINGRAD

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Abstract

Introduction: This paper is a result of a long-term comprehensive study of Houses and Palaces of Culture in Leningrad, designed or constructed in the 1920s–1930s. It provides proofs and clarifications for those intermediate studies and conclusions that we previously performed and drew. Our main finding is a refined methodology to establish grounds for the protection of a special type of buildings — Houses and Palaces of Culture in the style of constructivism — both at the urban-planning and facility levels. **Materials and methods:** In the course of the study, we examined archival as well as published scientific and reference sources, including illustrations, on the subject, analyzed the master plans of Petrograd/Leningrad, performed on-site investigations and office processing of the obtained results, and compiled detailed graphic models. **Results:** We identified all the planned, partially constructed, and implemented designs of a special function — Houses and Palaces of Culture — in the territory of Leningrad in the 1920s–1930s, tracked prerequisites for their creation at the urban-planning level in the Leningrad development system of the time, grouped the facilities according to the main urban-planning, architectural-and-artistic as well as cultural features, and found examples of such buildings that developed the most. Based on the identified facilities, we propose methodological approaches to identify the values of Houses and Palaces of Culture in the style of constructivism, clarifying the existing structure of grounds for protection, established for such facilities. The study showed that some of the most significant architectural-and-artistic as well as urban-planning features of Houses and Palaces of Culture are very vulnerable. **Conclusions:** The proposed methodology to identify (clarify) values (grounds for protection) of such facilities will ensure a more holistic, comprehensive approach to the preservation of unique architectural-and-artistic, space-and-planning as well as urban-planning features of cultural heritage facilities of the avant-garde period.

Keywords

Grounds for protection, cultural heritage facility, constructivism, Palace of Culture, House of Culture, Soviet architecture, restoration, adaptation.

Introduction

The growing interest in Soviet architecture of the 1920s–1930s, on the one hand, and the poor condition of many unique constructivism monuments, on the other hand, determine the relevance of this research. There are numerous Russian and foreign studies on architectural trends of the first third of the 20th century. For instance, Dayanov and Zalmanzon (2018), Kirikov and Stieglitz (2018), Sementsov (2012), Slavina (2019), Stieglitz (2020), and Vaitens (1995) addressed the urban planning and architecture of Leningrad (including individual monuments of architectural avant-garde) during the period under consideration.

Slavina (2019), Sementsov (2012), Mikhailov (2017), and others analyzed issues of determining the values of cultural heritage facilities and evaluated methodological approaches to the protection of architectural heritage.

The urban-planning role of Houses and Palaces

of Culture in Leningrad (Dubrovina, 2020b), the main issues of their operation and preservation (Dubrovina, 2019), as well as the specifics and current issues of establishing grounds for protection of such facilities (Dubrovina, 2020a) were briefly discussed in various research papers. We suggest an in-depth study of the main values of Houses and Palaces of Culture in Leningrad — their urban-planning role in city development of that period, the historical shape design, and the historical function of buildings as a whole and their individual premises — as significant features, which, when lost, may result in irreversible changes in original historical architectural-and-artistic solution as well as space-and-planning design.

To give consideration to all the Houses and Palaces of Culture of the avant-garde period (as a unique type of buildings), designed or constructed in the territory of Leningrad, we needed to identify all the facilities and their spatial location. This paper

presents a comprehensive list of all the Houses and Palaces of Culture in Leningrad in the 1920s–1930s.

Methods

Our research was based on a comprehensive study of the architectural heritage of the 1920s–1930s: Houses and Palaces of Culture in Leningrad (currently Saint Petersburg). We examined archival as well as published scientific and reference sources, including illustrations, on the subject, analyzed the master plans of Petrograd/Leningrad and identified urban-planning patterns in the arrangement of Houses and Palaces of Culture, performed on-site investigations and office processing of the obtained results, and compiled detailed graphic models. To develop a methodology to determine the values of Houses and Palaces of Culture in Leningrad, we needed to solve the following tasks in due sequence: A). Identify all Houses and Palaces of Culture designed and constructed in Leningrad in the period under consideration, and determine their urban-planning role. B). Group all the identified facilities according to the main urban-planning, architectural-and-artistic as well as cultural features so as to identify those that developed the most. C). Identify the main issues of their operation and preservation in Saint Petersburg. D). Determine their most significant (consolidated) values. E). Compare the obtained results with the available and applicable grounds for protection, established for the identified facilities.

