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## DOES COLOUR PLANNING MATTER? REFLECTION ON THE IMPACT AND COORDINATION OF COLOUR PLANNING IN POLAND AND SLOVAKIA

### PO CO PLANOWAĆ KOLOR? REFLEKSJA NA TEMAT KOORDYNOWANIA KOLORU W ARCHITEKTURZE W POLSCE I NA SŁOWACJI

#### Abstract

Research was undertaken in order to examine the ways colour has been coordinated in urban design in Poland and Slovakia – especially reasons and conditions under which colour planning started and thereafter operated. The methodology employed included an analysis of archival materials, interviews with designers and public officials as well as field studies. Five colour plans were analysed from the following points of view: the circumstances of their initiation, the methodology and process of their elaboration, the method and degree of implementation and their 'life' over the following years. The aim of this study is to compare and analyse the impact of individual colour plans in order to get an input for strengthening the professional and scientific approach to colour planning through lessons learnt from these examples.

**Keywords:** colour, colour planning, architecture, urban design, design methodology

#### Streszczenie

Artykuł przedstawia wyniki analizy sposobów koordynowania koloru w architekturze i urbanistyce w Polsce i na Słowacji, w tym badania powodów i warunków, w jakich podjęto się planowania koloru w architekturze w tych krajach. Metodologia badań objęła szczegółowe zapoznanie się z materiałami źródłowymi i wywiadami z projektantami i urzędnikami oraz badania terenowe. Pięć przykładów planowania koloru przeanalizowano pod kątem okoliczności ich powstania, metod projektowania, sposobu i stopnia zastosowania. Porównanie i analiza wpływu poszczególnych planów kolorystycznych pomogły wyciągnąć wnioski, które powinny przyczynić się do rozwoju planowania i koordynowania koloru w przestrzeni publicznej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** kolor, planowanie koloru, architektura, urbanistyka, metodologia

## 1. Introduction

Over the centuries colour has been recognised as one of the tools that visually forms the built environment; but on the other hand colour has rarely been regulated in the way other building components have been. Thus, research was undertaken to investigate selected examples of colour planning in Poland and in Slovakia in order to evaluate the existing experiences, and to develop the methodology of colour planning.

In regard to literature on colour planning in these two countries, so far few attempts to coordinate colour in Poland have been presented at a conference in Warsaw in 2015 and published in conference literature, including colour proposals for Warsaw, Lublin and Gdansk old towns [9]. A co-author of this article, Karolina Białobłocka, discussed the colour design for Blücherplatz (now Plac Solny) and the standard colours for Silesia proposed by the Association *Die Farbige Stadt*, both created in the 1930s [1, 2]. In a paper on the conservation of Wroclaw main square, Olgierd Czerner mentioned two colour proposals for the Market Square and prepared a report that included suggestions on colours for the square [5]<sup>1</sup>. Colour planning in Slovakia has been partially discussed in a few publications. Mária Grigerová and Pavol Bauer provided an overview of research on historical colours and the colour plan prepared for the Old Town of Bratislava in 1981 [6]. A co-author of this article, Andrea Urland, included her design of colour proposals for Banská Štiavnica and Dolný Kubín in a monograph on the power of colour [11]. Beáta Breítkopf Lososvy and György Breítkopf published drawings of their colour proposal for the square in Šahy [3].

In order to deepen our knowledge of colour planning and to explore the potential that colour planning may bring to a place and the key points that help with successful implementation and maintenance, the mechanism for the whole procedure was analysed focusing on the following three aspects: reasons for the formulation of specific colour proposals, design principles, and issues related to the implementation process. Furthermore, the current situation and state of the matter were investigated and compared with the initial intentions and proposed designs or guidelines. Those issues were explored using five examples of colour coordination that took place in Wroclaw, Poland and in Bratislava, Banská Štiavnica, Dolný Kubín and Šahy in Slovakia as a basis.

## 2. Sources and Methods

Three types of data sources were identified in order to explore the phenomenon of colour planning: archival sources, interviews, and formal analysis of colour designs.

Archival research was conducted in Poland in July 2018 and in Slovakia from October–December 2018 in the following archives: the Museum of Architecture, Wroclaw; Mestský ústav ochrany pamiatok v Bratislave, Pamiatkový úrad Slovenskej republiky Bratislava, Krajský pamiatkový úrad Bratislava, Krajský pamiatkový úrad Banská Štiavnica, Krajský pamiatkový úrad Nitra. Relevant documents were also found in the municipality offices of Dolný Kubín and Šahy.

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<sup>1</sup> The colours suggested were linked with historical colours, typical for each architectural style [4].

Interviews were conducted with designers and public officials, the former were responsible for the design of the examined examples of colour planning and the latter, for their implementation. Questionnaires were sent by electronic post or face-to-face interviews took place. During the interviews, the following issues were tackled: reasons for the introduction of colour strategy, ways of defining palettes of colours, issues related to the implementation of colour planning like planned and achieved goals, duration, maintenance methods, cooperation with inhabitants and, profits<sup>2</sup>.

Finally, field studies took place under different weather and light conditions, in late autumn and early winter mornings and afternoon light, on both sunny and cloudy days.

