

Reflections on heritage to be preserved and the resources required

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Reflections on heritage to be preserved and the resources required

[The present paper is based on the various drafts that have been discussed by members of ICOMOS CIF in 2011. The aim of this paper is to reflect on the resource requirements to meet the conservation challenges regarding the current broad definition of heritage.]

FOREWORD

The concept of heritage has been subject to constant evolution particularly in the second half of the 20th century and early 21st century. At the time of the Venice Charter in 1964, emphasis was given to monuments and sites though also referring to their urban or rural setting ‘in which is found the evidence of a particular civilisation, a significant development or an historic event’ (article 1). A new phase in the development emerged in the mid 1970s with the definition of ‘integrated conservation’ in the Council of Europe charter and Amsterdam Declaration of 1975, complemented by the UNESCO Recommendation concerning historic areas, in 1976, and the ICOMOS Charter on historic towns, in 1987. The developments in the 1990s introduced the notion of ‘cultural landscape’, defined more or less at the same time by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee (1992/94) and by the Council of Europe (1995). This was further complemented by ICOMOS drawing attention to vernacular heritage and historic timber structures (1999).

With the ratification of the World Heritage Convention by Japan, the question of authenticity was discussed in an expert meeting in Nara, in 1994. The same meeting brought out the issues of cultural diversity and heritage diversity. Consequently, UNESCO adopted the Universal Declaration of Cultural Diversity (2001), the Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003), and the Convention of Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005). In 2000, the Council of Europe adopted the European Landscape Convention, and in 2005 the Faro Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, which offered a comprehensive definition for cultural heritage, as well as introducing the concept of heritage community. In the same year, ICOMOS adopted the Xi’an Declaration on the Conservation of the Setting of Heritage. To these can be added the different developments regarding the protection of natural environment, and the environmentally sustainable development, and in 2011, UNESCO is about to introduce the new notion of Historic Urban Landscape, HUL.

As a result of the above evolution, the notion of heritage can be potentially associated with the entire built and natural environment. Consequently, it must be the society as a whole to take principal responsibility for this heritage. The heritage should be perceived as a resource, and its conservation a requirement for good quality of life rather than burden.

Another development that has taken place since the 1960s concerns the broadening of the international community. Thanks to the impact of international organizations, such as ICOMOS, ICCROM and the World Heritage Committee, under the umbrella of UNESCO, an increasing number of countries have participated in the debate regarding the protection and conservation of heritage resources, cultural and natural. Indeed, these countries together form the world community for heritage. While the participating countries have had a substantial

increase, it should be noted however that the above definitions still tend to remain the knowledge of a relatively limited group of people. Indeed, there is often a gap between the ‘international community’ and the local communities, which is not always easy to fill. Consequently, there is need for active awareness raising and capacity development of the population at large as well as the various professional and technical categories that should be involved in the process of protecting and conserving heritage resources.

The present paper complements and extends the ICOMOS CIF Guidelines on Education and Training in the Conservation of Monuments, Ensembles and Sites of 1993. It is addressed, in the first place, to the members of ICOMOS, inviting them to diffuse the messages therein to the broader international community of heritage conservationists and beyond. A heritage has had, and continues to have, reason to exist if it has made and continues to make part, of the customs of life of humankind. Conservation specialists are instrumental for the conservation process, while the ultimate responsibility lies with the society as a whole. Indeed, humanity is the first stakeholder in defining heritage and taking responsibility for its conservation. Starting from the suggestion that the overall responsibility for safeguarding heritage lies mainly with the population, the heritage community as defined by the Faro Convention, this document examines the different types of actions needed for the diverse forms of heritage, and who should be involved at the different stages of the process. Consequently, the aim is capacity development for the heritage community, including the different stakeholders to be involved.

THE BUILT HERITAGE RESOURCE

Definition of Territory

The European Landscape Convention notes that landscape refers to an area ‘as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors’. Consequently, a particular territory may be subject to layers of diverse perceptions by different groups of people. The notion of ‘cultural landscape’, on the other hand, is the result of interaction between human society and nature over time, and consequently has archaeological character, i.e. layers of history that can be read in the territory. The notion of landscape and the notion of cultural landscape can thus be understood as complementary, identifying different qualities of the territory. In the World Heritage context, cultural landscape has been defined as: designed, organically grown, or associative. These different types of definitions have consequences both on the identification of the cultural landscape area and its planning and management. These concepts may not necessarily cover the entire territory but only relevant parts of it.

