

# The stages of development of architecture and observance of architectural heritage in the Republic of Armenia

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## Abstract

There are a lot of scientific and research reports dedicated to Armenian architecture from the ancient times to nowadays. There are many interesting and thoroughly researched reports of architectural and historical value done by not only Armenian but also foreign historians, architects, and engineers. Exploring Armenian architecture's chronology and research reports, we noticed that after independence of the Republic of Armenia (since 1991) there are few scientific reports which include the stages of development of architecture of newly independent Armenia, the current state of the architectural heritage and their observance. So we decided to study that period trying to show the problems and essential events as well as to introduce that period by the stages of development also including some examples of architectural heritage.

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## 1. Introduction

Armenian architecture is a unique architectural style created and applied by Armenian nation in the Armenian Highlands and beyond its borders. It is spread out not only in the Armenian Highlands but also in the cities and places where Armenians or Armenian diaspora lived. Armenian architecture is characterized by the high level of development, rich artistic traditions, and especially national originality which is not only due to natural conditions, the way of living and national origins but also due to local building materials especially by the diversity and artistic characteristics of the stone "Tuff". The architecture is based on the rich traditions of national culture. Cultural contacts and interactions with other nations are also important. Many Armenian and foreign art critics, historians and architects noted the influence of medieval Armenian architecture [1,2] on the architecture of Western Europe. In its turn, Armenian architecture was influenced by other countries architecture such as in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, during the period of Armenian Hellenism, from the architecture of Ancient Greece. The best example is Greco-Roman peripter type temple of Garni (1st century) (see Figure1).

Modern Armenian architecture was also influenced by the period of the Soviet Union [4], because in this very time a lot of nowadays living and social buildings were created. But after the independence of the Republic of Armenia, Armenian architecture has been mostly influenced by western architecture, especially by European countries and USA.



Figure 1. Greco-Roman peripter type temple of Garni in Armenia

Among the monuments of Armenian architecture Zvartnots, Geghardavank, Haghpat, Sanahin were included in the list of the UNESCO's international heritage (Figure 2-5).



Figure 2. Zvartnots Cathedral



Figure 3. Geghardavank



Figure 4. Haghpat



Figure 5. Sanahin

The architecture is introduced thoroughly with facts in 6 tomes "The History of Armenian Architecture" published by the Art Institute of National Scientific Academy of the Republic of Armenia [1].



## 2. Stages of architecture development

During several years of studying historical-documentary materials and reports, doing a lot of researches of the archival material about the architecture of Armenia, fine arts, design and in other fields, we understood that there is no even short report which will introduce the stages of development of the architecture after 1990, so we decided to introduce the stages of development of that period, actual problems and what evolution Armenian architecture is undergone after the collapse of the Soviet Union (1991-2022). To make the period of development clear we divided it into 3 main stages:

- Irregular and disrupted stage of newly independent Republic of Armenia (1991-2000).
- Reinterpretation and rebuilding stage of newly independent Republic of Armenia (2001-2010)
- Stage of development and progress of the Republic of Armenia (2011-2022)

### 2.1. Irregular and disrupted stage (1991-2000)

Before speaking about the state of the architecture of Armenia in 1991-2000 let's have short historical excursion to see what The Republic of Armenia inherited in the first years of independence [3,4].

The development of independence in 1918 had a great role in the development of Armenian culture and art. In the 1920s and 1930s architecture thrived in Soviet Armenia not only in architectural rich traditions but also in the context of development of architecture. Alexander Tamanyan, a representative of the senior generation of architects, led and created the main plan of Yerevan (Figure 6).