### **3. Colour Planning in Poland and Slovakia: an overview**

In Poland, colour planning in urban design has been generally linked with post-war reconstruction and refurbishment of historical town centres that took place in major cities in the 1950s and 1960s. At that time colour was included in the complex designs of the main squares of Warsaw, Lublin, Gdansk, and Wroclaw<sup>3</sup>. In regard to Wroclaw, there were also colour proposals made in the 1930s that aimed to promote colourful architecture and to create a more exuberant image of the then German city [2], whereas the post-war proposals were part of the refurbishment of the city after the damages of World War II.

The research indicated that in Slovakia, the interest in coordination of colour in the built environment started in the early 1980s in Bratislava, and has reappeared irregularly in different parts of the country and that attempts were made to coordinate colour in both listed areas of historical significance (Banská Štiavnica, Dolný Kubín, Šahy) and in residential districts of prefabricated concrete blocks of flats erected in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (e.g. Levice).

## **4. Case studies**

### **4.1. Wroclaw - colour planning for the Market Square and Plac Solny**

#### **4.1.1. Reason**

There have been a few attempts to coordinate colour in the Market Square and the adjacent square Plac Solny in the Wroclaw Old Town including colour proposals made in 1928 and in 1959.

The 1928 colour proposal for Plac Solny (Blücherplatz at that time) was the subject of an architectural competition that took place at the peak of the 'call for colour' movement in the early 1930s; typical colours were also recommended for the Silesia region in the late 1930s [1].

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<sup>2</sup> All the interviews included questions from the questionnaire prepared by Karolina Białobłocka in 2016.

<sup>3</sup> For further details refer to [9].

In 1959 the state office *Pracownia Sztuk Plastycznych* ordered a colour design for the two main squares in the Old Town: Market Square and Plac Solny. The complex colour design was related to the refurbishment of the Market Square undertaken as the main part of commemorating the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the so-called return of the retrieved lands to the motherland, which took place in Wrocław in 1960<sup>4</sup>. Because of this event, the decision was made to plaster and paint the whole square for the first time after the end of World War II in accordance with the colour proposal prepared by three artists: the stenographer Aleksander Jędrzejewski, painter Stanisław Pękalski and furniture designer Władysław Wińcze.

#### 4.1.2. Design

The 1928 colour proposals for Blücherplatz (present day Plac Solny) in Breslau (present day Wrocław) were the competition entries from 1928. The limited available data on the competition informs us that both entries were award-winning, the first entry characterised a reduced palette of colours to shades of yellow and brown, whereas the other entry was composed on contrasts of hues, saturation and light [2]<sup>5</sup>.

The colour proposal made for the Market Square around 1959 was the consensus of ideas and approaches towards colour undertaken by the three artists. The idea was to paint each side of the square with a slightly different set of hues because of the authors' awareness of the power of sunlight depending on the direction the buildings faced. Cold hues dominated on the sides that received less direct sunlight and warm hues were applied to the sides with direct sunlight<sup>6</sup>. Additionally, the corner buildings were to be painted stronger colours in order to 'keep the side together' (similarly to the imitations of stone blocks painted on the corners of medieval buildings that aimed to provide a feeling of stability to the whole structure). Another feature of the colour proposal was the special treatment of the window frames of the stone facades. In order to harmonise and link the stone facades with the plaster facades, the artists proposed to paint those window frames with the colours of the neighbouring facades. In regard to the colours suggested, the range of colours varied but colours applied to a single side were more uniform. The interviewed artist recalled that colours were saturated, intense darker shades obtained by mixing with black or grey and pastel hues were omitted. Darker shades were applied on elevations with direct sunlight and lighter – on elevations that lacked direct sunlight.

The design had to be adjusted as the original idea was not highly regarded by the local conservation office. The colours proposed did not respect the original historical colours and for this reason the city conservator opposed the project by indicating the lack of experience of the artists regarding issues related to the monument conservation process. The city conservator

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<sup>4</sup> Information on this colour plan comes from a private communication between Olgierd Czerner and Michał Jędrzejewski. Interviews took place in March 2015 and July 2018.

<sup>5</sup> For details refer to [2].

<sup>6</sup> The conservator pointed out that the same rule was applied by one of the artists of the colour proposal on the stained glass located in the octagonal chancel of the Dominican Church in Wrocław. The medieval church is orientated to the east, therefore the right side of the stained glass receives more direct sunlight and is composed of warm hues, whereas the left side receives less direct sunlight and cold hues dominate on this side.

intervened, even personally removing part of the plaster and paint layers to expose older colours. Original colours had been suggested and as a result of those discussions, some of the colours proposed were changed in accordance to the city conservator's indications of which colours would be accepted by both parties<sup>7</sup>. The other interviewed artist mentioned that the original design was also planned to be richer in terms of ornamentation including wall painting, similar to the colour scheme applied in Warsaw in the 1950s; however, the limitation of funds prevented implementation of such an ornamented colour scheme in Wroclaw (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. The 1959 colour proposal for the Market Square, Wroclaw by A. Jędrzejewski, S. Pękalski and W. Wińcze (source: the collection of the Museum of Architecture, Wroclaw)

#### 4.1.3. Implementation

It is not known if the 1928 colour proposal was implemented. The 1959 colour proposal was implemented only once for a celebration in 1960 and only partially. According to the interviewed former head of the city conservation office, this implementation was possible due to practically absence of private ownership; state ownership of the buildings around the square prevailed. However, the colour proposal did not last for long as there were too many users and it was difficult to execute the colour scheme during subsequent refurbishments. With the lapse of time, the political system and ownership have changed and private owners did not

<sup>7</sup> The Conservator's suggestions on colours for the market square that would follow historical hues, typical for each architectural style can be found in the unpublished report stored in the archive of the City Conservator [5]. Additionally, art historians' comments on the same issue can be found in [7].



show any interest in the designers' postulates. The city conservator mentioned, that some of the designers reacted to the changes in their colour proposal with resentment; however, in the conservator's opinion, the situation has come back to a normal state, as in the past this was the way to paint facades – everyone painted his or her house in accordance with their own wishes<sup>8</sup>.