The normal functioning of society extends to the entire territories of particular communities. Considering that the recognition of certain parts of such territory as ‘landscape’ or as ‘cultural landscape’ are the result of learning and awareness processes and can vary over time, it is necessary to guarantee planning and management in the entire territory in order to avoid possible omissions of valences not recognized today. Indeed, it is the planning process itself, if properly undertaken, which can and should contribute to the more precise definition of the qualities of the territory, and its eventual recognition as landscape and/or cultural landscape. As in the case of the World Heritage, where there is an approved protected area and a buffer zone, there is territory around cultural landscape areas that are intrinsically related and relevant to the population. The surrounding area forms the setting of the recognized heritage

resources and also contributes to their significance.

Territory to Conserve

The heritage resources that a community has identified and associated with specific values form part of the capital investment of the society over time, intellectual in terms of design and innovation, and economic in terms of the material investment. The resulting historicized environment can be subject to different types of forces that may lead to stagnation and decline, or growth and transformation. It is the task of the society to assume the responsibility of its safeguarding. The aim of conservation and safeguarding measures is to guarantee that those qualities that have been identified by the community as heritage are not lost in the process. Such measures are the result of decision-making process, which should be based on the knowledge and understanding of the quality and specificity of heritage resources and the causes and impact of forces of development.

The causes of deterioration in relation to individual structures, monuments, historic buildings and objects can be subject to intrinsic causes of deterioration, associated with the origin and nature of the built structures, their material and structural character, subject also to geo-topographical and climatic position/situation, as well as with extrinsic causes that derive from external sources: natural agents causing prolonged action (such as weathering, ground movements, rising damp), or occasional action due to natural hazards (such as earthquakes, floods, landslides), as well as human action (such as fire, wilful destruction, incompatible use, and neglect).

In the case of larger ensembles and the built environment in general, including historic towns and villages, historic urban landscapes, or cultural landscapes, such causes of deterioration are multiplied in addition to the heritage resources being subject to various planning and management challenges that may result in environmental degradation and the diminution or loss of heritage qualities. The challenges may be articulated in those related to the sustainable planning and management of the heritage environment, human resources management, and institutional and legal frameworks.

The target groups and stakeholders that need to be involved in building up the capability to take proper care of the heritage involve the civil society in general, and the local community in particular, in concert with the relevant legal, administrative, institutional and professional resources according to the roles and responsibilities of each. The response mechanisms should be accountable and transparent, based on the ethical principles and the methodologies of restoration and integrated conservation. The practices should demonstrate a positive and tangible impact on improving the living environment of people. They should be based on partnerships between the public, private and civil society sectors, and should be socially, economically and environmentally sustainable.

Depending on the above characteristics and specificity, one can undertake conservation work directly on heritage areas, as well as indirectly, by acting on the environment that encompasses it. Consequently, a number of different specialists need to be involved in the different tasks. While the interventions of conservation and functional adjustment require distinct categories of specialists (e.g. conservators and engineers), the protection and continuous maintenance are normally the responsibility of the community itself, both directly, once acquired the appropriate indications, and indirectly, implying appropriate use and actions that do not cause degradation or environmental pollution.

Actions involving works aiming at more or less complete recovery of lost aspects of heritage (restoration, renovation, rehabilitation, etc.) require technical and professional categories who

must have theoretical and practical qualification in schools offering specialist training, in addition to basic education. To start with, the priority actions that concern all of the historical heritage, include safeguarding by monitoring the state of conservation and use, identifying any intrinsic and extrinsic causes of deterioration, and therefore prevention with a targeted and scheduled maintenance. The specialists involved in this part of conservation process include typically: recorders and photographers, laboratory analysts, structural engineers, climatologists, botanists, ecologists, and agronomists. The specialists involved more specifically in prevention include architects, structural engineers, traditional crafts, technicians for utilities and specialists for parks and green areas.

Where more radical or specialized recovery actions are needed, involving integrated conservation, in addition to the above mentioned specialists, there is generally need for historians, archaeologists, conservators and the producers of traditional and modern materials. Technological adjustments needed to ensure the use and modern comfort requirements, involve designers for utilities, surveyors, engineers and installers, who however before being involved will need to have appropriate qualification, depending on the type of heritage and required intervention. The existing educational programs for these disciplines do not normally provide sufficient guidance on how to operate on historical heritage. For this purpose, specialized training courses will need to be based on systematic testing treatments, and the documentation of case studies of appropriate interventions.

