

Heritage Protection and Cultural Identity: the case of urban space

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Urban space, which is shaped by the dwelling patterns of a culture, records the evolution of its identity, and as such acquires a heritage value. This unique way of becoming a heritage emphasises that it is not the walls nor the floor nor the monuments that are facing it, but the environmental quality of the urban space that needs to be paid attention. Each culture proclaims the heritage within its current cultural consciousness; thus protection of this environment quality would enhance a continuous life. The conventional conservation practices, placing priorities with physical elements, pay less attention to the mentioned environmental quality. They, neglecting the evolved activity patterns and concepts, challenge the phenomenological values of the urban space.

This paper interprets conservation as a cultural activity, rather than a physical petrification of its wall, aimed at signifying the urban space within the present day cultural consciousness. It, assessing heritage values, proposes an approach that would enhance a cultural continuity.

Men come together in the cities in order to live, they remain a group to lead a good life, wrote Aristotle. They evolved an ordered system of meanings and symbols, in terms of which social in-

teraction takes place. This could be called culture following Geertz (1973), but at the same time emphasising the fact that each individual belongs to more than one such ordered systems. These as learned behaviours or an expressions of ways of life, determine the dwelling in urban space, giving the city a *raison d'être*. This composed environmental quality, reflected in the physical components and the spatial structure criteria, informs the users of the culture desired social interaction and as such helps them identifying and orienting in the urban space. Continuity of this quality, ensuring a evolution of a cultural identity, would appreciate heritage values.

The UNESCO Draft Medium Report (1988) defines heritage as, "... the entire corpus of material signs, either artistic or symbolic, handed on by the past to each culture", and goes on to note that "... the cultural heritage gives each particular place its recognisable features". Interpreting the lived urban space as the store house of a cultural identity, links between protection of urban space and continuity of the culture could be noted. Identity of the culture and that of the

urban space are interdependent as reflected in the inconceivable quick changes of the urban fabric demanded by abrupt radical social changes such as the French Revolution. Thus, continuity of one should be integrated with the continuity of the other.

Today's urban conservation practices focus onto architectural, age or historic values of the urban fabric at the expense of the living society. They petrify streetscape, built shells, and city quarters. Having followed the protection of tangible components of heritage, these, in search of a signified identity, delimit the city geographically and delineate it in architectural typologies.

International charters, promoting the protection of a materialistic authenticity for 'universal values', have been a blessing for this type of conservation. They assess this foci of living experiences as a signified object independent of the context, convert the city into a cultural show room whereas the evolved living patterns are reduced to exhibits. The World Heritage List, in which the universal values are emphasised over the local values and the uniqueness of the cultural evolution, therefore look more like an invisible arm of the making of the global culture (Munasinghe, 1998). This has resulted in the depreciation of heritage values. In this context, it is important to redefine the urban heritage and search for more responsive conservation approaches.

Defining urban heritage

Protecting the past for memorial values, enhancing man's knowledge of man has reinforced continuity and shaped each culture with a unique identity. This past, proclaimed by mythology, ideology, nationalism, local pride, or romantic ideas, is a heritage (Schouten, 1995). Its expressing the shaping of a cultural identity makes it a heritage rather than being a documentation by itself. A city, historic or not, ancient or not, acquires a heritage value by being an encoded setting. As such, this culturally significant environmental quality can be proclaimed an urban heritage.

Faulkner (1978) distinguishes two fundamental concepts of heritage as the heritage of objects and the heritage of ideas, the latter representing symbolic values capable of communicating. It should be noted that

some cultures appreciate objects while others focus onto ideas or the message enshrined in those objects. Proclaiming the heritage within the culture-desired interrelationship between the objects and ideas would be more important than proclaiming them independently. With regard to the urban heritage, the morphological features of the city are the objects, and its designated role; administrative city, capital, port city, kingdom, etc., and cultural activities assigned to the urban space are the heritage of ideas. These two together express the transformed environmental quality of urban space. As such, the links between those two categories of heritage and the cultural identity can be noted. The urban heritage may appear as no difference from other aspects of cultural heritage as these two aspects composing an expression of the cultural identity. Yet, its unique process in becoming a non-intentional monument proposes that the urban heritage is to be proclaimed for the evolved cultural identity, and the continuity of this identity would only enhance its heritage value.

