

Preventing the Goose with the Golden Eggs from catching Bird Flu – UNESCO's efforts in Safeguarding the Historic Urban Landscape

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Introduction

The most comprehensive inventory of World Heritage-designated cities, undertaken at the end of 2004 by Vladimir Krogus,² established a total of 389 such properties inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List. This number included ensembles of monuments in historic cities, historic city centres, and towns and cities within cultural landscapes. Even if only World Heritage cities – whole or in part – are considered, the number is still huge: 240 properties, out of 830 inscribed World Heritage sites (as at July 2006).³ This makes cities the most abundant and diverse category of humankind's common heritage.

This quantity and diversity adds to the dynamics of urban heritage conservation, where concepts and approaches are constantly changing and evolving. The UNESCO World Heritage Centre's *Cities Programme* aims to assist States Parties⁴ to protect and manage their urban heritage. The programme is structured along a two-way process: the development of a theoretical framework for urban heritage conservation and the provision of technical assistance to States Parties for the implementation of new approaches and schemes. Concerned by the multitude of World Heritage cities facing difficulties in reconciling conservation and development, and following its mandate as a standard-setting organization, UNESCO is currently working towards the development of a new Recommendation on the Conservation of Historic Urban Landscape to meet the urban management challenges of tomorrow.

World Urban Heritage: a History in Diversity

While the majority of urban World Heritage sites are located in Europe (247 properties), nevertheless the geographical distribution is truly global and arguably among the most balanced as compared to other categories of heritage (such as archaeological sites, industrial heritage or cultural landscapes). In fact, urban heritage properties are situated in 96 States Parties, out of a total of 138 countries with World Heritage sites on their territories, meaning a representation in seventy percent of the States Parties.

¹ This paper revises, updates and expands two presentations made by the author at the "Urban Forum: Planning the Future of Cities in China", organized by the China Development Bank and The World Bank Institute in Beijing, China, October 25-30, 2004, and the conference "World Heritage and Contemporary Architecture – Managing the Historic Urban Landscape", organized by the City of Vienna and the World Heritage Centre in Vienna, Austria, May 12-14, 2005. Elements of these were published in the China conference report and in *World Heritage Review* No. 41, October 2005, UNESCO and Ediciones San Marcos, Madrid.

² Krogus, V., *The Full Systematized Inventory of World Heritage Cities*, Institute on Reconstruction of Historic Towns (INRECON), Moscow 2005.

³ These 830 properties include 644 cultural, 162 natural and 24 mixed properties in 138 States Parties – see <http://whc.unesco.org>.

⁴ UNESCO Member States that have signed the 1972 *Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (i.e. The World Heritage Convention) are referred to as "States Parties".

The early years of the implementing the World Heritage Convention⁵ were characterised by a primarily monumental approach to the identification and nomination of cultural properties, including cities. This meant that historic ensembles and urban sites were selected mostly according to the canon of architecture as part of fine arts. As such, the “picturesque” value played an important role, emphasizing aspects such as beauty and harmony in more strict and formal terms. Outstanding examples of this type of urban heritage include for instance the Old City of Dubrovnik in Croatia, the Historic Centre of the Town of Olinda in Brazil, and the Old Town of Lijiang in China.

By the 1980s it had become apparent that there was a growing imbalance between cultural and natural properties inscribed on the List. The associated debates led to the adoption of the *Global Strategy*,⁶ and a steady broadening of the meaning and interpretation of World Heritage. The result of this for the category of cities has been twofold. First, more emphasis was put on context and (natural) setting of urban heritage – the city and its territorial dimension –, which as a consequence introduced the “condition of integrity” for evaluation of cultural properties.⁷ Secondly, more value was placed on other aspects such as social and cultural processes, referring to aspects that shaped, and are still shaping, the city. Stone Town of Zanzibar in Tanzania, Le Havre the City Rebuilt by Auguste Perret in France, and the Historic Quarter of the Seaport City of Valparaiso, in Chile, are some important examples of this.

The Historic Quarter of Valparaiso was inscribed in 2003 *not* because of its monumental architecture or formal design principles employed in town planning – quite the contrary. While Valparaiso boasts great ensemble value, this is actually the product of rather random processes related to the dynamics of great harbour cities. With a permanent influx of immigrants from all parts of the world, that constitute very often a transitory population (moving on when their situation improves), Valparaiso alternately blossomed, and stagnated, with the fortunes of its port activities. With the exception of its humble beginnings as a Spanish colonial town in the sixteenth century, the town was never part of a formal planning scheme with related architectural styles. It is therefore all the more remarkable that over the centuries an urban landscape developed, with a vernacular architecture covering some forty-three hills, that is homogeneous in its use of modest building schemes and materials related to the industrial era. It was inscribed on the World Heritage List as a testimony of global industrialization and modernization in the 19th century.