The former city conservator also admitted that colour had not been of any special importance, there was no consistent approach towards the city as a whole in terms of colour, and regulations on colour were never introduced during his work as a city conservator in the years of 1955–1965, as the public official did not see any sense in it, adding that all the available financial support was used on refurbishing monument structures and not on painting elevations.

At the present time, colourfulness of both squares is the first feature to be noticed as, in regard to care of colour, the monument office in Wroclaw has been concentrating on the return of historical colours of individual buildings but has not provided consistent policy on colour that would help to provide harmony within the square<sup>9</sup> (Fig. 2).

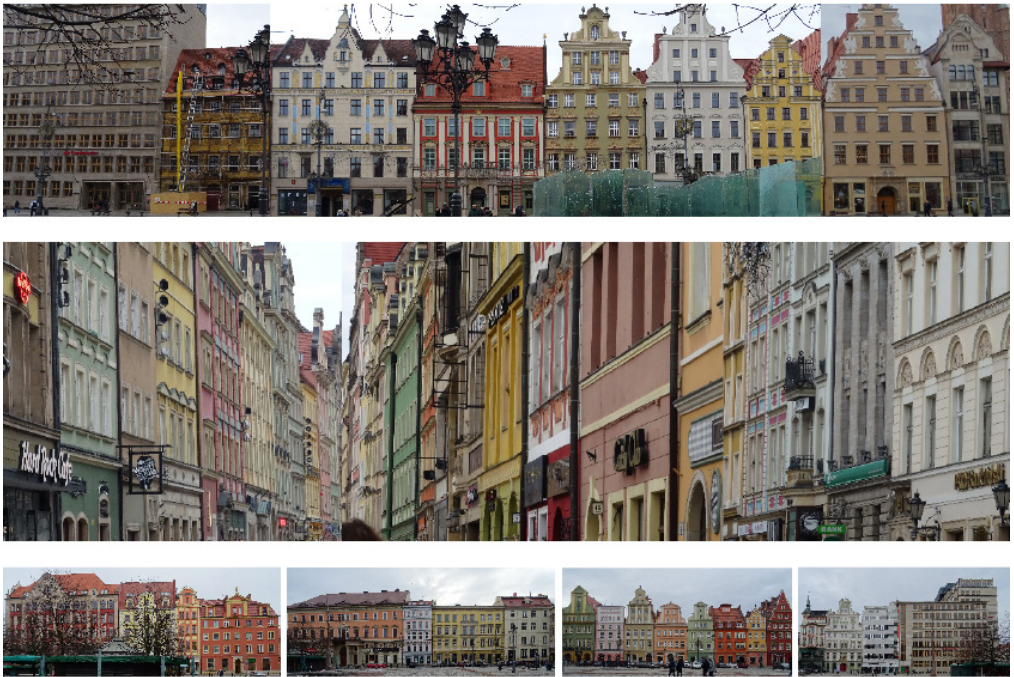


Fig. 2. Colourfulness characterises the Market Square (selected facades) and the adjacent Plac Solny (lower row), Wroclaw in the present day (photo by K. Bialoblocka, 2019)

<sup>8</sup> Yet at the same time, Olgierd Czerner indicated the possibility of a common initiative to repaint prior to the visit of a monarch, etc [5, p. 226].

<sup>9</sup> For details on historical colours of Wroclaw, refer to [1].

## 4.2. Bratislava – colour planning for the Old Town

### 4.2.1. Reason

Attempts to coordinate colour in the Old Town of Bratislava took place in the early 1980s. The colour proposal was prepared as a part of a bigger study consisting of historical and architectural analyses including new functions, public spaces, greenery, etc. The study was prepared in the Regional Monument Board in Bratislava SMPR (*Statna mestska pamiatkova rezervacia*) in 1981 by a team consisting of architects and art historians: Anna Schwarczova, Pavol Bauer, Maria Grigerová, Viktor Ferus and Martin Melichercik. The study was initiated by the architect Anna Schwarczova and aimed to conduct a renovation of the whole old town at a highly professional level. The reason for undertaking the study was described by the interviewed architect as a wish to restore Bratislava, the capital and one-time coronation city, to the grand character the city used to have in the past.

### 4.2.2. Design

Apart from other goals, the study aimed to provide a complex colour scheme for the whole area. The methodology applied included paint research and alterations of findings.