Territory to Re-Qualify or to Reconvert

In parts of the territory, where the modern expansions and interventions are now well-established and therefore acceptable, generally speaking, there may only be need for functional and architectural requalification through urban and landscape projects so as to guarantee integration with the recognized part of historical heritage. The professional categories involved would include urban planners, architects, civil engineers, technicians for traffic and urban infrastructures, landscape architects, agronomists, etc.

In the parts of the territory that are affected by recent or past incompatible or damaging interventions, which have altered if not even destroyed the countryside, causing environmental hazards, there is need for a radical remediation, restoration or conversion with respect of the pre-existing conditions. Operators to be involved would include those who have to verify the degree of incompatibility and provide remedial alternatives, as well as those who must intervene progressively over time. An important role could have the archaeologists, historians and environmentalists considering their knowledge of the historical conditions of cultural legacy, to be resumed as a general scope for the project design.

Unaffected Territory

Parts of the territory, whether rural or forest areas, both making potentially part of a landscape or cultural landscape and its surroundings, must be commensurate to their economic and social use in balance with the other parts, especially with those to be conserved or consolidated. Any new interventions or urban growth and development should take into account environmental sustainability and be based on impact assessments. This should be a compulsory subject for all forms of civil education and school education of the population. Prior to any intervention, it will be necessary to demonstrate its degree of economic and social compatibility with the existing condition in the territory, and how one can intervene in a balanced way.

Consequently, the first action of conservation for the population must start from a different

way of relating with one's surroundings.

CONSERVATION ACTIONS

Rather than formulate guidelines for the education of the population and the necessary vocational training experts to whom to entrust the conservation work, it is considered more appropriate to indicate the goals that you want to achieve in conservation. Therefore, it is better to start from the examination of operations that are considered necessary and see what is required and appropriate. In the conservation process, there are two parameters to be met: prolong the lifetime in the most healthy and authentic condition possible for what we have inherited, and to allow its adaptation to the needs of contemporary life, without foreclosing future actions.

A more in-depth knowledge of what the various types of conservation mean in practice must lead to a critical reflection on certain statements of principle, while it is important that the dialogue between conservators and innovators find points of convergence. On the one extreme, there may be the aims of archaeological and other museumification, on the other there may be innovation of everything in the name of progress.

A reflection is therefore needed on many humanistic schools of restoration as well as schools of architecture!

Conservation of the architectural heritage involves a whole range of constructive interventions, and each of these requires specific professional skills and techniques. Furthermore, depending on the regional and cultural context, even the specialist qualifications may vary. Nevertheless, the general criteria of intervention should be based on the same methodology for a heritage from old to modern or from monumental to more ordinary. What varies are the ways and the uses of materials, considering that systems of construction and consistencies may differ. The categories of intervention range from ordinary or extraordinary maintenance, to integrated conservation based on philological and functional analyses, involving restoration for the monumental heritage, recovery of typology for the built fabric, and technological adjustment and eventual replacement when required.

Maintenance

The care of heritage normally requires both local craft, experts in the use of traditional techniques and materials, and technicians for maintenance, able to adopt conservative therapies and also innovative materials. These technicians are new professions introduced from the trades, and must be qualified through appropriate training. Maintenance of the recent heritage can be entrusted to the construction trade, provided that it operates respecting traditional techniques and materials of existing artefacts. Maintenance, however, must be based on advance planning, in order to identify correct and most appropriate actions. The project should be entrusted to a graduate or a professional restorer.

Integrated conservation

Conservation should focus on the principle of integrated conservation, aimed at the recovery of the historical architectural (architectural recovery) and the integration of what is functional for a comfortable modern use (functional adjustment).

Architectural conservation needs to be based on philological and historical analysis of the

heritage concerned, including the collection of necessary documentation identifying changes over time. It will also require destructive and non-destructive surveys in order to assess the state of conservation. Based on this analyses, the first draft project should determine the type and delimitation of intervention to be proposed for physical recovery. In parallel, concerning functional adjustment, there is need to plan for utilities, which are then integrated into the project. The result is an executive project, forming a reference for initiating the work site. During the ongoing work, however, it may be necessary to make variations. For this reason, the definitive conservation project will only be complete at the conclusion of the work.