Results

A). Identify all Houses and Palaces of Culture designed and constructed in Leningrad in the period under consideration, and determine their urban-planning role. Based on the collections in the State Museum of the History of Saint Petersburg and Schusev State Museum of Architecture as well as reference sources on the subject, we compiled a list of 23 Houses and Palaces of Culture designed or constructed in the territory of Leningrad in the 1920s–1930s, which is by far the most comprehensive.

In the 1920s, district centers began to form in Leningrad. They usually included a square, administrative buildings, educational institutions, department stores, as well as Houses and Palaces of Culture. An intention to create a system of interrelated district centers was captured in the master plan of Leningrad of 1935 and was most prominently featured in the master plan of 1939. For various reasons (a “floating” system of zoning, the lack of funds, particular urban-planning conditions, flaws in design), the idea was only partially implemented. The most thorough ensemble appeared on Stachek Avenue (Stachek Prospekt). In fact, many district centers were outlined, even though they were not so thorough. When comparing the layout of district centers with the arrangement of Houses and Palaces of Culture, we can deduce that Houses and Palaces

of Culture were most often designed as part of a complex of district buildings. The largest stand-alone Houses and Palaces of Culture having a special purpose were designed as significant fragments of an architectural and urban-planning ensemble or a complex of buildings forming the centers of new city districts (Fig. 1).

List of facilities in Fig. 1:

1. Vyborgsky Palace of Culture with two residential buildings (architects: A. I. Zazersky, V. V. Starostin, G. A. Simonov, 1913–1916, 1924–1927);
2. Krasny Putilovets House of Culture (architect: A. S. Nikolsky, 1925–1926; formed as a result of Putilov Plant church alteration);
3. **Gorky Palace of Culture** (architects: A. I. Gegello, D. L. Krichevsky, V. F. Railyan, 1925–1927) — *selected to identify building values*;
4. Club at the Leningrad Commercial Port (architect: A. A. Ol, a project of 1925; the wooden building was constructed no later than in 1926; not preserved);
5. **Textile Workers’ House of Culture** (architect: S. O. Ovsyannikov, 1926–1927) — *selected to identify building values*;
6. **Lenin Palace of Culture at the Bolshevik Plant** (architects: V. A. Shchuko, V. G. Helfreich, 1927–1929) — *selected to identify building values*;
7. Orlov Metal Workers’ Club (architects: N. A. Miturich, V. P. Makashov, 1928–1929; destroyed in 1943);
8. First Five-Year Plan House of Culture (architects: N. A. Miturich, V. P. Makashov, 1929–1930; demolished in 2005);
9. House of Culture of the Kapranov Union of Leather Workers (architect: M. S. Reizman, 1930–1931; demolished in 2006);
10. **Ilich House of Culture** (architect: N. F. Demkov, 1930–1931) — *selected to identify building values*;
11. Aviation Workers’ House of Culture (architects: G. V. Maizel, Ye. V. Tseits, B. Ya. Karamyshev, 1930–1933);
12. **Gaza Palace of Culture** (architects: A. I. Gegello, D. L. Krichevsky, 1930–1935) — *selected to identify building values*;
13. **Kirov Palace of Culture** (architects: N. A. Trotsky, S. N. Kozak, Ye. A. Ilin, 1931–1937) — *selected to identify building values*;
14. **Lensoviet Palace of Culture (architects: Ye. A. Levinson, V. O. Munz, 1931–1938)** — *selected to identify building values*;
15. Communications Workers’ Palace of Culture (architects: P. M. Grinberg, G. S. Raits, 1932–1939);
16. Water Transport Workers’ House of Culture – Sailors’ Palace of Culture (architects: N. D. Saburov, Ye. I. Chilingarova, 1932–1933);
17. Movie Palace — Gigant Movie Theater (architects: A. I. Gegello, D. L. Krichevsky, 1934–1936);