The study started with paint research undertaken across the whole Old Town, and it covered most of the buildings apart from the contemporary buildings coated with stone<sup>10</sup>. At that time the methodology of paint research was limited to a few on-site scratches on the facades where the number of samples taken by art historians varied from five to fifteen on each dwelling. Findings were documented and colours were described in comparison to the colour chart of the paint company SYNTHESA. Colours for walls and architectural details were provided but colours of doors, window frames and roofs were not considered in the colour proposal<sup>11</sup>.

In regard to the alterations provided, the interviewed architect explained that the study aimed to emphasise the character of the area that consists of buildings representing different architectural styles. Provided modifications were minor and limited to the changing of nuances. Each street and square was treated individually and colour was used to differentiate the space, yet in different ways. As a rule, the grander and wider streets like Michalská and Panská were emphasised by lighter colours, whereas narrower streets of lesser importance were to be more colourful. In some areas a graduation of shades was provided, whereas in other places darker shades were suggested to make the area more visible (Fig. 3).

<sup>10</sup> Archival research in the two Bratislava archives that store documents regarding the conservation of the Old Town: Krajski Pamiatkovy Urad (KPU) and Mestsky Pamiatkovy Urad (MPU) revealed very limited archival sources. Report 'Vyhodnotenie stavu fasad v CMO Bratislavy', Bratislava 1988, MPU archive, call number 3316, consists of black and white pictures that depict the condition of buildings in the old town. Only a few pictures include written information on the colours of walls and architectural details.

<sup>11</sup> Documentation of the 1981 research is stored in Mestský ústav ochrany pamiatok v Bratislave in four volumes under the name 'Farebnost fasad'. There is no call number provided. Documentation is not completed as it lacks information on several elevations. Additionally, the maps that presented the colour proposal in the scale 1:1000 are missing.

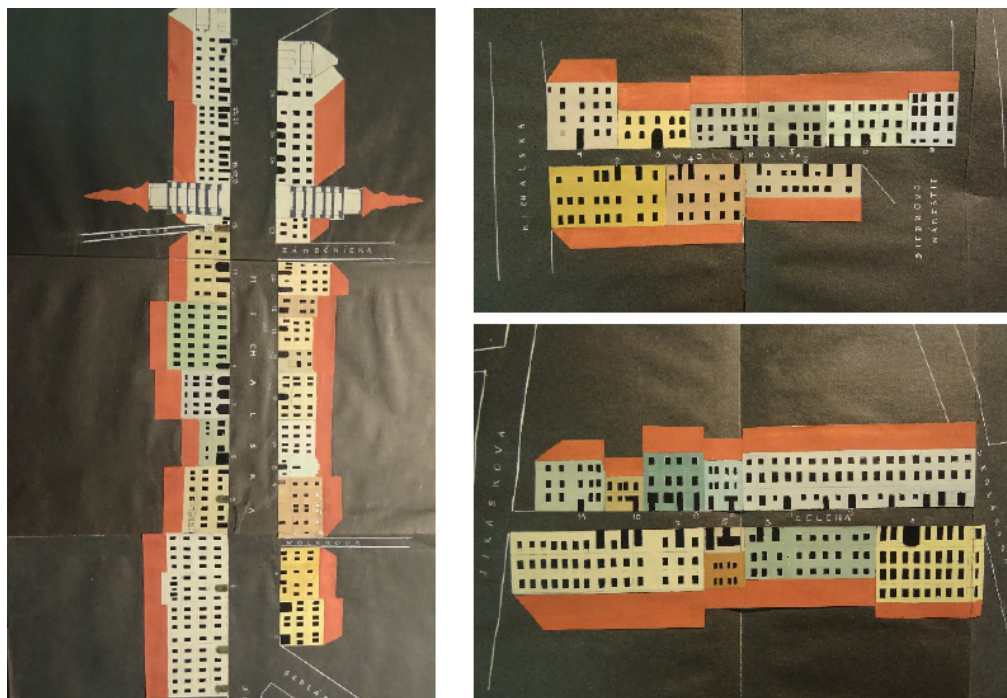


Fig. 3. Selected details of the Colour Proposal for the Old Town of Bratislava from 1981 – one of the main boulevards: Michalská ulica, and two narrow back streets (source: Archive of Mestský ústav ochrany pamiatok v Bratislave)

#### 4.2.3. Implementation

The colour proposal has never been implemented as a whole. Thus far, only selected buildings were renovated in the years 1981–1989 using as the principles of colour planning as a basis, including restoration of part of the so-called coronation street – Michalská, Sedlárska and Rybárska brána.

The political transformation in 1989 brought changes related to the law and the ownership of buildings; transforming from state ownership to private ownership; the closure of state architectural offices and the employment of new staff in conservation offices took place. As a result of changes in ownership, the restoration of the Old Town was not continued and with time the attitude towards colour planning has also changed. According the interviewed public official, after 1989 the colour proposal was still in use, but public officials have started to concentrate much more on original colours that would match the styles of facades instead of considering the harmony of the whole area. Additionally, the colour proposal was not favourable any more since the conservation office could only demand paint research of privately owned house and was not able execute an examination of a bigger area, e.g. a whole street. However, paint research has continued and its quality has increased especially as a special conservation office was established in 2002 to provide paint research and owners



themselves had to pay for the examinations. Since then, there has been no more consideration given to the area as a whole or to matching colours.

