Abstract

This diploma is an exploration of the field of building heritage and re-use through the case of the Laboratory building at Ullevål Hospital. The thesis questions the validity of the current listing criteria, thereby challenging the predominant strategy of exterior preservation, the most common form of heritage legislation. I have aimed to shed light on the many values of the Laboratory building, both physical and non-physical, and to find alternative preservation strategies to protect these values. Seven experiments show the potential transformation outcomes of different listing criteria and illustrate the arising dilemmas when a structure like the Laboratory building is listed.

In the first stage of the project, I studied the building and its history through original drawing material and other types of archival material, inspections on site with the general manager, and in conversation with Øyvind Almaas, one of the architects of the building. In addition to the listing document, I studied literature of preservation and heritage practice to acquire an overview of the field. Two texts in particular have been important for this project: "Style or Substance. What are we trying to conserve" by Alan Powers[1] and "Narrativt vern" ("Narrative preservation") by Karl Otto Ellefsen.[2] Powers points at an interesting difference between essence and substance when it comes to listing, simply explained as the idea of a given building versus its physical mass. Ellefsen describes how an exterior preservation strategy reduces a listed building into an anecdotal ingredient in a given environment, but that the very soul of a building and important values may in effect be lost. These two themes are in my opinion central to how the Laboratory building can be interpreted and developed as a cultural heritage item.

In the second phase of the project, I conducted seven experiments of different preservation strategies through drawing, illustration and model work. In the first experiment the consequences of the current listing criteria were tested. In the next six experiments I identified values within the Laboratory building worthy of preservation. Each value was treated independently from the others which led to six new value-based preservation strategies, and in effect, six different possibilities for transformation. Each strategy led to a new façade proposal, challenging the

[1] Powers, *Preserving post-war heritage*, p.7

[2] Ellefsen, Karl Otto. "Narrativt vern" *Arkitektur N,* 01 (forlag) 2008, p.52-59

currently listed curtain wall. The six new preservation strategies were then combined in a final collage model.

The goal of preservation today is normally preservation through use – that is at least a widespread management ideal. As a response to the listing proposal for Ullevål Hospital, the municipality of Oslo wanted the interiors excluded from the listing document, as they worried it would put too many constraints on future use.[3] But in the case of the Laboratory building it may just be the listing of the badly performing curtain wall that hinders many possibilities for adaptive re-use. The existing curtain wall is not performing well in terms of thermal capacity, and the sun shading is both blocking light on overcast days and not shading sufficiently on sunny days. My findings also suggest that important values may be lost in future transformation projects with the current listing criteria, and that there are many values, other than the exterior, inherent in the structure also worthy of preservation. I have identified six such values:
1. The laboratory, 2. The public good, 3. The service floors, 4. Flexibility, 5. The construction and 6. The open plan and the system which enables it.
The current listing criteria are meant to protect important values, but my studies suggest that a listing of the exterior is not necessarily doing so. The Laboratory building is a module-based building in which the most important design principle has been the functionality within the structure. Perhaps the most characteristic part of the structure are the girder trusses which define the service floors above each operational floor. All service installations are placed here, which frees up the entire operational plan and ensures the flexibility needed for laboratory activities. The girder trusses are in between the two facades, and hence not protected by the current listing criteria. A listing of the exterior of a building is defined by Ellefsen as "narrative preservation". In my diploma thesis the six new strategies I have described may be defined as "program based" (The laboratory), "symbolical" (The public good), "function based" (The service floors), "essential" (Flexibility), "constructive" (The construction) and "intention-based preservation" (The open plan and the system which enables it).

The question that arose after conducting the experiments was: Is it possible to preserve several identified values in one project? In a final collage model, the six new preservation strategies were

[3] https://www.riksantikvaren.no/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/vedtaksbrev_kap2.pdf

combined to form a physical no-compromise hypothesis of this combination of preservation strategies. The model suggests that a transformation of the Laboratory building will perhaps require compromises or a curation of values to be preserved.

My study has revealed that there are many values worthy of preservation in the Laboratory building beyond the exterior. I have concluded that preservation strategies of both physical and non-physical values are conceivable, and that the many inherent values of the Laboratory building can be preserved in future transformations, although probably not all in one project. A conscious wording of listing criteria is needed to ensure preservation of selected values. The identification of values which have led to different possibilities for transformation are specific for the Laboratory building in this project. But the method of value-based preservation strategies is applicable to other cases.