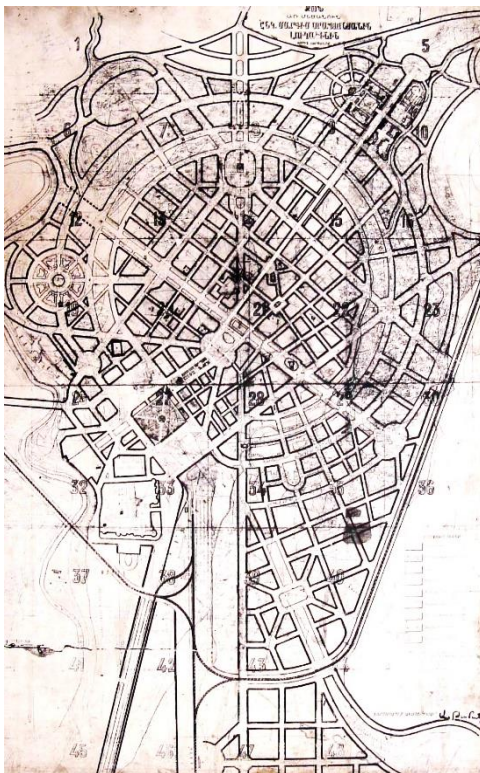


Figure 6. Yerevan city plan by architecture Tamanyan

Noting the world's architectural experience, the talented architect and city planner started to create the plan of Yerevan. Despite the short historical period soviet architecture had great achievements. In the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century the main branch of architecture was urban planning [5]. They planned and created 1-2 storey residential, hall houses, private houses and etc. The public buildings were created also. Residential architecture was developed due to social and other system changes, new worldview. After the active urban planning of these years Soviet Armenia's architectural modernism's period came when they build a lot of buildings of historical and architectural value, such as: Sport Concert Complex named after Karen Demirchyan, Youth Palace, and

Rossia cinema, the building of the Sevan Writers' Union, the old building of the Zvartnots Airport, the metro station of Yeritasardakan (Figures 7-10). We can continue this list constantly because the modernist structures of Soviet Armenia are actually numerous and most of them are still now standing and attract both Armenian and foreign art critics', historians', architects' attention till now [9].

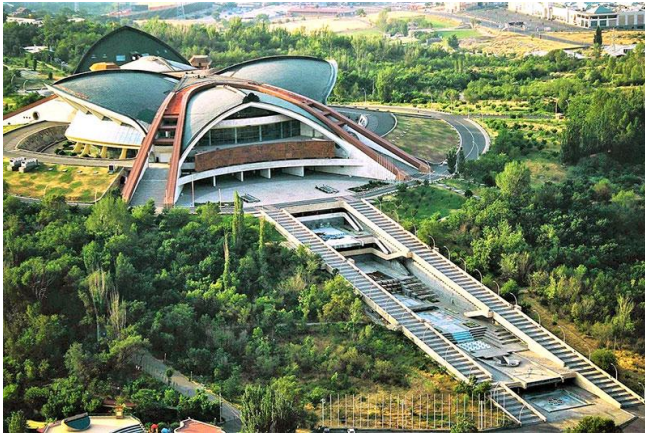


Figure 7. Sport Concert Complex named after Karen Demirchyan



Figure 8. Youth Palace



Figure 9. Old building of Zvartnots Airport



Figure 10. Metro Station "Eritasardakan"

The urban planning as well as social-economical flourishing stage of Soviet Armenia finished in the end of 1980s when Armenia and the whole region entered the period when everything was in a mess. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the earthquake in Gyumri in 1988, Artsakh war in 1991-1994 and the social-economical bad situation in the first 10 years of independence greatly influenced on Armenia's urban planning and architecture [6].

In 1991-2000s Armenia was in a social-economical, cultural chaos. In this period not completed state system, the lack of attention of statesmen as well as newly formed business environment undermined Armenia's almost the whole residential architectural environment. A lot of factories, public structures, cinemas, kindergartens, trade centers were dismantled, were robbed and changed. In these years urban planning architectural environment was undermined also because of the lack of control of government or the appearance of corruption when without any research or permission many trade centers, kiosks, private houses were built in not appropriate places. And this is the reason why we consider the first ten years of newly independent Armenia irregular and disrupted architectural and urban stage [6,7,8].

Till now in almost all settlements of Yerevan and Armenia the distortions inherited in these years which, unfortunately, became a part of our everyday life and to correct them we need significant resources for solving urban architectural problems, to review the plans and rebuilding, human resources and finance. There is no



single street in Yerevan where under a little attentive look you can notice illegal buildings, store-kiosks without aesthetic and architectural composition which are located in sidewalks, in the entrance or facades of public buildings, added balconies which contradict all safety rules or adding storeys to the roofs of the building (Figure 11).



Figure 11. A distorted residential building in Yerevan

We can continue this list endlessly though we hope that politicians will fix and correct such examples which disfigure Armenian urban architectural environment.

## 2.2. Reinterpretation and rebuilding stage (2001-2010)

Armenia's social-economical, therefore, cultural life began to have positive upheaval in the beginning of 2000s. From these years the country had industrial certain growth due to right social-economical management of government in the country. During these years there were a lot of investments from the Armenian diaspora thanks to which many schools, kindergartens, social and business buildings were renovated and built [8]. In this decade urban development was also active during which they build hundreds of newly built apartment buildings which had a positive remark not only in urban planning and in architecture but also had great influence on reducing unemployment and economic growth (Figure 12-15).