Nowadays, the Regional Monument Board in Bratislava continues to examine historical colours<sup>12</sup>. The discoveries serve as a base for decisions made by public officials who as a rule, seek to restore the original colour schemes. Sometimes compromises have to be made due to differences between historical and modern technologies and also due to requests made by the owners – in both cases compromises are limited to the choice of a similar shade. In case the paint research was not successful and did not provide any information on the original colours, the public officials base their decisions on historical analogies instead (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4. Selected streets in the Old Town of Bratislava in the present day: Michalská ulica and two back streets. With focusing on historical colours, some areas are still painted limited colours, whereas other areas became much more colourful (photo by K. Białobłocka, 2018)

The idea of colour planning in the form of guidelines sounds positive to the public officials. According to them, such guidelines may be especially useful in case there is no information on the original colours, but lack of time and limited workforce prevent any initiative from their side to prepare such a document.

<sup>12</sup> From private communication with the public officials, KPU in Bratislava.

### 4.3. Banská Štiavnica - colour planning for the town centre

#### 4.3.1. Reason

This colour plan was initiated as a response to an urgent practical need and it was elaborated in the framework of two concurrent research projects: Colour in Architecture and the Cultural Historical Topography of historic urban structures. The preparation of the plan was financed by grants and the client was the Union GRADUS of Banská Štiavnica<sup>13</sup>. The material was intended to be used by the Monuments Board officials in their day-to-day practical work with the owners of buildings. The interdisciplinary team consisted of architects A. Schwarczova and A. Urland, and art historians H. Haberlandova, Z. Sevcikova and Z. Zvarova. It was conceived as the first phase which was to be elaborated further to a more detailed level (from the level of an urban zone through to streets and squares, visual units, individual buildings, details).

The group of young architects from the GRADUS association aimed to recognise the merits of Banská Štiavnica and to preserve and maintain them in the most appropriate way. The document included a colour proposal outlining how to manage the colouring of the central, protected area of the town<sup>14</sup>. The interviewed architects explained that, first of all, there was a wish to improve the place. The other reason was the need for some guidelines that would help public officials; such as a document based on scientific research and not on public officials' personal preferences, which would be much more convincing for owners.

#### 4.3.2. Design

The aim of the work was to obtain objective information on the colours of the facades in relation to their stylistic expression, propose colours for the restoration of the facades with regard to the listed historic environment and to verify the newly developed methodology. The working methodology of colour design in historic environments consisted of surveys, analyses, synthesis and colour proposal with regard to:

- ▶ the character of the historical environment, its cultural and social significance and cultural and historical values,
- ▶ the existing knowledge of the historical environment, buildings and facades,
- ▶ the character of the task and the possibilities of making use of existing experiences,
- ▶ the available information input at that time,
- ▶ choice of buildings by the partner institutions (incomplete streetscapes),
- ▶ the requirement that the document should be used as a basis for methodical and administrative practice in safeguarding the built heritage of the town.

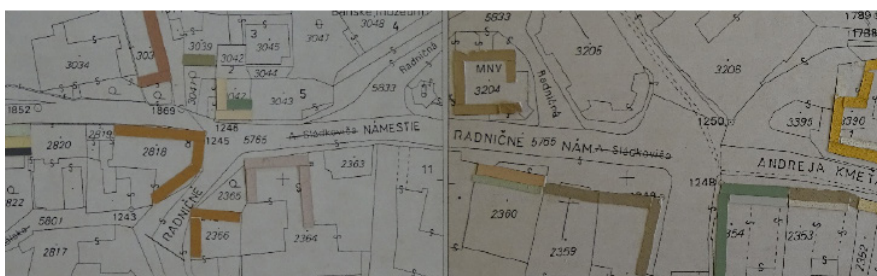
In the period between January to September 1992, facades of one hundred and thirty buildings in nineteen streets in the centre of Banská Štiavnica were subject to the colour

<sup>13</sup> Now *Spolok Banskej Štiavnice*

<sup>14</sup> Three people who worked in the conservation office in Banská Štiavnica at the time the colour proposal was created were interviewed in October 2018. They provided information on the colour proposal in the 1990s presented in this article.

plan as selected by the Monument Board. The colour plan focused on the present state of the facades, e.g. their prevailing architectural expression, for the immediate needs of the methodical practice.

On site surveys on the colours of the facade are studied in relationship to the colour of their stylistic architectural expression. Stratigraphic surveys were carried out at various heights of the facades according to their complexity, ranging from five to fifteen. Classical scratching techniques were employed. The process was recorded and the colour findings were documented by visual measurement using the ACC system. As a result of a thorough analysis, each facade was characterised from an architectural stylistic and technical point of view, a record was made of its re-buildings and restorations and the sequence of colour layers. The recommended colours were described in words and also by notions used prevalingly the ACC. The team obtained information on the state of the current knowledge of the facades (Fig. 5).



A



B

Fig. 5. Detail of the 1992 colour proposal for Radnicne Namestie – one of the two main squares in Banská Štiavnica: results of the paint research (upper row) and the colour proposal (lower row) (source: KPU Archive, Banská Štiavnica)

#### 4.3.3. Implementation

The colour proposal was implemented by the local Monument Board and has been in use since 1992. The interviewed architects recalled that the proposal was fairly easy to implement as it was logical; scientific-based material was helpful to convince the owners and most of the owners liked it and approved of the scientific-based colour proposal, only very few people were opposed.