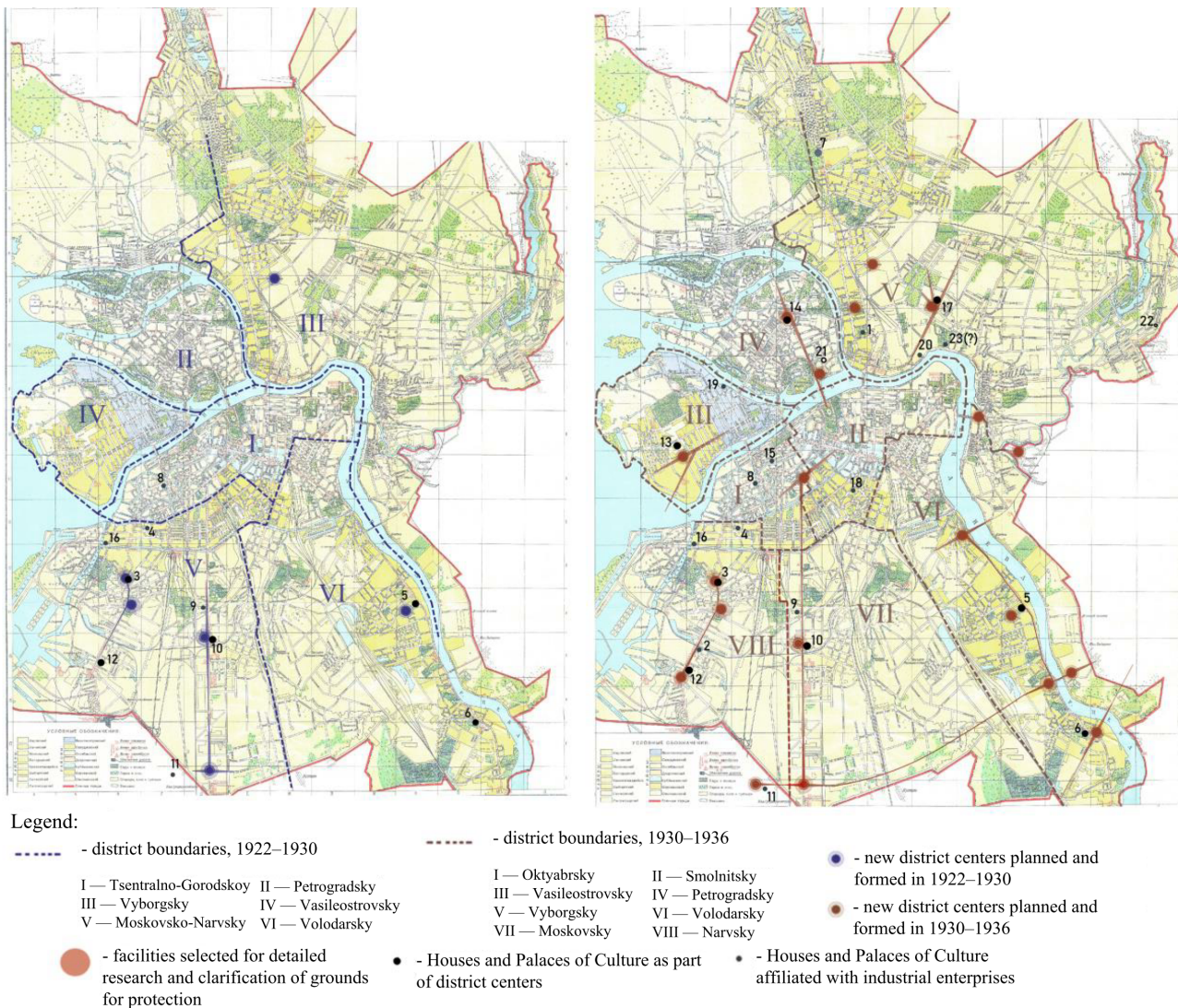


Fig. 1. Petrograd/Leningrad zoning plan, 1922–1930 and 1930–1936, with new district centers

18. Railway Workers' Club, Food Industry Workers' House of Culture (architects: A. G. Golubkov, V. P. Makashov, V. K. Krylov, 1912–1913, 1935–1937);
19. Kozitsky Plant. Plant Club (architects: M. I. Brusilovskiy, D. P. Buryshkin, 1938–1940);
20. Cultural Education Complex (Club) of Krasny Vyborzhets Plant, 1939—1941 (architect: D. L. Krichevskiy, finishing, 1945–1953);
21. Design of the theater (for 750 people) affiliated with the club of the Utility Workers' Union on Derevenskoy Bednoty Street (currently Michurinskaya Street) (architects: A. I. Gegello, D. L. Krichevskiy, 1927) — *not implemented*;
22. Design of Porokhovskoy House of Culture of the Chemical Industry Workers' Trade Union in Leningrad (architects: N. A. Miturich, V. P. Makashov, V. V. Danilov, 1929) — *not implemented*;
23. Design of the House of Culture of the Metal Workers' Trade Union in Polyustrovo (architects:

N. A. Miturich, V. P. Makashov, V. K. Krylov, V. V. Danilov, 1931) — *not implemented*.

B). Group all the identified facilities according to the main urban-planning, architectural-and-artistic as well as cultural features so as to identify those that developed the most. The list of all the identified facilities includes not only stand-alone Houses and Palaces of Culture having a special purpose, built in original (for that time) shapes, but also Palaces of Culture formed as a result of the alteration of existing buildings and introduced in the existing historical development of Leningrad. In these facilities, the distinctive features of the Palace of Culture (a new type of buildings) are represented only partially since the space-and-planning design as well as architectural-and-artistic features of the original buildings prevail. Some of the identified facilities were re-built or lost. Thus, it became necessary to analyze all the identified facilities and group them according to the main urban-planning, architectural-and-artistic as well as cultural features (Fig. 2).