The Case of Vienna, Austria

In general, cities have been inscribed on the World Heritage List because the process of urbanization with accumulation of open spaces and building stock had created a harmonious, singular ensemble, containing outstanding universal value through its significance as regards the cultural development of mankind within a particular context. In principle, urban development during the centuries prior to the Industrial Revolution was gradual and interventions were largely guided

⁵ The Convention was adopted on 16 November 1972, entered into force on 17 December 1975 and the first sites were inscribed at the Committee's second session from 5 to 8 September 1978; since then new sites have been inscribed yearly.

⁶ The Global Strategy for a balanced, representative and credible World Heritage List, adopted by the World Heritage Committee in 1994, is an action programme designed to identify and fill the major gaps in the World Heritage List. The Global Strategy relies on regional and thematic definitions and analyses of categories of heritage of outstanding universal value, encourages more countries to become State Parties to the *World Heritage Convention* and to develop nominations of properties for inscription on the List.

⁷ For inscription on the World Heritage List, next to being of Outstanding Universal Value, cultural properties must meet the ‘test of authenticity’, while natural properties must meet the ‘condition of integrity’ (paragraphs 79 to 95 of the *Operational Guidelines*, version 2 February 2005). Von Droste explains that “the notion of integrity, even in its common use referring to wholeness, has an ecological basis. Integrity relates to the maintenance of functional relationships between components of a system”, and thus has relevance also for cultural heritage properties in their wider setting. (In: *Linking Nature and Culture*, Report of the Global Strategy Natural and Cultural Heritage Expert Meeting, Amsterdam, UNESCO World Heritage Centre 1998, p. 13).

by tradition, taking continuity and consistency with the existing spaces and stock as the norm. While a certain degree of variation in types and styles occurred, these were often well integrated in the ensemble. They now provide interesting clues to reading the development of the city through various time periods.

Today, the ever-increasing speed with which societies evolve means that urban development is often abrupt and ill-conceived, enlarging in scale, and thereby in impact. During its 27th session in Paris (July 2003) and after mounting civil society protests, the World Heritage Committee had a heated debate about the planned construction of four high-rise towers at the 'Wien-Mitte' project site in Vienna, Austria, which had been put on the World Heritage List just two years before (in 2001).

Vienna's historic cityscape is characterized by low-rise apartment blocks, typically between 4 and 6 stories high, a fairly homogeneous roofscape throughout the innercity, and a 19th century classicist architectural style. The only structures standing out from this historic urban landscape are the domes and spires of churches and other religious buildings, which can be seen from various viewpoints in the city and function as landmarks.

In the past there has been little sensitivity towards the impact of modern constructions, as several high-rise buildings, mostly office blocks, had been built on the fringes of the historic city centre during the 1950s, 60s and 70s. However, the inscription of the historic centre of Vienna on the World Heritage List in 2001 required a new vision of modern developments and contemporary architecture, whether high-rise or not, in order not to compromise the outstanding universal value for which the innercity had been put on the World Heritage List. It is important to recall here that the nomination of a property to the List is done by the State Party on a voluntary basis, by which it progressively engages itself to "ensure that effective and active measures are taken for the protection, conservation and presentation" of the property under consideration, as set out in Article 5 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention.

In this spirit, in April 2002, the Municipal Authorities of Vienna adopted guidelines for planning and assessing high-rise building projects. These guidelines explicitly banned high-rise construction in specific protected areas, landscape areas and important visual axes. However, two construction zones, located in the periphery of the buffer zone, were not included: the 'Wien-Mitte' site and the urban area north of the Danube, which suffered war damage in 1945.

After intense diplomatic communication and professional engagements, the state and municipal authorities took the decision at the end of March 2003 – despite the developer's existing legal entitlement – to elaborate a new 'Wien-Mitte' project that would be compatible with Vienna's World Heritage status, in particular with regard to height and bulk of buildings. This meant that the new height should not exceed that of the existing Hilton Hotel (60 m). Unfortunately, the almost completed Vienna City Tower (87 m), erected despite all protests, had to be accepted as an urban planning mistake, which would serve as a bad example to prevent future errors, instead of setting a precedent.

