

ICCROM/UNESCO World Heritage workshop Vicenza 11-12 November 2002.**Monitoring Heritage Properties : Presentation by Flemming Aalund, architect MAA, Phd.**

Flemming Aalund, is a practicing architect based in Copenhagen specialized in restoration of historic buildings and cultural heritage preservation.

Monitoring heritage values in the environment.**Abstract.**

After 30 years of operation the World Heritage Convention has become an important instrument for international co-operation. Looking at the number of signatories totalling 175 the WH Convention is the most successful intergovernmental UNESCO agreement ever. Most important, the agreement has reached on a definition that the cultural heritage belongs to all people and that nations have a responsibility to protect and care for the natural and cultural heritage on their territory.

The World Heritage List has become an important instrument of the World Heritage Convention, and much effort has been invested to ensure protection of these outstanding monuments and sites as testimonies of major cultural achievements in the history of mankind. Less consideration is being paid to the stipulation that each State Party has the duty to ensure that effective and active measures are taken for the protection, conservation and presentation of heritage properties within its own territory (art. 5). Special problems relate to the preservation of cultural heritage in countries, where the economic resources are limited and basic needs of the population are first priority, and it is worth emphasising the duty of the international community as a whole to co-operate.

The rapid change of the physical environment under the influence of globalisation is both a challenge and a threat. In this situation of unprecedented pace the World Heritage Convention may serve as an instrument to raise more public awareness about heritage values as a quality in the environment and to support the national endeavours for preserving this heritage. Heritage preservation has to be incorporated as an integral part of physical planning objectives with special attention to preservation of the cultural and natural environment; and there is a special need of constant monitoring to avoid irreplaceable damage.

Introduction.

In preparation for the workshop 'Monitoring World Heritage' I have again read through the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage as well as the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention.

In particular I have noticed the dual obligations of each state party to the Convention at a national and an international level. At the national level each member state has a duty to adopt a general policy that will ensure an appropriate documentation and preservation of the cultural and natural heritage situated on its territory, as well as setting up appropriate training and encouraging research in this field (as specified under section II, article 4 -6). International co-operation relates especially to the nomination of

sites for the World Heritage List and to maintain active co-operation with the World Heritage Committee with regard to the preservation of these outstanding monuments and sites (as stipulated under section III, article 11-13).

The language generally is direct and easily comprehensible, but I have some difficulties in defining where the Convention text refers to the heritage at large, and where it refers exclusively to cultural heritage included in the World Heritage List. For example, Article 6, para.1 and 3 refer to national duty towards cultural heritage as defined in article. 1 and 2, providing a general definition of cultural heritage, whereas article 2 of this article refers especially to heritage qualified for inclusion in the WH List. Furthermore, article 7 stipulates that it is the duty of the international community as a whole to co-operate, but I do feel that the text is blurred, whether this duty is restricted to what is considered 'World Heritage' only, or whether it also includes cultural heritage properties in a broader national context.

When reached to art.12 I had to read the text twice, and quote: *'The fact that a property belonging to the cultural or natural heritage has not been included in either the two lists mentioned in paragraphs 2 and 4 or Article 11 shall in no way be construed to mean that it does not have an outstanding universal value for purposes other than those resulting from inclusion in these lists'*.

In a more simple language I believe the meaning is that a natural or cultural property may be of outstanding universal value, even if it is not included in the WHL.

By signing the World Heritage Convention a country also pledges to protect the whole of its national heritage, whether or not it is recognised as World Heritage. However, the identification of the national heritage often concentrate on the listing of monumental structures, drawing attention towards the exceptional at the expense of the ordinary. Often people are not aware of the heritage that forms part of their immediate environment. It may serve the purpose, if the perception of the World Heritage Convention moves away from the elitist approach often associated with the few outstanding monuments included in the World Heritage List and focus more on the preservation of heritage assets at large. Monitoring in this broader perspective would then include to report on how national policies fulfil the obligations towards the preservation of heritage values in the environment and how the national policy addresses heritage problems generally, including the protection of architectural heritage as an essential town and country planning objective.