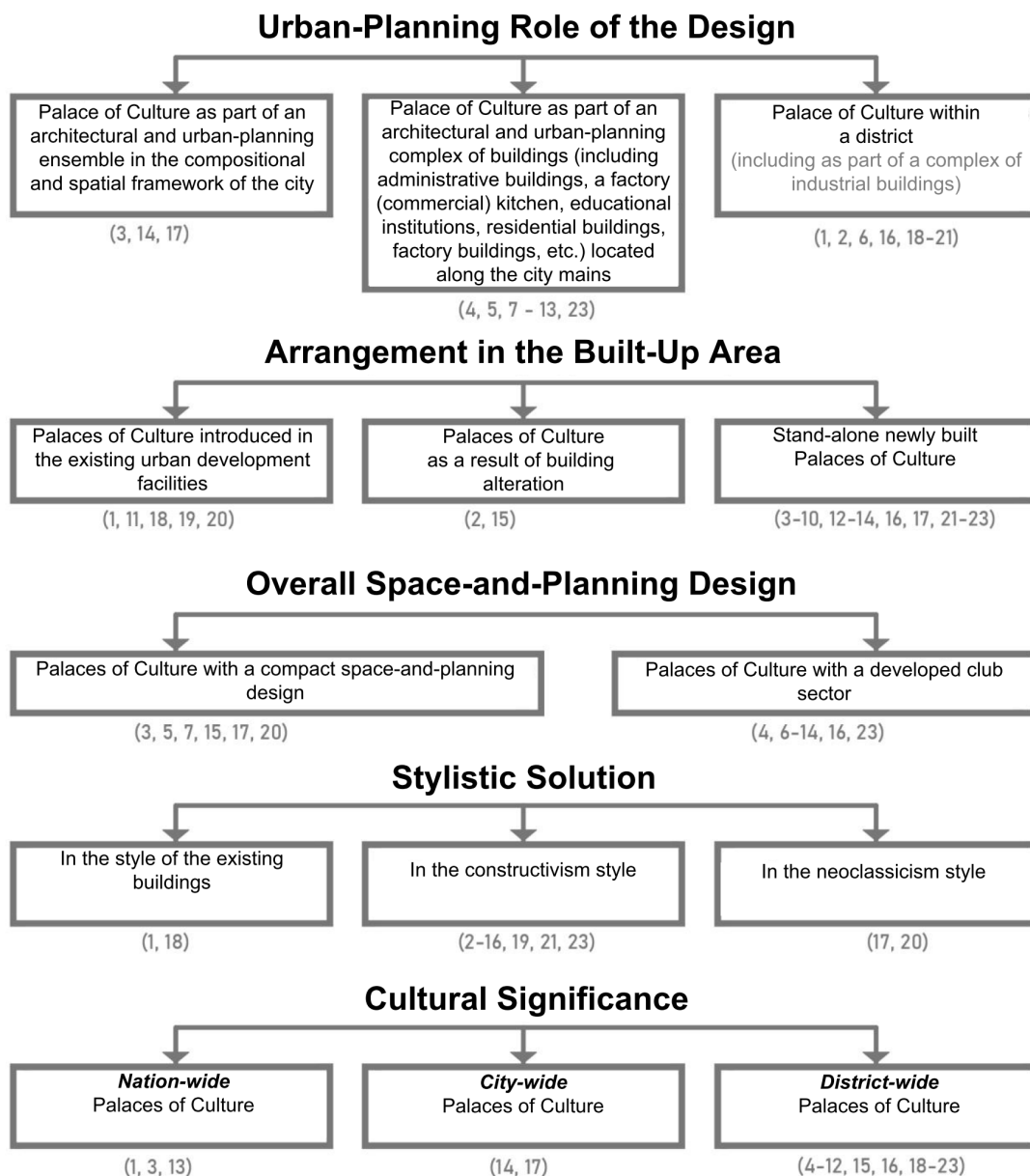


Fig. 2. Classification of Houses and Palaces of Culture in Leningrad in the 1920s–1930s:
(*) — No. of a facility from the list to Fig. 1

To determine the values of buildings, we selected the following stand-alone preserved facilities newly built in the constructivism style, having particular grounds for protection: the Lensoviet Palace of Culture (a cultural heritage facility of regional significance), the Kirov Palace of Culture (a cultural heritage facility of federal significance), the Gorky Palace of Culture (a cultural heritage facility of federal significance), the Gaza Palace of Culture (a newly identified cultural heritage facility), the Ilich House of Culture (a newly identified cultural heritage facility), the Textile Workers' House of Culture (a newly identified cultural heritage facility), and the Lenin Palace of Culture at the Bolshevik Plant (a newly identified cultural heritage facility).