The Goose with the Golden Eggs

This decision by the Austrian authorities avoided a potential Danger Listing of the Historic Centre of Vienna, which is a mandatory step prior to delisting, but no doubt at a considerable financial loss related to the breach of contract with the developer and sending the parties back to the drawing table. However, wouldn't it be interesting to see any internal checks and balances that were made by government officials as regards these short-term losses versus long-term gains by maintaining an unblemished World Heritage status for the city?

Although the World Heritage Centre does not collect specific data concerning the economic benefits arising from the designation of sites as World Heritage, it is widely assumed that they are significant – so much so, that the mass-media often suggest that it may constitute the primary driving force for countries to nominate their sites to the World Heritage List of UNESCO. These same media point in particular to the direct revenues from tourism and reiterate, one after the other, the already much debated Janus-faced nature of this industry.⁸ To be sure, the figures are impressive, as is shown in the case of the Fortified Town of Campeche in Mexico: listed in 1999, it has since seen an increase in visitation every year, with a total rise of 39% between 1999 and 2004, an increase of 45% in available hotel rooms and a near doubling of the tourism revenue.

Despite this, it is still important to keep in mind that tourism remains a highly volatile industry, with strong recent fluctuations owing to fears over terrorism, epidemics and natural disasters, and that the benefits range is much broader, e.g. through direct investment by government and private sector. While these figures are more challenging to obtain, given the complexity of interactions, they provide convincing arguments that heritage conservation in general, and World Heritage in particular, is part of mainstream development, instead of opposing or hampering it.

Recent figures obtained from South Africa indicate that R745 million (app. USD 75 million) of additional direct investments have been made during a three-year period (2004-2006) on South Africa's seven World Heritage sites.⁹ These figures do not include the day-to-day management budgets of conservation and management agencies, such as Cape Nature of the South African National Parks, which the South African government provides annually. For instance, the budget allocation to Cape Nature, the Western Cape Provincial Nature Conservation Agency responsible for the management of the largest part of the Cape Floristic Protected Areas (six of the eight serial sites), is R65 million per annum. These amounts also do not include the indirect spending of government and the private sector on programmes and projects for regular maintenance of roads, tourism promotion, etc. Further to this, it is interesting to note that it has been calculated that over the last five years Table Mountain alone, as Cape Town's emblematic natural feature, has contributed R600 million (app. USD 60 million) to South Africa's GDP.

Infection with The Iconic

New waterfront apartments in Cape Town's harbour currently sell for one million USD or more, no doubt because of the view they offer on world-renowned Table Mountain. Historic character and identity are part of the unique selling points of cities and, like it or not, in particular the internationally recognized outstanding universal value that comes with World Heritage listing has become a powerful asset to stand out in the otherwise crowded market place. When properly managed, meaning that the values are not compromised, neither the World Heritage Committee nor UNESCO has a problem with this.

However, in addition to Vienna, the World Heritage Committee has discussed other cases involving high-rise and/or contemporary architectural interventions in World Heritage cities that were

⁸ For the latest in this, see: Kugel, S., "Preservation: Sure, It's a Good Thing, but...", The New York Times, 15 January 2006.

⁹ In detail: R62 million from the World Bank for a conservation and development programme of the uKhahlamba-Drakensberg-Maloti Transfontier Park; R163 million public-private partnership project for visitor centres at the Cradle of Humankind, Gauteng (total costs R360 million); R260 million for St Lucia Wetlands Park (KwaZulu/Natal) for infrastructure and economic development; R70 million World Bank funding for a biodiversity project in the Cape Floral Protected Areas; R72 million over three years for capital infrastructure on Robben Island; R101 million for the development of the Mapungubwe National Park (Limpopo Province); and R17 million for the development of tourism infrastructure at the Vredefort Dome (Northwest Province/Free State Province), announced on the day that the World Heritage Committee decided to inscribe the Vredefort Dome on the World Heritage List (July 2005) – acknowledging with gratitude this contribution from Ms. Hannetjie Du Preez, Chief Director Cultural Affairs, Provincial Government Western Cape, South Africa.

considered a threat to the outstanding universal value, including Beijing, Kathmandu, Cologne, Riga, Potsdam, Avila, and Guatemala City – the number of cases, which were increasing year by year, indicated that there was a problem.¹⁰ But instead of development per se, the issue primarily concerned the type of development in relation to the location, and what form it took in terms of volume and materialization – in short, sound urban planning and top-quality architectural design in respect of the inherited historic townscape in its wider setting.