It should be noted that the Provisional Revision of the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (July 2002) does include a special Format for the Periodic reporting on the application of the WHC and the Explanatory Notes do emphasise on the national duties, including the need to establish national inventories and to report on the adoption of policies that aim to give the cultural and natural heritage a function in the life of the community (section 1.3). Also Mr. Bouchenaki at the WH Bureau Report 26th session this year, para 1.7, is referring to the changes decided at Cairns 2000 by stating that.. 'the laws and management regimes applied for World Heritage sites is intended to serve as models of good practice to enhance the protection of cultural and natural heritage of national and of local importance and the current reform of the Convention enables the Committee to focus more on strategic issues to guide and reinforce the implementation.

I do find this change of approach very promising and suggest that these issues being incorporated directly into the text of the Operational Guidelines. I may briefly elaborate more on these issues:

The general trend in heritage conservation during the last 30 years (simultaneously with the lifetime of the WHC) has been characterised by a shift of focus from the conservation of the monumental heritage towards a community based local conservation. The role of the local people with their indigenous skills to save, maintain and revitalise their cultural properties is now acknowledged as a vital element of sustainable development, especially in developing countries, where the feeling of cultural identity help strengthen self esteem in the confusion of globalisation. This

gradual value change (change of paradigm) has reached to an ultimate conclusion in the formulation of UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (1). The reform of the WH Convention should reflect these points of view and reach to a better conformity between the related Conventions and Declarations.

Assessment of heritage values in the environment:

Monitoring requires a common reference, which to some extent is provided by the Operational Guidelines emphasising on the 'test of authenticity' - with intrinsic reference to the Venice Charter concerning reconstruction, which is only acceptable, if it is carried out on the basis of complete and detailed documentation on the original and to no extent on conjecture. This formulation originate from the fourth session of the WH Committee meeting in Paris 1980, but still there is a distinct cultural difference, when it comes to realities in different parts of the world. By the early 1990s The World Heritage Centre initiated a re-examination of the changing concepts of authenticity and integrity, concluded by the Nara conference in 1994 with the formulation of the Nara Document on Authenticity. (2).

The present workshop on Monitoring World Heritage can be considered as a continuation of this debate, which will anyhow continue, as monitoring of any cultural assets need to establish a common reference. We have reached to a general concept of appreciating cultural diversity and emphasising on sustainability, including a concern to avoid World Heritage Sites being turned into major tourist attractions and exploited beyond their bearing capacity (3). I feel that we have reached to a general understanding of the concept of authenticity that bridges the perception in different cultures. With the point of departure in the Venice Charter the treatment of historic monuments and individual buildings have a common reference. But dealing with more anonymous settlements and urban areas, there are highly varying concepts of what heritage values really mean, and what constitute the real character and feeling of a cultural environment. Not to mention the impossible task of preserving authentic values that constitute immaterial culture.

Appreciation and knowledge of the heritage assets in the environment is therefore a prerequisite to any preservation effort. Surveys and critical environmental assessments of cultural and architectural significance therefore need to define the site specific features as they have evolved in time. The intrinsic qualities of the heritage resource refer to the quality of the materials, the workmanship, the design and the relation to the setting. With a special view to the World Heritage Convention authenticity of the heritage resource requires special attention in a society undergoing rapid change. Modern development often ignores the values of the existing ecological and traditional cultural context. Individuals may realise only a small fraction of this complexity and tend to focus on the parts, which have a special interest and the perception may be influenced by personal taste full of assumptions and prejudices. Local people of course have an intimate knowledge of their native place, where they live and work, but a professional approach is needed in order to fully comprehend and prescribe the topographical, historic and architectural features, which make up the whole character of the place. And this evaluation can best be made in dialog and through a multidisciplinary approach.

The delicate concept of authenticity

Ethics in restoration and preservation of built heritage will continue to be a matter of discussion. There will always be room for different interpretation of individual sites and monuments. The Venice Charter still maintain the overall authority concerning the principles of restoration, although it has been generally acknowledged that the recommendations were mainly drafted on basis of European traditions. The subsequent reviews, especially the Nara Conference in 1994, provided a more varied view on these principles giving room for a different interpretation with more emphasis on the tradition

of craftsmanship and the need to maintain skills and knowledge related to the old building techniques and materials. The subsequent discussions during the intermediate time has been focussing on intangible cultural heritage values, which need to be included as a heritage resource in line with the monumental architecture previously in focus. However, the concept of authenticity is one of the major pre-requisites for inclusion of monuments and sites on the WHL.