C). Identify the main issues of their operation and preservation in Saint Petersburg. Based on the results of on-site investigations of the preserved

Houses and Palaces of Culture, we defined issues of their operation and preservation, including the following:

- the relationship between the historical function of the main premises and the most significant urban-planning, shape design, architectural-and-artistic features of individual premises and the building as a whole. Changes in the function result in the loss of building values (e.g., when auditoriums and entrance lobbies are used as beauty salons, shops, trade fairs with individual entrances, randomly arranged partitions, walls and ceilings clad with plasterboard);
- the effect of using substandard materials and technologies during construction, which resulted in buildings falling into a dangerous condition right in the middle of operation;
- imperfect components of the state heritage

protection system, including activities aimed at preserving, maintaining, and ensuring the successful operation of Palaces of Culture;

- insufficiently clear requirements, formulated at the legislative level and within the operation system, for maintenance and operation of cultural heritage facilities; the lack of detailed methodological recommendations to establish grounds for protection.

D). Determine their most significant (consolidated) values. Based on the results of historical and cultural studies as well as on-site investigations, we identified the following features of Houses and Palaces of Culture as a unique type of buildings to be unconditionally preserved or — in case of their loss — reconstructed (if sufficient historical illustrations and technical capabilities are available):

- the urban-planning role of a Palace of Culture within the structure of urban development (as part of a district center);

- the overall historical space-and-planning design of a building (including elements not implemented and late additions): a compact space-and-planning design with a theater as a core component and a space-and-planning design with a developed club sector;

- the historical structural concept with the use of a reinforced concrete framework, wooden trusses, metal structural members, brick structures (including vaulted ceilings), etc.;

- the historical space-and-planning design of the main premises, based on the principle of “flowing space”;

- the historical function of a building as a whole and individual premises: theater sector premises (entrance halls, lobbies, auditorium, restaurants, cafeterias, etc.), libraries, club sector premises (rehearsal rooms, dance halls, recreation rooms, etc.), sports sector premises, movie halls, etc.;

- the historical architectural-and-artistic solution of facades in the constructivism style (in some cases, with the use of elements in the Stalinist classicism style);

- the historical decorative-and-artistic solution of interiors, showing the structural concept, with the use of concrete, metal, natural stone, fine wood, rich wall colors, decorative panels, etc.

E). Compare the obtained results with the available and applicable grounds for protection, established for the identified facilities. For this purpose, we performed a graphic analysis of the applicable grounds for protection, established for the selected facilities (Figs. 3, 4). It showed that currently only preserved historical elements of buildings, related to the construction period, can be considered eligible for protection. Grounds for protection depend on the integrity of a building. Usually, when grounds for protection are established, a formal approach is used. In all the studied and analyzed documents,

they are identified in isolation, a building is “divided” into individual elements, and the most important features of Palaces of Culture are not considered eligible for protection.

- the urban-planning role — one of the most important features of this type of buildings;

- the space-and-planning design based on the principle of “flowing space”. In most of the examples considered, the space-and-planning design of a House or Palace of Culture within the boundaries of bearing walls is considered eligible for protection. However, even in this case, it is impossible to preserve the unique historical space-and-planning design of buildings with a developed system of entrance halls, lobbies, grand staircases, halls, recreation rooms, libraries, and other premises (e.g., to ensure preservation of bearing walls, formal rooms can be divided by numerous partitions with the arrangement of individual entrances, and that interferes with the historical shape design);

- the historical architectural-and-artistic solution of interiors. It was established that it is necessary to include the historical interior solution of some premises in the list of grounds for protection, especially when its reconstruction implies revealing and removal of late additions having little value in the form of random partitions, cladding, stretch ceilings, etc.;

- the function of premises. It was established that it is necessary to preserve the overall function of buildings (Palace of Culture), the general functional division into theater and club sectors (a compact design or with a developed club sector), as well as the function of individual premises (entrance halls, multi-level lobby system, auditorium, corridors, libraries, sports complexes, grand halls, etc.) since changes in the function of a building as a whole or the main premises of all the facilities under consideration transform significantly the space-and-planning design and the decorative-and-artistic solution of interiors.