Evolution of the concept of cultural heritage has transferred its ownership from a privileged class to a wider community, enlarging today's consciousness of the urban heritage. This evolution, diluting the concept of heritage from easily identifiable objects to less tangible evidence of a culture, fades the sacredness attached to the monument. The fading sacredness has not necessarily threatened the proclaimed heritage, as it has brought a wider society to visit or use or become guardians. It is a fact that the idea of World Heritage is a result of this widening concept. Being old does not make the urban space a cultural heritage, but its contribution to the shaping of a cultural identity does. Shankland (1975) agrees,

... the magical power of past does not lie only in the intrinsic beauty of what is being preserved, or survival of an age when towns were made by artisans, but above all in the identity they confer.

Urban fabric does not have a heritage value of its own, but for expressing a cultural identity and for recording a cultural evolution, it is ascribed with a heritage value. The universal value of this identity, rather than its re-

presentation in physical elements, should be proclaimed a World Heritage. At the same time, the widening concept of heritage means, the diversity of the heritage value has enlarged along with the complexity of incoming new valuing community.

The awareness of the city, first as a symbol for well-being, then as a work of art and a cultural setting, has diversified the urban heritage by bringing in different valuing communities. As such, many groups for different reasons appreciate one urban quarter. Mumford (1938) notes that the city is

... both a physical utility for collective living and a symbol of those collective purposes and unanimity that arise such favouring circumstances.

City, a concentration of cultural productions of civilisations, evolves like a living entity, accumulating layers of the living experiences of individuals as members of a group. It acquires layers due to those different valuing communities as well. Thus, the urban heritage is not just a non-renewable resource but also a growing resource. Identifying the resource value of the urban space could reveal its placing within those valuing communities.

Urban heritage cannot be assessed as simply as a work of art because identifying a signified unity is not easy. Cesari (1988) finds,

... it is ridiculous to establish that the historic centre is the town within the walls, so it is the walls that determines the valid inside from the rest outside.

This compartmentalisation of the setting with its architectural types or age disturbs the evolved activity patterns, authentic investments, interrelationship between different sub cultural groups, and the boundaries determined by the socio-cultural patterns (Munasinghe, 1998). It is clear that the evolution pattern of the concept of heritage has neither contributed in defining urban heritage or in shaping proper tools to evaluate its values. Proclaiming urban space as an object, and its activity patterns and the concepts held as ideas would support revealing its values within the socio-cultural context. The unique compositional orders of the urban elements, social structures based

on race, caste, religion, life patterns, and activity and investment patterns, diversify the urban heritage, its component of object and idea both. As such, more place-oriented evaluation tools are needed to assess the urban heritage and its valuing community.

Ascribing heritage values

Age, historic, artistic, social, cultural, national, religious, architectural, use, and aesthetic are often identified as heritage values. Riegl (1903), defining the cult of monument, proposed a particular way of ascribing values on individual art objects. His emphasis on age and aesthetic value focused onto the appreciation by a limited valuing community. Lincourt (1996) brought the discussion to the urban heritage, identifying a more diversified set of values. Both, representing the European way of defining heritage with objects, do not cover the aspects appreciated elsewhere. Concept of authenticity, original materials, and the other such aspects focused in these with intentions of finding roots should not ignore the appreciation of continuity by other cultures. Theravada Buddhists, for example, consider today is shaped by the thoughts of yesterday and today will compose tomorrow, glimpsing an evolution and continuity. They do not pay attention to the roots or the buried past nor to the materialistic authenticity, but to the continuity and reincarnation. Thus they added layers to the proclaimed artefact in a form of veneration. They, having divided 'form' and 'shape' as message and its temporary container, place priorities with the message. Periodic reconstruction, living traditions that produce them, and the process of production as a form of meditation signified the inherited heritage to extent of becoming a cult for the ascribed gratitude and memory (Munasinghe, 1998). Proclaiming the urban heritage was no different in this context with the grafting of urban quarters and re-shaping of urban space following the designated role of the city quarter, cultural activities that are accommodated and concept that are attached. These diverse patterns of identifying or ascribing values with heritage demand a look at the concept of value.