The last decade has seen a surge in the demand by city governments for iconic architectural works created by big names, the “star architects”, to boost their image. This often regardless of the city’s existing character and inherited values – indeed, whether it has World Heritage status or not. Fancy towers and computer-generated blobs with media-savvy names are springing up all over the place, from Foster’s “Gherkin” in Central London, to the “Friendly Alien” by Cook & Fournier in Graz, Austria. The first is located in the vicinity of the Tower of London World Heritage site, an area projected with a multitude of new towers and dubbed “Costa del Icon” by architect Graham Morrison;¹¹ the second situated right in the core zone of the designated World Heritage city. Designs as abstract as H5N1, the official name for Bird Flu, threaten to contaminate the existing historic townscape in a search for architectural novelty for its own sake. Characterized by Kenneth Frampton as “figurative, anti-urban excesses that occur when architects attempt to reduce architecture to nothing more than sculpture writ large”,¹² this kind of design works towards confrontation, or dissociation instead of harmonization, in order to attract attention.

Referred to as the “Bilbao-effect”, obviously these city governments are seeking a similar success to that generated by the Guggenheim Museum for the Basque city. Celebrating its tenth anniversary in 2007, the Museum’s eye-popping architecture by Frank Gehry, which comprises an interplay of contrasting shapes and volumes in limestone and titanium, continues to draw hordes of visitors from all over the world, some 8.5 million so far. While Gehry’s design was revolutionary and has since created a real hype, two important issues are generally forgotten.

The first is that the Museum was built in a totally degraded urban industrial landscape devoid of any cultural-historic significance, with as its main objective to change the city’s image to attract attention and investment to this wasteland – hence its design and location. The second is that there can only be a first time once: the novelty often sticks to the first-born, but can seldom become the rule, which can be repeated wholly and successfully; certainly not in every city on every continent. It is in this sense that someone has rightfully remarked that what we currently are experiencing is “the same difference everywhere”. What is easily lost, however, is the city’s uniform historic character and integrity, often forever.

Such insensitivity is often spurred on by arguments that a favourable climate has to be created to attract investment and to avoid inner cities becoming museum-like environments. This totally overlooks the issue at hand. Instead of a “free-for-all and anything-goes” climate, it can be argued that investors are more interested in proper guidance as to the general direction of urban development with sound management of the built environment, in order to provide for safeguards as regards their investments in the long-term.

¹⁰ Kathmandu and the Cologne Cathedral were put on the World Heritage List in Danger, in 2003 and 2004 respectively, because of direct threats to the outstanding universal value. In particular the Danger Listing of Cologne had an important effect (the first site in Western Europe) and the World Heritage Committee no doubt wanted to give a strong signal that it was serious on this issue and a solution had to be found. Relating to the recurrent problems involving high-rise constructions in or adjacent to World Heritage cities around the world, it was at the 27th session in 2003 that the Committee called for a conference on this topic, which became the Conference on “World Heritage and Contemporary Architecture – Managing the Historic Urban Landscape”, held in May 2005 in Vienna, which developed the Vienna Memorandum.

¹¹ In his speech to the AJ/Bovis ‘Awards for Architecture’ dinner in 2004 – acknowledging with gratitude the contribution from Ms. Laura Iloniemi, Architectural Press, Westbourne Studios London.

¹² Frampton, K., in “Foreword to the Second Edition” of Peter Collins’ *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture 1750-1950*, McGill-Queen’s University Press, Montreal 2003, p.xiii.

While both Moscow and Saint Petersburg in Russia are currently booming in urban development terms, they both maintain a distinctly different identity. In contrast to Moscow's contemporary and business-related character, where in development terms anything goes, St. Petersburg remains Russia's cultural-historical capital, which is guided by a strictly enforced policy as regards the type and form of permissible urban development. A strong Conservation Department (KGIOP) is in existence and has been able to impose its view within the overall planning process. The new Masterplan for the city (with 2015 and 2025 horizons), due to enter into force in July 2006,¹³ includes a clear strategy for conservation of the historic monuments and of the historic city to guide public policy making in order to protect and properly manage the city's World Heritage status (registered in 1986), with an endowment of over 8,000 historic buildings, parks and landmarks, supplemented by world-renowned cultural institutions and visited by over two million people a year.

And yet even here the city authorities couldn't resist selecting Dominique Perrault's high-tech design for the extension of the Marinsky Theatre, characterized by a "Golden Shell", a golden steel and glass envelope that surround completely the building forming a geometrical shape around it...