The document was used in the following way: in case the owner wanted to refurbish his/her house, he or she was informed to use a certain colour from the colour proposal. In case of a disagreement only a small compromise was possible and was limited to the same hue but of a lighter/darker or warmer/colder, etc, shade.

In regard to the profits colour planning has brought in the 1990s, the advantages were described in the following way – saving the authentic feeling of the town; general improvement of the place, the town has a more historical atmosphere because of the lack of artificial colours and because of the use of traditional materials. However, there was also an opposing voice. One of the interviewed architects indicated that the study tried to create a sort of ideal situation since the dominating colours in the proposal were the colours typical for the 19<sup>th</sup> century but the buildings were erected in different architectural styles, so the interviewed architect argued that in reality there has been never an ideal situation<sup>15</sup>.

Nowadays, the responsibility of colour within the protected area lies with the local branch of the Monument Board in Banská Štiavnica. The interviewed public officials draw attention to the fact that despite the 1992 research being an old research, it has never stopped being used; but only to some extent – as a sort of a consultation document. In fact, the current



Fig. 6. The Radnicne Namestie square in the centre of Banská Štiavnica in the present day with renovated facades in accordance to the current approach remains fairly uniform (photo by K. Bialoblocká, 2018)

<sup>15</sup> The colour designer of the colour proposal explained that in the proposal the present style and character of the facades was respected (many of the buildings were older, but facades had been remodelled in the 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century).



approach differs as the main aim is to re-establish original colours. For this reason, in the case that a certificated conservator would find new information, the public officials would decide in favour of the updated findings, but only if there are no findings in the 1992 colour proposal when consulted or if the decision is made to use light colours that have been already applied somewhere within the vicinity. The public officials consider owners' opinions and wishes only in cases there is a lack of information on the exact historical colours, but the choice is limited to light hues.

The conducted interviews revealed that the colour proposal is perceived as useful since the public officials find it difficult to decide on colours on their own. However, at the same time they stress that it is important to have information on the original colours, and that they concentrate on single buildings, not on the whole streets (Fig. 6).

#### **4.4. Šahy - colour planning for the main square**

##### 4.4.1. Reason

Colour planning for the main Hlavné námestie square in Šahy was initiated by the local municipality office and the design was made by the architects Beáta Breitkopf Lososvy and György Breitkopf in 2005. In accordance to the interviewed public officials, the colour proposal aimed to help to improve the image of the main square of the town. The idea appeared that a complex colour design would serve as a guide supporting the municipality office in assessing restorations and in this way would help to prevent messy restorations on the square. The need for such a document became crucial especially after 1989 when the number of restorations conducted according to the owners' own ideas significantly increased, which resulted in repainting houses in various different colours and shades bringing a chaotic result to the whole square.

##### 4.4.2. Design<sup>16</sup>

The available document consists of part drawing and part text, which is in fact the list of colours described by comparison to the NCS colour chart. The colour proposal was provided in three variants and colours were estimated for the walls, architectural details and plinths for all buildings. Colours of the entrance doors, window frames and roofs were not provided. The design was elaborated using the layout of the square as a base and was consulted with the owners of the buildings. Three variants aimed to provide more freedom to the owners while choosing colours. The design was presented at the exhibition in a local museum and the interviewed public official recalled that the feedback was generally positive (Fig. 7).

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<sup>16</sup> Information on the design for Šahy main square comes from analyses of available sources and interviews with public officials as the authors of the colour proposal refused to take part in the interview.

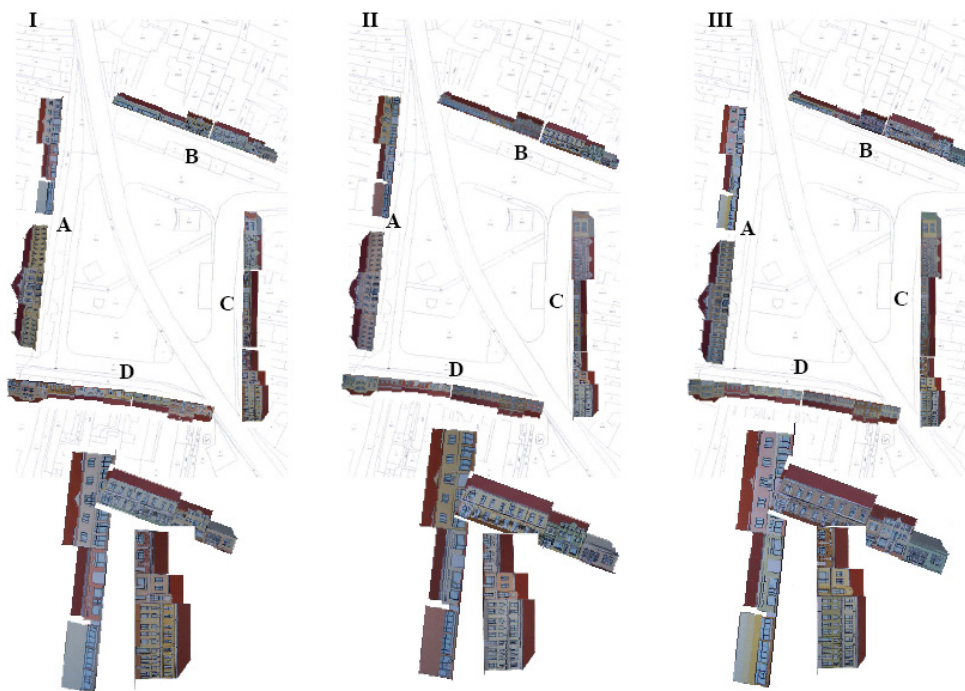


Fig. 7. The colour proposal in three variants for the Hlavné námestie in Šahy by Beáta Breitkopf Lososvy and György Breitkopf (source: <https://www.sahy.sk/navrh-farebneho-riesenia-hlavneho-namestia.phtml?id3=33467>)