Discussion

The study showed that to ensure more holistic preservation of the basic values of Houses and Palaces of Culture, it is necessary to determine grounds for protection at the urban-planning and facility levels, including both tangible and intangible components (urban-planning role, function of some premises, and, in some cases, those designs that were not implemented).

Currently, grounds for protection are mainly established at the facility level. In rare cases, specifics of Houses and Palaces of Culture' location in the structure of urban development are briefly determined. Such an approach results in a gradual loss of the significant urban-planning role of Houses and Palaces of Culture, which can be observed in such unique facilities as the Kirov Palace of Culture, the Textile Workers' House of Culture, and the Lenin Palace of Culture at the Bolshevik plant. Those

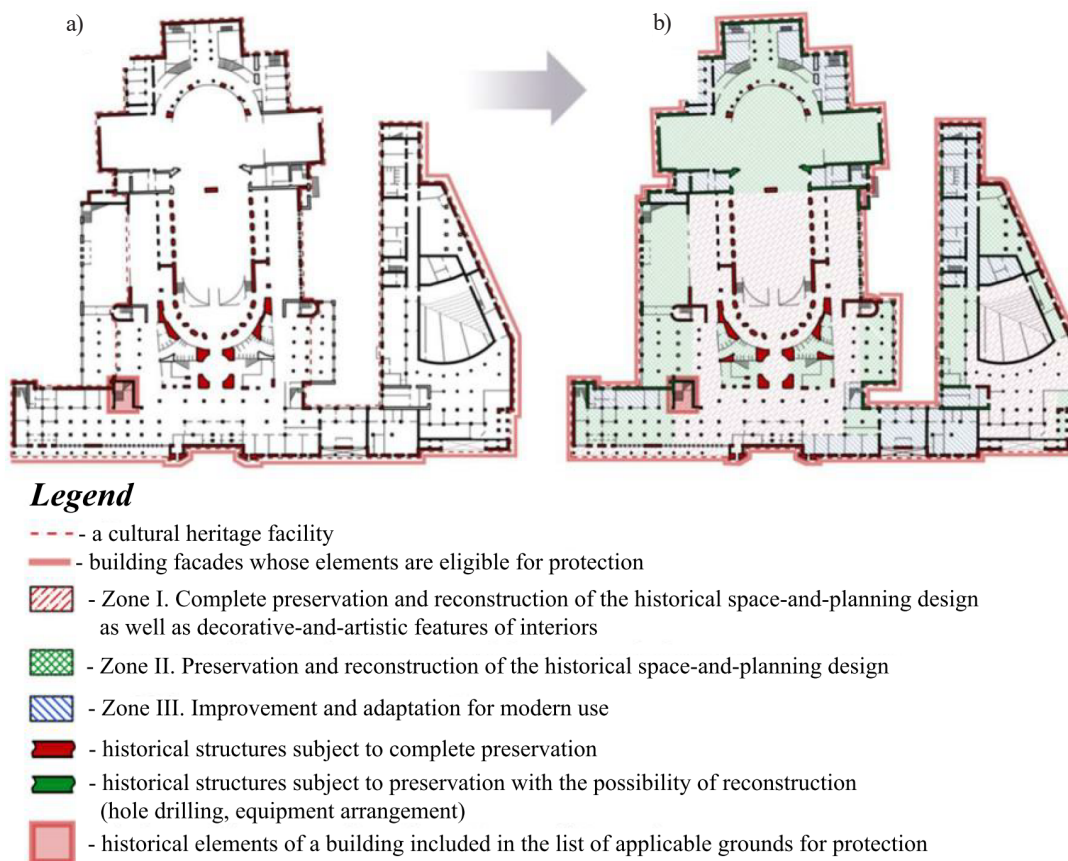


Fig. 3. Floor plans of the Lensoviet Palace of Culture:
 a — a graphic analysis of the existing object under protection; b — a scheme of the proposed object to be protected