As cities will always invest in new infrastructure, housing and office space, this phenomenon is here to stay and will constitute a permanent challenge: how to accommodate the needs for modernization and investment in historic cities and city centres, without compromising historic character and identity? What are the limits of acceptable change and what criteria should be applied for evaluation and assessment?

Entry: Historic Urban Landscape

Criteria and guidelines for conservation management exist for cultural properties, natural sites, and since 1992 for cultural landscapes. However, there is a gap in relation to the historic urban landscape. The principal guiding document for the conservation and management of World Heritage properties, the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (version WHC. 05/2 of 1 February 2005), refers to definitions for cultural, natural and cultural landscape properties in its paragraphs 45 to 47.

Until now, the historic urban landscape has been treated under the category of "groups of buildings" as defined in article 45 of the *Operational Guidelines*: "groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science." However, the challenges to be confronted by historic urban landscape management are characterized by highly dynamic and cyclical processes instead of a static physical determinant and they require a new vision and paradigm.

Urban heritage is considered to be a human and social cultural element that goes beyond the notion of "groups of buildings", as cities are witness to the fact that the accumulation of cultures and traditions, recognized as such in their diversity, are the basis of heritage values in the areas and towns that these cultures have produced or reused. These values must be made clear from the outset and serve in defining urban development strategies and policies, with related programmes and actions.¹⁴ In this updated vision, the concept of the historic urban landscape could provide a guiding principle.

¹³ Taken from: Bandarin, F., Mission to St. Petersburg, Russia, UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Paris 16 February 2006, pp. 6-7.

¹⁴ One of the conclusions of the International Workshop *Partnerships for World Heritage Cities: Culture as a Vector for Sustainable Urban Development*, Urbino - Pesaro, Italy, 11-12 November 2002, published as *World Heritage Papers* No. 9, UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Paris 2004.

The notion of 'landscape' is a cultural construct involving the existing natural environment, but described and classified in cultural terms. A 'cultural landscape' is considered to be the "combined works of nature and of man" (*Operational Guidelines*, 2005, § 47), where a long-term, structural and harmonious interaction between man and the environment has created a complete new characteristic and idiom.

Along similar lines it could be argued that an urban landscape consists of a pre-existing environment (involving topography, and physical and natural features), which has been modified in part or completely through the process of urbanization by a stratigraphy of patterns, plots (built and unbuilt), infrastructure and building stock geared towards the provision of urban space for housing, work, transport, and leisure activities. Urban morphology scholars define the urban landscape as a cumulative record of the succession of booms, slumps and innovation adoptions within a particular locale, which thereby acquires its own *genius loci* that no society can, or should detach itself completely from. "This landscape is never a *tabula rasa* and to seek to achieve such a condition is a profligate waste of human endeavour",¹⁵ remarks Jeremy Whitehand, specifying that the spirit of a society is expressed in the historico-geographical character of the urban landscape which enables individuals and groups to take root in an area. They acquire a sense of the historical dimension of human existence, which stimulates comparison and encourages a less time-bound and more integrated approach to contemporary problems. Landscapes with a high degree of expressiveness of past societies exert a particularly strong educative and regenerative influence. Whitehand underlines that the historical unfolding of the built environment is not only fundamentally important in itself, but also becomes the starting point in the search for a theoretical basis for the management of urban landscapes in the future – "the past provides object-lessons for planning".¹⁶

Understanding Urban Transformation Processes through Urban Morphology Research

By the time of the European post-war reconstruction, the theme of historic cities became central in architectural culture. The debate was generated by the urgent need to reconstruct the cities destroyed during the Second World War, and the failure of modern urbanism. The character of many historic cities had been altered or lost as a result of insensitive 'urban renewal' practices and 'redevelopment' policies that ignored the historical process of their genesis and transformation. Moreover, then-existing contemporary conservation and urbanism theories were difficult to apply to the management and control of the transformations that affected complex urban structures.

The most articulated result of this fervent debate was the emergence in Italy, in the early 1950s, of typo-morphology. Dealing with physical form of human establishments as products of material culture, typo-morphology aimed to elaborate a grammar of transformation, through the identification of rules that preside historically the synchronic and diachronic relationships between built objects of each particular cultural area. Essays written during this period show a consciousness of the complexity of urban problems, of diverse and conflicting requirements, and of the complex and movable character of functions.¹⁷ Accompanying ideas included the view that new architecture built within a pre-existing built environment should be in a tight dependency with the environment by virtue of a sense of continuity, not only formal, but socio-historical, that connects buildings from diverse periods.