#### 4.4.3. Implementation

In regard to the implementation process, on one side the private ownership prevented the use of the colour proposal, as the municipality office had no legal right to execute the document<sup>17</sup>, and from the other side, as the square lies within the protected zone and under the law, Act No. 49/2002, the conservation office has to approve colours of buildings protected by this rule, so the town hall had to seek the opinion of the conservation office. The public officials from the conservation office in Nitra confirmed that the office issued an opinion of the document on the request of the municipality office in 2006. They stated that the document *Návrh farieb budov Hlavného námestia Šahy* was not relevant for them and that they were not going to use it. In fact, the Regional Monument Board in Nitra rejected this document in 2006 because of the methodology used in the colour proposal. The public officials explained that the colours of all the buildings were invented and they were not based on paint research that would reveal the original colours of individual buildings. The theory is

<sup>17</sup> At the same time, the interviewed public officials from the municipality office did not mention any attempts to make the document compulsory by local law.



Fig. 8. At present, Hlavné námestie in Šahy remains multi-coloured and without any feeling of harmony in terms of colour (photo by K. Bialoblocka, 2018)

that the office decides on colours using paint research that seeks historical colours as a basis. For this reason, this colour proposal has been never implemented in Šahy.

After the rejection of the colour proposal, the municipality office neither continued their interest in a colour plan by trying to adjust it to the law, nor got directly involved in paint research. The public officials did not see the point in such actions as that would mean the financial involvement in paint research and according to the public officials, the municipality office has no right to comment on colours – that responsibility lies with the conservation office. At this moment, the municipality office presents the colour proposal on their website for information only and interviewed public officials were not aware of any future plans regarding the 2005 colour proposal prepared for the main square in Šahy (Fig. 8).

#### 4.5. Dolný Kubín - colour planning for the main square

##### 4.5.1. Reason

A colour plan for the Námestie P.O. Hviezdoslava square in Dolný Kubín was elaborated in 2006 by the architect Andrea Urland on the basis of the request made by the Dolný Kubín Municipal office which felt the need to have a conceptual material at hand when responding to the desires of the owners of buildings to restore or repaint facades. It was a response to the

rapid and rather dramatic visual changes of the square – the aim was to set an end to such arbitrary use of colour in the square of major importance to the town.

The colour plan was initiated by the public official from the municipality office who perceived the colour proposal as a tool that would provide improved aesthetics within the main square of the town, an area of huge importance for the town but not listed with the exception of two buildings; for this reason there is no necessity to consult the local monument board prior to the refurbishment of the buildings. The interviewed public official mentioned that it was difficult to convince the owners to use certain colours in order to provide spatial harmony. For this reason, the office requested colour planning that would serve as an official document and as a basis for discussions on colour.

#### 4.5.2. Design

The colour proposal [10] was prepared for the Námestie P.O. Hviezdoslava square and for part of the adjacent street 'Matúškova ulica' that encloses the rectangular square from the east. Information on colours was provided for thirty four buildings on the square and seven on the adjacent street. The document provides information on colours for the walls and architectural details, whereas colours for roofs, window frames and the entrance doors were not included in the colour proposal. Colours were specified using the NCS colour chart; in most cases one



Fig. 9. Colour proposal for the Námestie P.O. Hviezdoslava square in Dolný Kubín by Andrea Urland (source: courtesy of the author of the plan)



colour or a combination of two colours were provided, in some cases alternatives were also offered in order to give some liberty to the owners or users of the buildings for their own taste.

The plan focused on the P.O. Hviezdoslav square, i.e. the main town square – a historical urban space with two listed buildings. A total of thirty four buildings of various styles and values were studied as the subject of the colour plan. Many of the facades had been modified several times in the past and in the majority of cases their original or previous colour appearance is not known. In several cases it was possible to find historical surface layers with colour on the facades that allowed the history of their colour appearance to be traced down. Most of the buildings serve as commercial functions and part of them for living, but there are also some important buildings such as the Municipal office, the church, Orava museum and gallery as well as, the former synagogue.

The colour plan had been worked out for the present state of the buildings, e.g. their current expression and artistic and historical meaning which had been evaluated by the collaborating art historian Dr Magda Kvasnicova. The analyses of the square and the individual buildings, including a spatial one, showed several problems and needs (Fig. 9).