Considering that the implementation of this type of intervention requires the involvement of different competences, it is necessary to immediately work for a multidisciplinary team, even at the stage of research and planning, involving those responsible for research, design and implementation. The phase of documentation and analysis requires specialists, such as historians, laboratory researchers, and structural engineers. The design work instead involves architects and engineers, on the one hand, engineers and technicians specialized in utilities, etc. on the other. The execution of the above project needs above all specialized craftsmen, workers of qualified contractors, site managers, installers.

While many professional and technical categories in architectural conservation work have long been involved in this type of specialization and have acquired specific knowledge about the criteria of conservation, the technicians required to undertake functional improvement have often not yet been adequately involved. It will be necessary to catch up with the delay because often good conservation work may be compromised by poor execution of utilities.

Restoration

Restoration is normally applied on what is considered monumental heritage, where the historical and artistic values can prevail over functional. The professional categories involved are those with advanced qualification, such as conservation architects, curators, historians, restorers. In case, in practice, certain interventions would include demolition, renovation or reconstruction, these should be undertaken by traditional craftspersons, specialized firms, or conservation technicians.

Paradoxically this type of heritage, recognized for the values it represents, almost never retains the uses for which it was originally conceived, and is now often intended for public use, museums or institutional venues. In reality, this type of use often results in logistical intrusions, far more invasive and disruptive.

Recovery of Typology

Recovery of typology implies architectural re-composition, tending to retrieve historical parts and rebuild what was necessary to reconcile the typology of lost parts of the historic fabric. The recovery of typology concerns normally a serial type of architecture and urban fabric, which has suffered from inappropriate structural changes and uses over time, while still preserving many of its historical elements. The professional and technical categories required for this type of work include architects, engineers, skilled craftspersons and technicians qualified in the use of traditional and modern materials, technicians for utilities, etc.

Urban Fabric and Green Spaces

The maintenance of the urban fabric and green areas involves continuously many

professional and technical categories. Therefore, their presence must be programmed in time. While the conservation of historic building stock normally is part of heritage conservation, the recovery of roads and historic open spaces is part of general interventions, requiring traditional and innovative planning. Also in this case the professional and technical categories are diversified, according to who should deal with the physical preservation of urbanised land and those who install utilities and infrastructure necessary for the functioning of the city.

The conservation of open surfaces, once identified the historical parameters of reference and the estimate of most congenial accommodation, needs artisans qualified in street paving and gardeners. Their involvement can be programmed and operated periodically in relation to the use of roads and seasonality of vegetation.

In the conservation of historic urban areas, functional aspects are important. These include technological infrastructures, such as the network of sewers, public lighting, energy supply to residents, etc. In the past, such utilities were not always taken into consideration due to problems raised in architectural and urban planning. These infrastructures are now supported and maintained by technicians who work in the logic of the modern town planning. It is therefore necessary that their training should include operation in historical context. It will be necessary to review the use of artefacts and more specific systems of installation of utilities.

Not-built territory

The territory outside the built-up areas of historic interest or with consolidated fabric, but related to it in its historical development, should be considered as a landscape to be protected. The conservation of this territory is linked to seasonal cycles and agricultural or forestry production. Specialists involved in protection and recovery can be the same as those operating in agriculture or forestry, agronomists, landscapers, plumbers and environmentalists. It should be remembered that the notion of cultural landscape is an intellectual definition, which leads to the consideration of that what for a peasant is the land where he works (Bruckhart). For this reason it is necessary to ensure a range of crops allowing the preservation of the environment, as well as its profitability.

SOME DEFINITIONS

Heritage/inheritance

Heritage or inheritance refers to tangible and/or intangible resources inherited from the past. Such resources in their diverse forms and aspects can be considered heritage so far as they are recognized as such by the community as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions. The natural aspects of heritage environment include biodiversity and geo-diversity. The layers of perception by the community identify the ensemble of the heritage resources. A heritage community consists of people who value specific aspects of heritage which they wish, within the framework of public and/or private action, to sustain and transmit to future generations.

Heritage Management

Culturally and environmentally sustainable management of Heritage Resources is understood as the vocation and practice of conserving and managing resources identified by society as

heritage in their social, cultural, economic and environmental setting.

Capacity Development/Capacity Building

Capacity development / capacity building in relation to safeguarding heritage resources is understood as the process of developing the capability of communities and related institutions to take care of the relevant heritage. This is a continuing long-term process involving all stakeholders.