From my own experience evaluating sites and monuments especially in the Arab World, I have found some difficulty to adhere to the same basic understanding of the underlying concepts of authenticity. For several reasons the feeling of age and inherent qualities of patina in the weathered and worn original materials are not generally appreciated in the same way as the feeling for the romantic has grown in Europe since Ruskin wrote his '*Stones of Venice*'. Similar praises of the cultural environment with all the charm provided to a place, which have maintained the original feeling of age as illustrated in the sensitive drawings by Alfred Parsons for example, of the 'climbers' in the wild grown garden, would probably not have the same appeal elsewhere (4). Personally, the urge to make a watercolour sketch drawing is a test of authenticity at a specific place. If the site has been modernised and changed without keeping its inherent qualities, I can find the site impressive or admire its perfection or whatever the quality might be, but it cannot evoke this intimate atmosphere of beauty, which can only be transmitted from an environment that has kept the authentic values in craftsmanship and materials and thereby maintaining the special feeling of the place.

Degradation of the physical environment

Social degradation and erosion of city life has become a serious problem of so many modern cities, only to be increased with globalisation and by the growing urbanisation throughout the world. Rapid development has led to rapid physical expansion, and mainly uncontrolled, this physical development is spoiling unique cultural and visual environments. There are different scenarios depending on the local situation. In the large South East Asian metropolises alignment of new highways, some of which are elevated, disregard and bisect traditional local communities and induce more roads and more development. As a result the general environment is deteriorating, making it less attractive to live in the former agreeable environment and the individuals can do very little about it. Along with the disappearance of the traditional economy and way of life the former local communities dissolve, leaving the historic environments even more prone to physical degradation and starting a vicious circle that will destroy the historic environment eventually.

This is not a new phenomenon, but the physical degradation has accelerated and all sorts of social problems increase. Neglect and misuse of the original fabric in combination with speculation in land and real estate values too often transform and destroy unique historic urban areas. Pollution and vehicular traffic are other factors badly affecting historic city areas. Whatever the reason, irreplaceable cultural assets are disappearing before people even become aware, what they are about to lose. And it is important to have in mind, that not all of these cultural heritage values are known in advance or appreciated as environmental assets that enhance the quality of life.

Jane Jacob's famous book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (5) has produced a marked change in the debate over urban renewal and the future of cities. In the new foreword to the 1993 reprint she makes a reference to the city as an ecosystem composed of physical-economic-ethical processes. The two sorts of ecosystems - one created by nature, the other by human beings - have fundamental principles in common, both requiring much diversity to sustain themselves. This comparison is interesting also in view of the World Heritage Convention, which combines the aspects of natural and cultural preservation with the quest for maintaining diversity.

This holistic approach was actually a virtue by one of the pioneers of physical planning, the venerated Patric Geddes (1854-1932), who introduced the idea and use of regional survey - the stocktaking of an area before preparation of change. It is notable

and thought provoking that he had completed a career as professor in botany and zoology before turning to physical planning and became involved in the formulation of the first British physical planning legislation in 1909. With a professional background in natural science he perfectly understood the intimate inter relationship between all ecological factors, which are sustaining life (6). He later became responsible for the formulation of a number of town plans in Scotland and overseas in which he realised his humanistic ideals. Considering the city as a living organism his planning strategies were based on a 'diagnostic survey' and a 'conservative surgery'. Geddes invented the term 'conurbation' to highlight the process of urbanisation in industrial areas, which swallowed up the individual identity of former settlements. The common practise of 'blanket destruction' was condemned and he expressed severe criticism towards the modern town planning movement altogether, stating that.. 'cities are fundamentally to be preserved and lived in; and not freely destroyed, to be driven through, and speculated upon' (7). Seeing the city as a whole, however, was not straightforward. Observations made in a systematic manner, combined with an artistic understanding based on cultural criteria, together made a new subject, which Geddes called 'Civic Reconstruction'. What he wanted was the preservation of the best historical traditions of the past, the involvement of the people in their own betterment and the rediscovery of past traditions of city building, which deliberately expressed the aesthetic ideals of the community.

His passionate concern for peace was closely in tune with his propaganda for civic regeneration that was presented in his international Cities and Town-Planning Exhibitions. Geddes had formed the idea of a World Congress of Cities and had a vision of world development through direct contact between cities on an international basis and his ideas of a Centre for the World's Cultural-Resources was leading to the mounting of a World Congress of International Associations in 1910.