This broadening of the horizon was accompanied by a severe critique of modern urbanism that according to protagonists of typo-morphology, among others, was unable to deal with the problems

¹⁵ Whitehand, J.W.R., *The Making of the Urban Landscape*, The Institute of British Geographers Special Publications Series no. 26, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford UK, 1993, p. 6.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Muratori, S., *Studi per una operante storia urbana di Venezia*, in: Palladio, 1959; *Studi per una operante storia urbana di Roma [di] Saverio Muratori [et al.]*, Consiglio nazionale delle ricerche 1963, Rome 1964 – acknowledging with gratitude the contribution made by Mrs. Cristina Iamandi, urban planner and conservation architect.

of historic cities, which involved solving the in-fills on one hand, and the dichotomy between new 'planned' developments within older 'spontaneously grown' towns on the other. The alternative brought forward was a unitary vision of a continuous and active renewal and conservation process, of a socio-historical continuity of the city. From this point of view resulted the historical-critical approach of urbanism summarized in the key-expression *rinovare conservando* – to renew by conserving.

Associated with key concepts of this theory was the idea of the primacy of history as a research method and an antidote against the fragmentary approach to the city, relating to the conviction of unity of the city as living organism and the permanence of the character of each town. This new mode of understanding the city's structure, based on identity and collective memory, brought forward an element of the planning process most pertinent to this paper's subject: the study that proceeds with the examination of surveys and critical reconstruction of entire quarters, structure by structure, phase by phase, of the historic built environment.

From Theory to Practice

This method found its application in urban conservation and management of historic centres and became a generalized mode of intervention in Italy in the 1960s and 70s, and was carried abroad. In 1975, the results of pilot projects launched by the Council of Europe lead to the definition of the concept of 'integrated conservation' of historic urban areas, in the Amsterdam Declaration. Conceived in a global perspective, integrated conservation is founded on the principle that conservation is efficient provided that it is embedded within the framework of economic and urban planning. Beyond stressing the need for a planning process, the Amsterdam Declaration emphasized treating the historic city in a non museum-like manner and recovering its qualitative dimension, as well as historical continuity.

By the mid-1980s, conservation had been linked to management in view of gradual transformation processes capable of absorbing the social and functional needs of everyday life. This new stage was codified in the ICOMOS "Charter for the Conservation of Historic Towns and Urban Areas" (Washington Charter of 1987) and its pertinence resided in the identification of elements of an appropriate approach based on conservation planning and public participation. Under the basic components of this strategy, it is still possible to identify typo-morphological principles in the requirement of respect for the dynamic nature of cities and for cultural sensitivity, which implies the consideration of context-specificity.

The debates of the 1990s focused on the 'urban project' with the formula of 're-qualification' that placed the recognition of values of historical heritage as starting point for the project of the existing city. This urban project should integrate the historic centre and the suburbs, the city and its territory, through unitary re-qualification methodologies, and should tend as well to establish a significant relationship between the places and their history. The sense of memory should guide the project, in all scales of attitudes that go from conservation to transformation and/or reconstruction. All this requiring a preliminary knowledge project prior to each intervention.

In the early years of the twenty-first century, attention is focused on urban places as dynamic historic environments continually being reshaped, renewed and refurbished. Here, the role and operations of heritage conservation groups have become equal to other important actors in the field of urban development, illustrated by the establishment of an 'Urban Panel' within English Heritage, the UK Government's lead body for the historic environment. Their approach involves more than viewing heritage as a concern for the historic component of a city only, and relates to *urban culture* in general. Facilitating change through an inter-disciplinary group of engineers, property developers, architects, archaeologists, historians and planners, this conservation-oriented panel is concerned with the "primacy of understanding the regeneration process" of inner cities,

industrial settlements and waterfront complexes, because “even if archaeological, building or streetscape evaluation is successfully addressed, the historical morphology and topography of our cities is so often sadly neglected”.¹⁸

As such, an integrated approach is advocated to both evaluation and management in an attempt to achieving an understanding of the historic dimension of the environment. This approach would serve three main objectives: 1) exploring and exploiting the synergies between the historic fabric, its conservation and the regeneration or further development of the city; 2) understanding the whole as well as the parts and provide clear advice on relative significance, thereby providing certainty to planners and developers about what should be retained, allowed to change or go; and 3) ensuring that all the values attached to a place by those who live and work there are taken into consideration.¹⁹

The Way Forward

Looking over the principles and trends, it seems as if much relates back to that important contribution of urban morphology research launched in the early fifties. Indeed, the conservation of cities as preservation of spirit and identity of place has to be founded on an objective knowledge of generative structural factors, rather than on aesthetical appreciations or in reference to theoretical models. Urban morphology’s cognitive tools seem to be the most pertinent means for evaluating the context transformability, necessary for the identification of structural permanencies, both material and immaterial. The fundamental task of historic urban landscape and its conservation and management is thus to maintain and restore the spirit and character of cities understood in relation to the sense of identity and collective memory embodied in the structural permanencies. The design work implies a preliminary thorough knowledge of urban history, typical organisms and building types, and their transformation in and over time.