Evolution of this concept, within the teleological and deontological ethics, categorises the intangible va-

values attached to the heritage as intrinsic and inherent values. As a common tendency, intrinsic values are those that are independent of the valuing community, and inherent value as those ascribed on a moral status value. Age, historic, and architectural values are examples for the former whereas cultural significance and historical importance are examples for the latter. Externally enforced values such as economic and tourist value do not fall in to these. Thus it is necessary to introduce a third, extrinsic value. Inherent value is supervenient on being a moral subject and as such reminds a moral duty to protect. Intrinsic value addressing emotions and intellects independently, attract undue attentions. Living in the protected urban quarters becoming a symbol of status or visiting such places to get way from the stereotyped life are among the results of ascription of these values. Extrinsic values often promote a destruction of heritage by adding a market value to the built fabric and its location. As such, finding a culture-desired order among the diverse values possessed by the urban setting would be an important initial step towards appreciation of its values.

Taylor (1986) notes that inherent values are placed on an object or a place, not because of its usefulness or commercial value, but for historical importance or cultural significance. He further notes that once such a value is ascribed, it is considered wrong to destroy it, or to allow it to deteriorate through neglect. By ascribing inherent values, the duties to protect a heritage can be promoted as norms or paradigmatic expanse. The inherent value is not the good of moral norm such as duties of respect that are binding on moral agents in their relations to non-human moral subjects. It is the opposite, as the moral agents are bound by moral norms in relation to the moral subjects, that have a moral status and a moral status value that may be called inherent values. Norms and values, determining a cultural identity, ascription of inherent values comfortably place the heritage within the context. As such, their ascription facilitates a cultural continuity by strengthening the bond between urban space and its culture.

Enhancing dwelling patterns

Cultural consciousness of the urban space promotes social interaction and thus a continuity of life (Munasinghe, 1999). Individuals and their societies encode the urban space through these interactions, and this consciousness helps this encoding. They carve out niches in urban space to maintain the desired social relationships within their sub culture or others. The niches, which are called places, are shaped according to the circumstances, allowing the expression of self and disposition in space and time. The link between 'place' and human existence is such,

...‘place’ places man in such a way that it reveals the external bonds of his existence and at the same time the depths of his freedom and reality.

(Heidegger, 1958)

This emphasises the key role played by phenomenological values in man's existence, socialising, and continuing to participate in cultural production. As such, phenomenological values can be emphasised as significant cultural value of an urban space, for documenting unique dwelling patterns of the life lived and for promoting its continuity. The environmental quality of urban space, having been shaped by the particular way of life, would thus be emphasised in proclaiming the city a cultural heritage.

Canter (1977) considers that place constitutes of concepts, physical attributes and activities. As the places are created in an urban space by the performing activities or concepts held by different groups, by respecting these two aspects, the place-making capacity of the space could be enhanced. One's survival in urban space depends on this capacity to enable place-making; therefore enhancement of the urban quality within the present day cultural consciousness would be vital to the continuity of life. The idea of place-making emphasises the need to identify different place-making patterns, and the diverse types of proclaiming urban space. As such, this helps identifying how to enhance the continuous living in the urban space by culturally-signifying it as a heritage.

Relph (1976) explores the possibilities of protecting the space as a formidable way of enabling place-making. Further he notes that place and place-making is clo-

sely related to the identity of a group. Once managing the urban space enables this place-making, not only a continuity of heritage could be ensured but also an appreciation of those values. As continuous place-making would not distort an urban space and its proclaimed heritage values, but enhance the expression of these values in terms of a cultural identity. Urban space can be signified within the current cultural consciousness by ascribing inherent values to enhance its place-making capacity. Among the values that could be emphasised in proclaiming the urban space are its phenomenological values. An emphasis of the cultural importance of the phenomenological values or the readable encoding would enhance a cultural consciousness of the urban space, this in turn help the place-makers and also remind a moral duty to protect it from destruction or neglect. Thus, proclaiming urban space, its heritage of object and heritage and ideas, instead of its walls exclusively and then enforcing activities to introduce a life will reinforce the continuity of a cultural identity.

Responsive urban conservation

The widest ramification of conservation proposes a management of something that is in the process of ageing. This has reduced the idea of conservation to a physical intervention or the mere umbrella word for different actions towards protection has been inevitable. The emphasis on physical intervention does not render a true protection as it fixes one value with the multifaceted urban heritage. Redefining conservation as a cultural activity that promotes appreciation of a cultural inheritance in time and space, or as one that signify the heritage within the current cultural consciousness, the proclaimed urban space could be given a new lease of life. Proclaiming the urban space as a joint product of yesterday and today, the continuity of a cultural identity could be supported. Lynch (1987) too observes this cultural continuity, if conservation of historic setting is carried out when only it has a tangible value to the present and future.