The contemporary international movement, which unfortunately was interrupted by the outbreak of the First World War, can be considered in many aspects as a forerunner of the work now being accomplished through the implementation of the World Heritage Convention. 'The Outlook Tower' in Edinburgh was one of the means to disseminate his visions and passionate socio-biological beliefs and help realising his ideas about diagnostic survey and civic regeneration. The roots of one's culture, including the heritage of the built environment, were in his opinion the vital means of achieving the potential for individual growth, - and eventually to create respect of basic human rights (cf.: League of Nations 1919, The Hague Convention 1954, The Geneva Conventions and the protocols that were added to these in 1977, the WH Convention 1972 and the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity).

Appreciation of cultural heritage in the environment: European initiatives.

In a European context the campaign for preservation of cultural heritage initiated in 1975 by the Council of Europe generated considerable influence upon the change of policies in the member states. The subsequent adoption of the Amsterdam Declaration by the member states of the Council of Europe was a giant stride forward accepting the concept of integrated area preservation of the environment. The development towards a more comprehensive view on the preservation of architectural heritage has been further promoted through the adoption of the Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (Granada 1985). The member states are committed to make proper provision for the protection of monuments, groups of buildings and sites as stipulated in the convention. The extensive programme of duties and obligations also includes the protection of architectural heritage as a fundamental component of local and regional planning objectives. Subsequently, the programme co-operation evolved through a number of workshops and conferences to more fully address the social aspects of conservation and integrate them with housing and employment policies. Also more emphasis has been put on raising awareness about heritage values and to initiate training and educational programmes, which promote greater appreciation of heritage assets in the environment.

The Granada Convention advocates a co-ordinated approach (article 17) and the Council of Europe's technical co-operation and consultancy programme for the integrated conservation of cultural heritage has supported new member states through assistance and exchange of good practice as well as co-ordination of legislation to new member states (8).

Survey of the architectural values in the environment.

As a direct consequence of the stipulations put forward in the Granada Convention the Danish Building Preservation Act was amended in 1979 including more emphasis on the duties of information, documentation and guidance in preservation planning. This duty has materialised in the development of a systematic Survey of Architectural Values in the Environment (called SAVE) and the subsequent production of a large number of so-called Municipal Atlases, which are being prepared in close co-operation with local museums and municipal authorities. They provide a description of topological, historic and architectural features following a well established pattern of survey, evaluation and policy. In principle the methodology is rooted in Patric Geddes ideas of 'Survey before Plan', as well as being inspired by Camillo Sitte, and more recent survey principles described by planners like Kevin Lynch and Gordon Cullen (9). Additional to a general survey of the characteristic physical features in the environment each individual building structure constructed before 1940 is being evaluated on basis of a number of different criteria. The conclusive grading of the architectural, cultural and environmental values of the building is incorporated into the General Building Register, which is established as a means to administer and regulate private property in planning. The Atlas also provide an overview of the characteristic features of the built and natural environment as a basis for the preparation of Local Plans and the review of the Municipal Plan every four years.

Cultural environment in Planning.

In order to regulate the urban growth and control new infrastructure development without destroying important cultural environments, it has further been decided to include a survey of significant cultural environments in the Regional Plans. These surveys are carried out by staff of the Landscape Department in each County in close co-operation with local expertise in each Municipality. In this way also the local museums have got a new role to play in the contemporary society by sustaining a public debate about what heritage to preserve, and how best to maintain existing cultural elements in the environment. The new museum is not only a custodian of the past, but becoming an important stakeholder in the decision making process. So far each county has been free to decide on methods and priorities and the plan needs a political endorsement every four years on basis of a public debate including public hearings. Many cultural environments have not yet been identified and systematically registered and consequently, this process is subject to considerable political controversies as a result of the many individual interests pertaining related to land use and possible restrictions on infrastructure development. Without appreciation of the cultural environment, there is little public support or political will for legal measures or investment in conservation. Transparency and active participatory involvement have therefore become key elements of a democratic process in spatial planning.

Monitoring is then a continuous and never ending process of recording change and providing documentation and interpretation of the authentic heritage assets in the environment. In line with the physical appearance also intangible spiritual values and belief associated with the particular site need to be presented and respected during a period of change. This view is of special relevance due to the ethnic and religious conflicts in many parts of the world. The monitoring process also implies a democratic approach in which all stakeholders are consulted to ensure that different views are being considered and taken into account in the management of the cultural heritage.

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