Thus, one of the first concerns would relate to the design training and practice of architects nowadays, as the majority of building projects concern interventions in urban landscapes, often rich in cultural-historic significance and local values. The profound changes wrought by the Industrial Revolution in the assignment of tasks for architects, meant that traditional building practises handed over from generation to generation among the local architect-builders were gradually lost, including the lessons of history. As architectural training today hardly involves relevant lessons in history, including transmission of traditional building concepts and practises in order to build upon experiences of previous generations, there seems to be a preoccupation with the design of architectonic statements primarily. In this regard, Peter Collins has remarked that “doctrinaire arguments concerning the authenticity or otherwise of individual buildings, individual techniques and individual mannerism can never be unimportant, but they seem of secondary importance when compared with the problem as to whether or not a new building fits harmoniously into the environment into which it is set”.²⁰ Collins’ book was published in 1963 and this remark was singled out by Frampton in his foreword to the 2003 edition, four decades later, as being still one of the critical issues to be solved today. A change, therefore, in design ethic seems one essential aspect.

Furthermore, a decade of regular and systematic reporting on the state of conservation of historic cities²¹ has revealed that existing methodologies of valorisation and assessment integrated in

¹⁸ Beacham, P., “The Urban Panel”, in: [English Heritage Conservation Bulletin](#), Issue 41, September 2001, pp. 4-7.

¹⁹ Cherry, M., “The Historic Urban Environment”, in: [English Heritage Conservation Bulletin](#), Issue 41, September 2001, p. 8.

²⁰ Collins, P., *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture*, Montreal 2003, p. 299.

²¹ Since the 1990s the World Heritage Centre prepares each year on average between 100 and 150 State of Conservation reports on World Heritage properties for review and discussion by the World Heritage Committee at its annual session.

practises of heritage management and new development have not been applied widely, as they tend to be both time-consuming and human resource intensive – both expensive commodities in today's fast-moving world. For cities and their historic urban landscapes to survive however, next to conservation, also urban regeneration and new development projects should aim to maintain character – the 'spirit of place' related to cultural identity and collective memory. This requires a critical understanding of the transformation processes that have underpinned the city's historic evolution over time and the determination of limits of acceptable change. Therefore, existing planning tools have to be re-visited so as to integrate these essential aspects in the planning process.

A Work-in-Progress

A first attempt to do this resulted in the "Vienna Memorandum",²² the principal outcome of the Vienna Conference on World Heritage and Contemporary Architecture discussed earlier in this paper (see footnote 10). The Memorandum contains an outline of recommendations promoting an integrated approach linking contemporary architecture, urban development and heritage landscape integrity. It introduces a working definition for the concept of 'historic urban landscape' and emphasizes the need for enhancing the quality of urban life without compromising existing values of the historic city. It contains guidelines for both urban development and conservation management, as it proposes a dialogue between the two to respond to development dynamics in order to facilitate socio-economic changes and growth, while simultaneously respecting the inherited townscape and its landscape setting.

Criticized by some as too generously in favour of development instead of preservation, while by others as not enough forward-looking, the document clearly represents a consensus-product established with involvement of various professional entities.²³ However, while still considered a work-in-progress, it was welcomed by the World Heritage Committee at its 29th session (July 2005 in Durban, South Africa), as a much needed additional tool for discussing and assessing contemporary architectural interventions in World Heritage cities and their wider setting.

At the request of the Committee, the Vienna Memorandum formed the basis for the adoption of a 'Declaration on the Conservation of Historic Urban Landscapes' during the 15th *General Assembly of States Parties to the World Heritage Convention*, which took place on 10 and 11 October 2005 at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. The Committee also recommended "that the General Conference of UNESCO adopt a new Recommendation to complement and update the existing ones on the subject of conservation of historic urban landscapes, with special reference to the need to link contemporary architecture to the urban historic context".²⁴ As such, the World Heritage Centre is currently engaged in a thorough evaluation of the 'UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Role of Historic Areas' (26 November 1976) to determine if there is a need for an update that includes the notion of Historic Urban Landscape.

