



3<sup>rd</sup> International Scientific Conference

## ARCHITECTURE OF LOCAL CULTURES OF THE BORDERLAND

**The Sacred – The Profane – The Sacred**  
**Conversions and Reconversions of Sacred Architecture and Art**  
**XX – XXI cc.**



**organizer:**

International Union of Architects UIA Work Programme "Spiritual Places"  
Unit for Architecture of Local Cultures Faculty of Architecture of Białystok University of Technology

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Sacral buildings changed purpose of use dilemma has been issued in the history for ages. It is also relevant today but now it appears in a more massive scale and it is still growing in its intensity.

Formerly it was the consequence of an ideological, political, military, national, social and ethnic struggle. It testified about exclusiveness of various religions. It was the result of religious activities and often a struggle with religion, different mission actions, proselytism and even religious wars. These were not sporadic cases. They were preceded by acts of permanent and continuous intolerance, ignorance and sometimes aggression. Today, more often it is the result of progressive secularization of life in the world and the depreciation of the religion as a source of value creation in human life and a testimony of his cultural heritage. Culture departs from worship, from which it is derived. It becomes alienated.

The objects of worship of one religion are not only converted into objects of different religions. Today they cease to be objects of worship at all. Regardless of the causes of such incidents and their ethical overtones, it becomes a global spreading phenomenon.

It is increasingly common that abandoned or economically inefficient temples are adapted to hotels, restaurants, apartments, shops, and even workshops, garages and entertainment places with services of a dubious reputation (brothels) and even public toilets. Today they are transformed into sophisticated phantoms, without a religious spirit larvae-mask. To this day they stand sometimes abandoned, ruined, desecrated. They cry for mercy.

Complete conversion of the sacral role of the object into a secular or even profane one, is a dangerous phenomenon as it affects the essence of culture, threatens its fundamental values, which have always been represented by it: truth, goodness and beauty.

So maybe conversions of temples, even though they seem to be morally "dubious", in a broader perspective are necessary? If it saves them from a fall, annihilation and desecration? Especially since they may also be a pretext for mutual understanding and rapprochement of the Churches and their religions, their encounter and dialogue. Hopefully this dialogue will not last forever and may this meeting be that postulated by all *"meeting in truth and love."*

**Warszawa – Białystok – Supraśl**

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