THE PERMANENCE OF BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Authenticity and Reconstruction: the keys

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Initially, in the mid-20th century, the conceptualization and application of the colonial reconstruction and conservation heritage in Latin America was based on definitions and parameters issued from Europe[1], but these first guidelines did not contemplate or promote cultural diversity, ethnic multiplicity and, above all, the use and social practices of the inhabitants for whom the cultural goods in question were constituted in the daily life of their national identity. The material authenticity value that had been acknowledged more than half a century ago, was not enough reason for their recognition and appropriation. Currently, deterioration statistics regarding the postcolonial urban centers are eloquent manifestations of the social disarticulation facing those urban and architectural permanencies that, based the public policy, have been imposed as anachronistic receivers of the communities' daily life.

At the end of the twentieth century the Southern Cone countries felt the need to rescue the cultural issue from their regional reality, expressing that the continent´s identity had been shaped by the confluence of two different currents: one syncretic and one of resistance under the confluence of diverse traditions, ratifying the defense of the indigenous period without disfavoring that of the European, in a way that included black and creole, and the nineteenth and twentieth century immigrants, understanding identity as a form of belonging and participation.

The San Antonio Declaration of 1996[2], a regional document that analyzed Nara´s vision formulated two years earlier[3] corroborates that authenticity is dynamic and that it can adapt, value, devalue and revalue the formal aspects and the symbolic contents of heritage. The aspect most relevant to Latin-American's heritage has been that there is no single identity, that it is heterogeneous, presenting different readings of time and place, all equally valid. Identity´s spectrum was broadened by recognizing the minority's values, not only those of dominant cultures, but also those who resisted colonization, deriving from those who arrived as slaves, and later those arriving as immigrants.

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[1] International charters since 1938

[2] The San Antonio Declaration on Authenticity in the Conservation and Management of Cultural Heritage, Inter-American Symposium ICOMOS 1996, Texas, United States

[3] Nara Document on Authenticity, ICOMOS Conference November 1994, Nara, Japan

At the start of the new millennium, the Summit of the Americas held in Quebec[4] opened the new era by supporting efforts aimed at the early and successful conclusion of negotiations on the draft of the American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which promoted and protected their fundamental rights and freedoms, considering the cultural diversity that characterizes the continent as a source of great wealth for society. Respect for and appreciation of that diversity should be a cohesive factor that strengthens the social fabric and encourages the development of all nations.

In all the Letters and Recommendations on Cultural Heritage in the Americas[5], the vast patrimony composed of the indigenous cultures is recognized as having an authenticity that has existed over a long period of time. The San Antonio Declaration set out to establish a process that helped in defining and protecting authenticity as the recognition of a wide range of important resources through a comprehensive and specific evaluation of the cultural value, context and the history of the site. The Burra Charter[6] and its operative guidelines would serve as a model for this process, which included administrative mechanisms to ensure the participation of all the interested groups.

All these efforts in understanding America´s spirit led to the realization that the cultural heritage of America was not just the European imprint on the continent; it also encompassed the ethnic diversities that took almost two hundred years to manifest themselves and be recognized. And this recognition implied a new way of assuming cultural heritage, which will not only be pre-Hispanic and that associated with the colonial past, but will also validate the recent, the vernacular, and the emergent, all identity manifestations inseparable from their way of lives and their natural environment, in which the past cultural assets, those recognized by the state, make up a list of resources fully separated from its symbolic world.

Cases of disconnection between cultural identity and the conservation of colonial heritage

Cultural heritage represents a long experience of original and unrepeatable ways of existing in the world. It represents the communities' evolution and, therefore, constitutes the basic reference for their identity. It is made up of both tangible and intangible heritage, both of which must be respected and protected. That identity, linked to the physical presence of the entity, depends on the social image that has been generated around it, and always, naturally or induced, its conceivable permanence becomes a forceful cultural manifesto. The community, strongly linked

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[4] III Summit of the Americas, 2001, Quebec, Canada
[5] America understood as the whole vast continent, including South, Central and North America.
[6] Burra Charter for Sites of Cultural Significance, ICOMOS 1999, Australia

to its heritage, will decide on its safeguarding, expressing the right for its perpetuity or reconstruction. In contrast, a State´s decision imposed over the collectivity will not express any affection for that continuity, and its possible stability or reconstruction will not find grounds for any intervention.