To facilitate this evaluation and to receive expert input related to either an updated or a new UNESCO Recommendation on the subject, the World Heritage Centre will organize six major meetings during 2007 and 2008 in the various geo-cultural regions of the world, one each in North America, Latin America, Europe, the Arab States, Sub-Saharan Africa and the Asia/Pacific region.

²² See: <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/2005/whc05-15ga-inf7e.doc>

²³ In a cooperation scheme involving the World Heritage Centre, UNESCO's Advisory Bodies ICOMOS and ICCROM, as well as partner organizations OWHC (Organization of World Heritage Cities), IFLA (International Federation of Landscape Architects), IUA (International Union of Architects) and IFHP (International Federation for Housing and Planning).

²⁴ Decision 29 COM 5D adopted by the 29th session of the World Heritage Committee (Durban 2005), in which a UNESCO Recommendation concerns a "soft-law".

The final results are earmarked for submission to the UNESCO General Conference for adoption in the fall of 2009.

While taking due notice of this ambitious scope and the challenges ahead, what should be achieved by 2009 is that the international professional community, which includes the World Heritage Committee, will have reached consensus on the meaning and significance of the Historic Urban Landscape and the need for its safeguarding, codified in an up-dated and expanded tool. Building on the concepts of authenticity and integrity and honouring the different world-regional contexts, this tool will make references to, *inter alia*, natural elements, intangible dimensions and cultural diversity, and the recognition that these manifest themselves in urban contexts at different scales and over time. It will enable communities, among them decision makers, professionals and residents, to take note of general criteria for their identification, evaluation and management in order to translate and adapt them to their local context and traditions. This, ultimately, will lead to possibilities for properly evaluating and assessing proposals for interventions, assisted by enhanced techniques such as environmental, visual, social and economic impact assessments, and value-led management plans. And subsequently programmes can be started to support corresponding capacity building at all levels.²⁵

Conclusion

In today's urban age, more and more historic cities adopt strategies and policies that assign an important role to heritage in the city's social and economic development. A well-managed historic urban landscape is a strong competitive tool as it attracts not only tourists, but capital and residents as well. Historic buildings and spaces contribute significantly to the value of the city and the city is branded with their character. They are an asset contributing to the quality of the urban environment and securing market value of properties. Next to these tangibles, increasingly intangible values and benefits, including community pride, the links with local history, educational value and symbolic role of heritage, are addressed in studies measuring benefits of built heritage, as they constitute 'cultural capital'.²⁶ With investment understood by international accounting standards as an expenditure with potential long-term benefits, heritage protection and management constitutes exactly that. Experts agree that heritage conservation can be extremely profitable, as long as it takes place in a context of long-term analysis.

As one of the primary issues in the decades to come concerns urban regeneration, it is essential to establish an active and more equal partnership between conservation and development, including processes of community consultation and public participation.

Within this, one of the principal tasks will involve the evaluation and assessment of proposals for change through techniques such as environmental, visual, social and economic impact assessments, so that conservation and sustainable development may work together. But as Whitehand remarks: "Preoccupied as most societies are with current practical problems rather than long-term values, it is easy for such an approach to be overlooked. The problem becomes especially acute in societies ever more technically capable of producing substantial change, particularly in phases of economic buoyancy".²⁷

In a continuous process to understand the changing conditions in which we live and value our environment, and to transmit this to future generations through education and proper training, this

²⁵ Part of the conclusions and recommendations of the academic workshop *Historic Cities in the 21st Century – Towards New Approaches in Urban Conservation*, held in Jerusalem 4 - 6 June 2006 at the Brigham Young University, Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies.

²⁶ Throsby, D., "Sustainability in the Conservation of the Built Environment: An Economist's Perspective", in: *Managing Change: Sustainable Approaches to the Conservation of the Built Environment*, Proceedings US/ICOMOS, Pennsylvania, USA April 2001, pp. 5-6.

²⁷ Whitehand, J.W.R., *The Making of the Urban Landscape*, 1993, p. 7.



International ISoCaRP Congress, Istanbul, Turkey, 14-18 September 2006
Keynote Speech: Ron van Oers
Preventing the Goose with the golden Eggs form catching Bird Flu

partnership is an essential principle for consideration if historic cities and their urban landscapes are to foster economic, social and cultural development in mutually inclusive ways, as they have done for the last thousand years.