Figure 12. Residential and Commercial Buildings in Northern Avenue (Yerevan)



Figure 13. Residential and Commercial Buildings in Northern Avenue (Yerevan)





Figure 14. Residential and Commercial Buildings in Northern Avenue (Yerevan)



Figure 15. Residential and Commercial Buildings in Northern Avenue (Yerevan)

Parallel to these positive examples there were a lot of problematical cases when newly built apartment buildings were built in the places of old structures which have historical value or without any research, they gave permission to demolish the structures' and to build new buildings. These cases are topic for another discussion and we will study it in future because studying these cases and giving them professional's opinion for excluding such cases in future is necessity for Armenian architectural heritage.

As we mentioned there were a lot of omissions in urban planning and architecture in general but we can consider this stage the stage of reinterpretation and rebuilding stage of newly independent Republic of Armenia because after long period pause in Yerevan and in other cities of Armenia began the stage of the reincarnation of architecture, many architects, engineers and designers began to work [9]. The start of this stage was needed for getting out from 1990s "dead" state and giving the country new breath which was actualized, and the country began its natural urban development and architectural process (Figure 16-36).



Figure 16. Residential Building and Business Center in Yerevan



Figure 17. Business Center in Yerevan



Figure 18. Residential Building and Business Center in Yerevan



Figure 19. Business Center in Yerevan





Figure 20. Residential Building in Yerevan



Figure 21. Residential Building in Yerevan



Figure 22. Residential Building in Yerevan



Figure 23. International College in Dilijan



Figure 24. Smart Center and Hotel Complex in Stepanavan

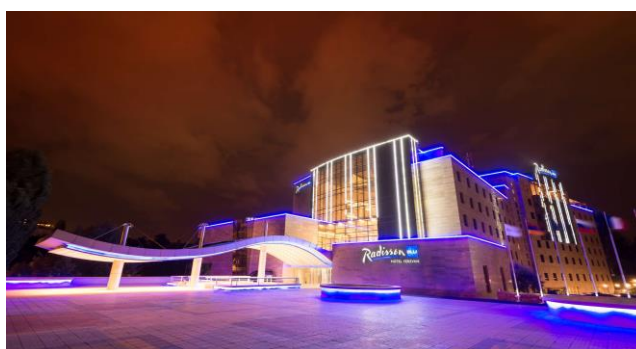


Figure 25. Hotel Complex in Yerevan

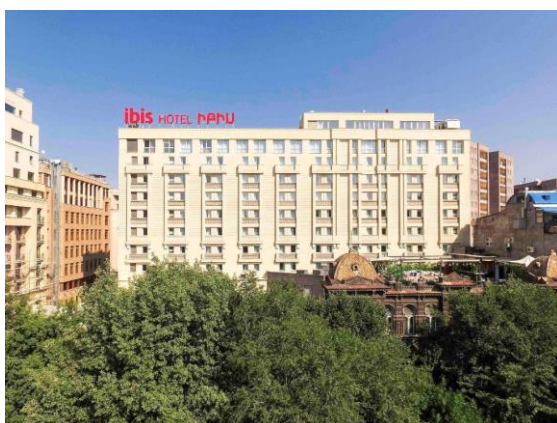


Figure 26. Hotel in Yerevan



Figure 27. Hotel in Yerevan





Figure 28. Hotel in Yerevan



Figure 29. Renovated Historical Building in Gyumri



Figure 30. Residential and Commercial Buildings in Gyumri



Figure 31. Renovated Historical Building in Yerevan



Figure 32. Renovated Historical Building in Yerevan

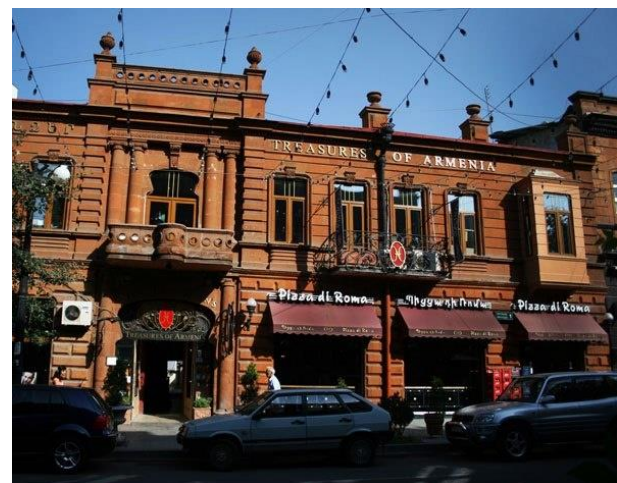


Figure 33. Renovated Historical Building in Yerevan

### 2.3. Stage of development and progress (2011-2022)

We can prove that this third stage of the Armenian architectural progress is the logical continuation and development of the second stage. During this period Armenia entered in a great construction phase. Almost in any city and especially in the capital city of Yerevan many architectural structures such as business centers,