The concept of conservation has a history and a particular pattern of evolution. Viollet-le-Duc, using the word restoration, defined it as

... to restore a building is not to preserve it, to repair or

to rebuild it, it is to reinstate in a condition of completeness, which may never have existed at any given time.

Most importantly, he emphasised that this reinstated completeness gives a new lease of life by signifying an identity within the living society. He notes that the protection links past with the present once the 'styles' are unified according to the predominant style. Italians developed several approaches to restore artefacts. The *restauro filologico* noted documentary values and emphasised all historic periods over original forms and structure. The *restauro storico* accepted the imperfection of history as a value in itself thus placing priority on the architectural appearance, and the *restauro critico* noted the total expressive qualities of artefacts.

Currently practising conservation approaches can be categorised in three types (Jokilehto, 1988). They are the traditional approach, that aims at preserving use values, romantic approach, that has evolved with romanticism and nationalistic ideas during the Italian Renaissance, and the historic approach that developed with an emphasis over the documentary values and authenticity. All these approaches are based on intrinsic values, and promote extrinsic values. They, by fencing off the heritage from its context, drew undue attention by making the past superior to the present. They endanger the cultural heritage by paralysing a cultural continuity. Protecting documentary values for the sake of creating a historic consciousness does not support a cultural continuity in many contexts where the proclaimed heritage symbolises a repressed past.

There is a demand for a fourth approach that assesses all merits of heritage as a whole and protects heritage by ascribing inherent values. This cultural approach, placing priorities cultural values, could signify the urban space within the current consciousness as a cultural production. This threefold approach evaluates the heritage values within the context, frames actions such as cultural and physical intervention, and ascribes heritage with inherent values. Reinforcing the phenomenological values of the urban space, this may enhance the identity of the urban space.

Tensions between local, national and universal values could be detected through the cultural approach that is based on the phenomenology of urban space. Thus,

this approach would render a better protection to the World Heritage Sites that are not proclaimed by the locals as a cultural heritage. Once focused to the Fortress Island of Suomenlinna in Helsinki, Finland and the Galle fort in Sri Lanka as such examples along with the locals' role in identifying them as protection-worthy urban quarters, the strength of the fourth approach could be highlighted. In both cases, the locals do not seek to play an important role as trustees but would help protecting the universally-proclaimed heritage. The Finns generally feel that fixing a monument sticker on their popular picnic place would threaten its attraction to life. The Sri Lankans, on the other hand, suspect the universal protection as a neo-colonial domination that is designed to control their living spaces. As such,



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facades were put up for celebrations, but all aim at the accommodation of that particular cultural activity. The first capital of Sri Lanka, Anuradhapura (3000 BC – 1100 AD.) instructively records expansion, addition, and such re-shaping without losing its primary expression as an administrative capital. As such, the cultural approach that is built in the design and building of these cities reinforced was integrated with the designing and building of these cities, reinforced a cultural continuity. This continuous reinterpreting of the urban space through use cultural productions making it into an inheritance. Therefore, the best way to practice the cultural approach would be by integrating with the design approach.

Philippot (1976) considers protection of heritage as

both cases instructively show the need to assess the values of these urban quarters and emphasise inherent values within the current cultural consciousness. This, revealing the particular way to signify the urban heritage, would enhance its well-intended use thus appreciating its heritage values.

The protection is often considered as a physical intervention in the international guidelines that promote minimum and reversible intervention. This is a mistake emerged from the intentions of looking for tangible witness. The urban heritage is not a physical object, and its values cannot be protected by physical intervention. The cultural approach, being a responsive place-oriented, would look beyond such universal denominators. For example in East, the heritage value was placed with the form rather than the shapes that were mere temporary containers of the form. They ensured the continuity of the form by reshaping the container as a form of veneration. Thus, conservation was a cultural activity. Annual lime coating on walls, cow-dung coating on floors, adding enclosures to the deteriorating stupas, or removing the rotten wood, they all were conservation actions that protected a heritage as a cultural activity. This enhanced the social structure, social organisation, and cultural identity for generations. The emphasis was placed with continuing the building or carpentry traditions rather than maintaining the objects.

This was the case with the urban space that was designed and designated for certain types of celebrations. The extensions were built to the urban spaces, urban wall was re-shaped, and temporary the modern way to reinforce links between past and present. It is the way to build a cultural continuity by informing man of his progress and supporting further development.

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