#### 4.5.3. Implementation

The colour proposal has been in use since 2006 in the following way: whenever an owner comes to the department of planning and building regulations (*Referát územného plánovania a stavebného poriadku*) in the local municipality office in order to discuss his or her plans for future refurbishment, the public officials inform them that there is a colour document and those colours should be used. In case an owner opposes, at compromise is sought and a similar shade is proposed; however, in the case of disagreement, the most helpful argument is that the colour proposal was made by a colour designer so the colours suggested are not the personal preference of public officials. When asked about the profits the colour proposal has brought, the interviewed public official briefly indicated some improved aesthetics.

The interviews and fieldwork conducted in December 2018 allowed us to assume that the colour schemes as provided in the colour proposal are suggested by the municipality office whenever the façade refurbishment is performed. However, the analyses of the colours of the facades in late 2018 revealed that only some of the buildings have been renovated since 2006 and only some of the renovated facades were repainted using colours indicated by public officials from the municipality office<sup>18</sup>. While asked about this issue, the public official explained that there has been no town architect office in Dolný Kubín for years and that they do not have enough authority to execute the colours proposed in the colour proposal<sup>19</sup> (Fig. 10).

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<sup>18</sup> Limited access to the document did not allow us to estimate the exact number of renovations.

<sup>19</sup> The public official did not reveal any plans to make the document compulsory by the town council.



Fig. 10. West part of the main square Námestie P.O. Hviezdoslava in Dolný Kubín in the present day partially renovated in accordance to the 2006 colour proposal (photo by K. Białoblocka, 2018)

## 5. Conclusions

Investigations of attempts of colour coordination in architecture and urban planning in Poland and in Slovakia revealed four examples of such actions undertaken in representative historical areas in Slovakia : two examples of colour planning for the old towns of Bratislava and Banská Štiavnica, and two examples of colour planning for small-scale locations: the main squares in Dolný Kubín and Šahy. Those case studies were analysed and compared with one case from Poland – colour planning for the Market Square in Wrocław<sup>20</sup>.

All of the examined cases were structured in a similar way – they were not meant to act as more or less flexible guidelines that would provide a choice from the established range of colours, but they were prepared as complex designs that provided exact information on colours to be executed on each building. In this matter, no significant differences were spotted in the approach towards colour planning in Poland and Slovakia.

In regard to the reasons for the introduction of colour proposals, the following reasons were indicated by the interviewed public officials and designers: a feeling of overwhelming colourfulness, lack of connections between the colours used and local traditions, lack of

<sup>20</sup> Colour planning for other historical centres in Poland are under examination.

respect towards cultural heritage (traditional colours), the wish to improve the area, the wish to emphasise the significance of the area, the need to provide spatial harmony within the area.

In regard to the design methodology, the conducted interviews indicated that in some cases the examined designs were a result of the designers own research experience and ideas (Wrocław, Šahy, Dolný Kubín), whereas in other cases, paint research served as a base for a choice of colours (Bratislava, Banská Štiavnica)<sup>21</sup>.

Regarding the implementation process, four colour proposals were implemented to some extent at the time of creation (Wrocław, Bratislava, Banská Štiavnica, Dolný Kubín); two colour proposals are still being consulted (Banská Štiavnica, Dolný Kubín); and only one colour proposal has never been implemented (Šahy). In regard to the profits the colour plans have brought, the interviewed designers and public officials indicated the following: better aesthetics within the area, general improvement of the place and, salvation of the traditional image of the place. During interviews, only one opposing voice appeared indicating that some sort of artificiality in the colour proposal had been created.

The interviews indicated that the public officials' strong belief in profits that colour planning may bring, resulted in creating colour proposals (Bratislava, Banská Štiavnica, Dolný Kubín, Šahy), whereas a lack of conviction towards colour planning among public officials prevented either their implementation or keeping them in use (Wrocław, Bratislava). Generally speaking, it appears that the existence of colour planning is strongly related to the awareness of the power and importance of colour and depends on the presence of such awareness at the local municipality and conservation offices. Again, in this matter, no difference was seen between Poland and in Slovakia.

Additionally, the interviews also revealed that in two cases the implementation process was easier to proceed with due to the then political system and state ownership, but it was not in position to allow the implementation of the whole colour proposal – the financial constraints and lack of interest from both the public officials and the owners' side prevented the implementation of the whole colour plan (Wrocław, Bratislava). The other problem was that unsuccessful implementation could also be the result of the lack of coordination among various offices that participate in renovations – from one side public officials indicated a lack of authority on executing a certain colour change, at the same time no public official interviewed indicated the need or plan to make the colour plan compulsory by the municipal office's decision (Dolný Kubín, Šahy)<sup>22</sup>.

Currently, instead of colour proposals that would not only keep local traditions, but also unify the space, efforts are instead concentrated on reconstructing historical colours. This is the approach taken in all the examined cases in Poland and Slovakia that are protected areas (Wrocław, Bratislava, Banská Štiavnica and Šahy). Some of the interviewed public officials admitted that the guidelines on colour would help them in their every day work with protected areas but no specific plans to achieve this goal were indicated, or even suggested.

<sup>21</sup> The available colour designs only allow us to increase our knowledge of colours used but the limited access to the designers prevented us from detecting what ideas and inspirations lay behind each colour plan.

<sup>22</sup> Especially the case of Bratislava allow to assume that both the strong leadership and the awareness of colour and its influence on human beings may help to provide guidelines on colour in the built environment.

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