residential apartment buildings, districts, townhouses, studios, trade centers, playgrounds, entertainment centers, museums, cultural centers, government buildings, roads, churches, bridges, underground and overpass crossings were built and are still going to be built. The state political system was changed. If in 2010s city governors weren't attentive to the structures of cultural values at the expense of new buildings because there was no certain state policy but for second period of this decade we can notice serious state policy towards to Yerevan's and other cities' significance, care and reconstruction of the structures with historical and cultural value. In recent years the construction of Old Yerevan has been discussed. Because many buildings or structures with architectural value which were collapsed during the years or gave their place to other structures which have public interest now, they will be moved to new place which will be called Old Yerevan and where almost all types of Old Yerevan's architectural structures will be reverberated (Figure 34-35).

We must fact that now besides the state governors' there is also great public attention to the structures of historical and architectural value. There have been a lot of cases when structure was not collapsed thanks to public rebellion. The public consciousness toward to this topic has also positive progress which is also very important. It's also important that if in 2000s lots of public structures were built in European and western style using the materials from that countries and details, now almost in all new buildings include national symbols, structure plans which remind national architectural details in which not only European or western standards are applied but also are combined with ornaments, colors and building materials characterizing Armenian architecture. Almost in all new buildings they again started to use Armenian tuff stone which in past and now is considered to be special cutaway of Armenian architecture.

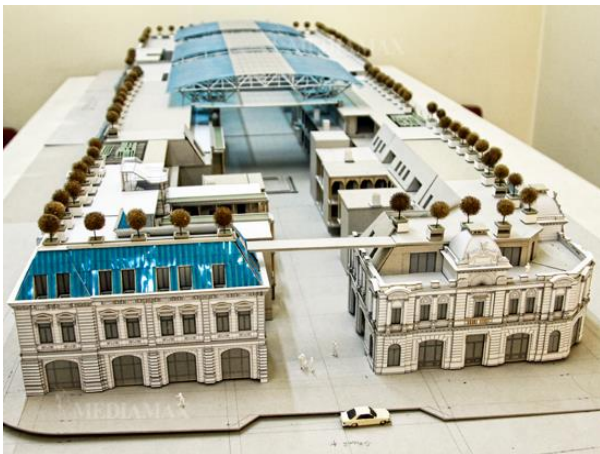


Figure 33. Old Yerevan project

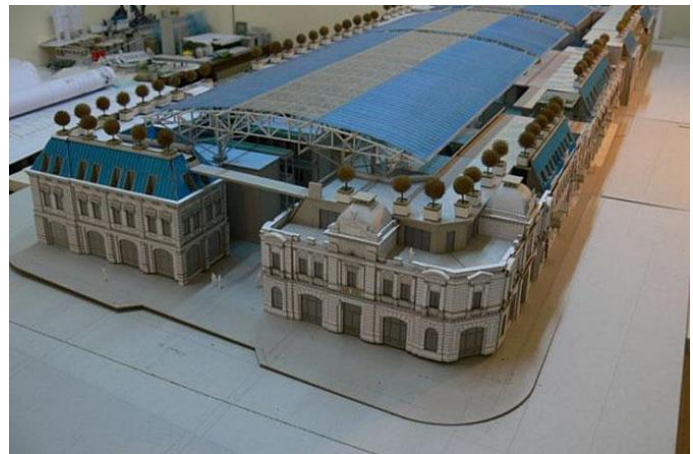


Figure 34. Old Yerevan project

### 3. Conclusions

- This short survey presents the development stages of Armenian architecture since 1991, which is the first in the art and architecture of Armenia. There are many research reports, but none of them are separated by periods and their professional attitude.
- It should be noted that in Armenia the problem of preservation and development of architecture is now in the centre of attention of proper bodies and public. There were many omissions when valuable buildings were disassembled but now there is no such problem. And all new structures undergo appropriate professional procedures.
- Alike all the cities including the big cities of Armenia Yerevan, Gyumri, Vanadzor, Kapan and Abovyan new structures are being built outside the central areas, moreover, many new districts which are outside the area of Yerevan have more demand due to climatic and ecological circumstances.
- Green architecture in Armenia is being developed too applying new eco technologies as well as solar energy systems.
- We should pay attention to the fact that except of planned or governors' work there are also bad circumstances which disrupt the observance of architecture heritage.



**Declaration of competing interest**

There are no financial or non-financial interests and competition in any material discussed in this paper.

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