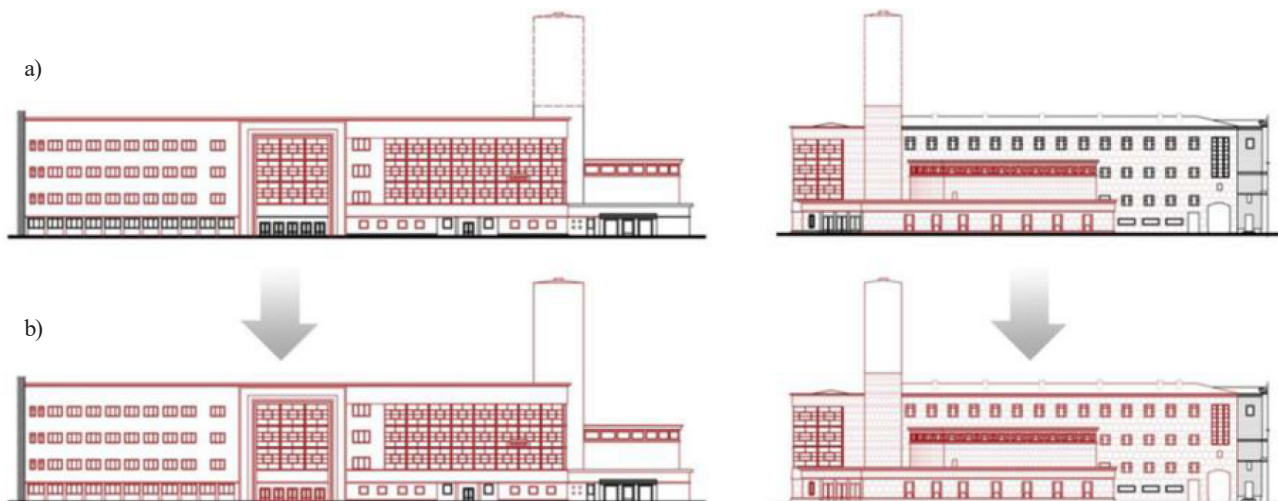


Fig. 4. Scheme of the Lensoviet Palace of Culture facades along Kamennooostrovsky (on the left) and Levashovsky (on the right) Avenues (Prospekts):
 a — a graphic analysis of the existing object under protection;
 b — a scheme of the proposed object to be protected

facilities that were not completed at the construction stage did not acquire any significant urban-planning role set in all the corresponding design drawings (e.g., the Lensoviet Palace of Culture). Thus, in some cases, it is required to consider designs that were not implemented as grounds for protection.

Paragraph 6 of the existing methodology to establish grounds for cultural heritage facility

protection, approved by the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation on January 13, 2016, regulates specifics of their establishment and approval but does not give any recommendations on the nature, scope, and composition of the relevant document.

It is necessary to introduce the following mandatory sections and subsections into the existing structure of the object to be protected:

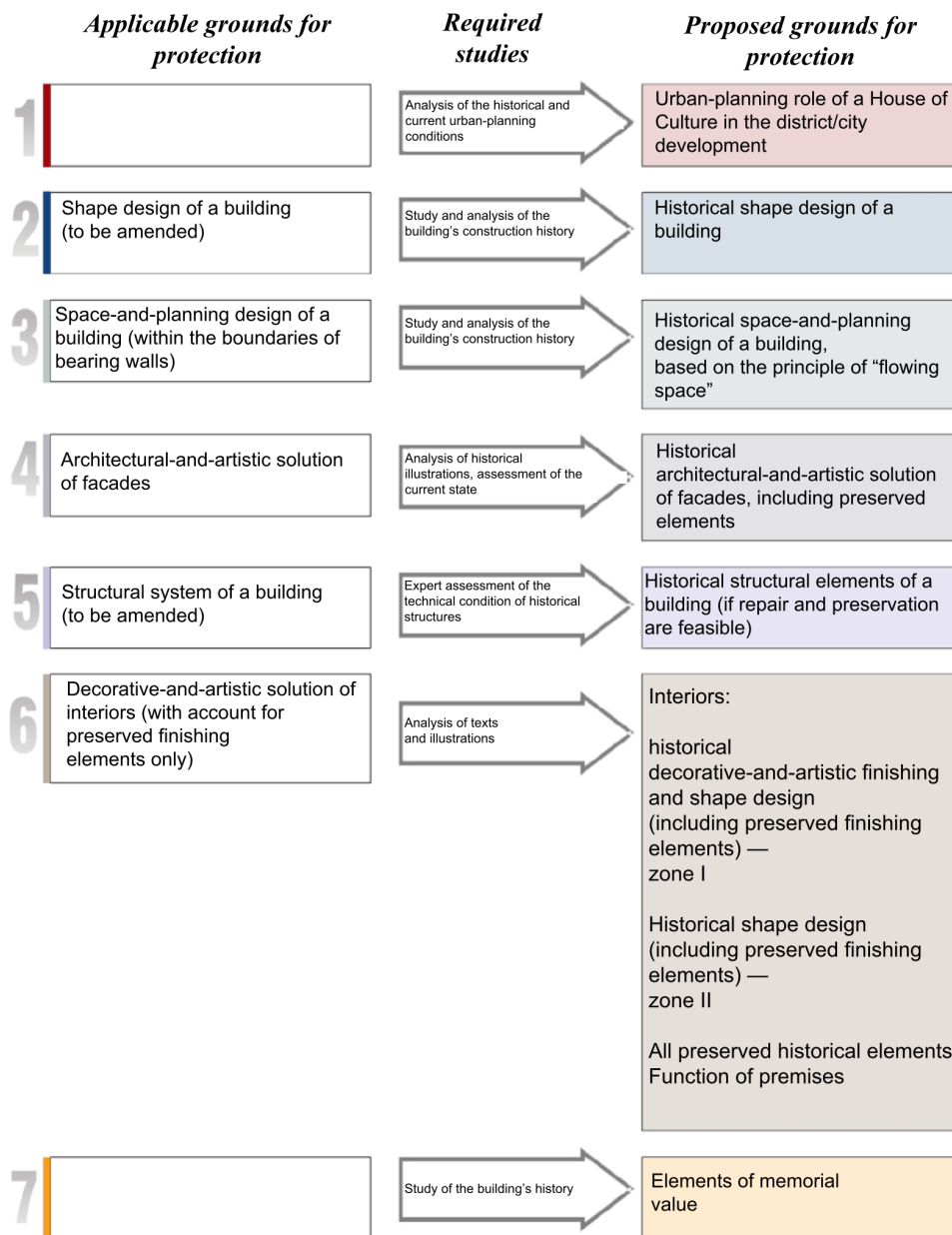


Fig. 5. Scheme for clarifying grounds for the protection of Houses and Palaces of Culture designed in the style of constructivism, with proposed amendments

- the urban-planning role of Houses and Palaces of Culture;
- the elements of memorial value;
- the principle of defining specially protected zones, introduced in the “Decorative-and-Artistic Solution of Interiors” section, which will ensure a more holistic, comprehensive approach to the preservation of facilities;
- the function of some premises is proposed to be included in the list of grounds for protection.

The “Shape Design of a Building”, “Space-and-Planning Design of a Building”, “Architectural-and-Artistic Solution of Facades”, and “Structural System of a Building” sections require amendments and clarifications.

The results of the study can be recommended for use by architects when developing restoration and reconstruction designs for Houses and Palaces of Culture in Saint Petersburg and other cities, experts and art historians when establishing or updating the grounds for the protection of cultural heritage facilities of the avant-garde period, as well as faculty of universities when training bachelors, masters, and PhD students.

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ОСОБЕННОСТИ ВЫЯВЛЕНИЯ ЦЕННОСТНЫХ ХАРАКТЕРИСТИК ДОМОВ И ДВОРЦОВ КУЛЬТУРЫ ЛЕНИНГРАДА АРХИТЕКТУРЫ КОНСТРУКТИВИЗМА

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Аннотация

Статья является результатом многолетнего всестороннего изучения Домов и Дворцов культуры Ленинграда 1920-30-х годов XX века, закрепляет и уточняет ранее выполненные авторами промежуточные исследования и выводы. Результатом статьи является уточненная методика составления предметов охраны для особого типа зданий – конструктивистских Домов и Дворцов культуры на градостроительном и объектном уровнях.

Материалы и методы: Изучение архивных и опубликованных научных, библиографических и иконографических источников по теме исследования; анализ генеральных планов Петрограда-Ленинграда; натурное обследование; камеральная обработка выполненных исследований с составлением подробных графических моделей.

Результаты: Выявлены все запроектированные, частично возведенные и осуществленные объекты особой функции – Дом и Дворец культуры на территории Ленинграда в 1920-30-х годах, прослеживаются предпосылки их создания на градостроительном уровне в системе застройки Ленинграда тех лет, приводится их классификация по основным градостроительным, архитектурно-художественным и общекультурным особенностям, выявляются примеры наиболее сформировавшихся построек такого типа. На примере выявленных объектов предлагаются методические подходы к выявлению ценностных характеристик конструктивистских Домов и Дворцов культуры, уточняющие существующую структуру предметов охраны, составленных для таких объектов. Исследование показало, что некоторые важнейшие архитектурно-художественные и градостроительные особенности Домов и Дворцов культуры в настоящее время весьма уязвимы. **Выводы:** Предложенная методика выявления (уточнения) ценностных характеристик (предметов охраны) для таких объектов обеспечит более целостный, всеобъемлющий подход к сохранению уникальных архитектурно-художественных, объемно-планировочных и градостроительных особенностей объектов культурного наследия эпохи авангарда.

Ключевые слова

Предмет охраны, объект культурного наследия, конструктивизм, Дворец культуры, Дом культуры, советская архитектура, реставрация, приспособление.