Facing the immense challenge of preserving all that we inherited, all that we are, and all that we represent, in the continent (America as a whole) we have adopted various forms of heritage intervention. This is because, within this vast cultural diversity, many groups coexist in the same space and time sharing many cultural manifestations, but frequently assigning different meanings to them. Human rights today recognize the convenience of adopting actions to compensate for these cultural asymmetries and ensuring the exercise of full citizenship under the principle of recognition and protection of cultural heritages. These rights become the basis of full nationality and make individuals, in the social collective, cultural protagonists.

Colonial architecture

The first Latin-American cultural laws were rooted in the safeguarding of European-referenced architecture, limited to an elite group of the population. With the passage of time and the social and economic transformations of the historical centers it was possible to confirm that the material authenticity value of this inheritance was not sufficient for its recognition and appropriation by the community that presently occupies these edifices; the necessary spiritual connection between the architecture and identity never generated the emotional bond necessary to forge the sense of continuity that these constructions required for their permanence in time, as stated in the UNESCO Intangible Heritage Convention[7]: "*Considering the profound interdependence that exists between the intangible cultural heritage and the material, cultural and natural heritage*".

The foregoing is demonstrated by the urban statistics throughout the continent. For example the cadastral case study of the historical center of Bogotá[8] indicates that 80% of the historic center is in a poor state of conservation. The figures are based on the quality of construction materials, age of the construction and maintenance of the mansions that constitute it. Much of the characteristic architecture has never had a relationship with the population that inhabits it today (change of ownership and use), which generated a lack of connection between the deep desires of those who granted the patrimony a national identity (government) with what would be its new ethnographic connection.

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[7] Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, UNESCO, Paris, 2003

[8] Beuf, Alice y Martínez, María Eugenia coordinadoras. Colombia centralidades históricas en transformación. Organización Latinoamérica y del Caribe de Centros Históricos OLACCHI, Quito, Ecuador, 2013

In the face of this reality, incentives and sanction[9] policies for the material conservation of cultural real estate have been imposed, among them the reconstruction of fallen property. Through the sanction of reconstructing in matching form, even if the architectural form and space is to be refurbished, neither the owner nor the community will give it any recognition in terms of cultural value, as distinct from the conferred government's value. Those who now maintain and transmit it in such poor conditions of conservation feel dissociated from the assignment.

Neither the flexibility towards the change of use, nor the economic stimulus for the survival of the building, nor the sanction of reconstruction have achieved, with the owner or with the community, the cultural recognition that from the government's point of view is embodied in the historic center houses. The legislative imposition for architectural-urban heritage's conservation is still an ongoing issue; the mandate for its preservation is not related to the individuals who live in them. That is why, through the responsibility of maintaining the Historic Urban Landscape scenario, gentrification is taking place.

Tenants in the mansions of Cuzco´s historic center

The preservation of these historical models has conformed to the adoption of international doctrines but has not been related to the community that inhabits them; while the historic centers are destroyed by the ruin of their architecture other indigenous manifestations begin to be incorporated as cultural heritage, arising with their own strength. Today´s reading of the historical urban manifestations demonstrates the symbolic abyss that exists between cultures.

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[9] National Cultural Law 763/2009

"chola"[10] architectural culture, Bolivia

Cultural syncretism has also been demonstrated by several decisions; another example would be the 1980's transformation in the blocks surrounding the site of the Great Temple of Mexico, where in the *zocalo*, the Mexicans did not hesitate to erase the material evidence of the Spanish colonial period, to recover the Aztec´s culture of Tenochtitlan.

History says that the local city fell in 1521 to the Spaniards and their indigenous allies, all under the command of Hernan Cortes. In 1535 the Viceroyalty of New Spain was officially created and, with recognition by a royal decree of 1545, the New Mexico City was established on top of the ancient Mexico-Tenochtitlan. Although Spanish colonization meant the cancellation of the way of life of the Mesoamericans, it also implied the starting point of Mexican culture. Nowadays, the historic center of Mexico City is made up of various constructions used throughout its history, promoting culture as a mechanism of legitimacy; the authenticity of the place has been validated by its declaration as Cultural Heritage of Humanity site in 1987 and so the *zocalo* becomes a new testimony of a past that was not annihilated, and that, through the archaeological rescue, is still present.

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[10] The word "cholo" is used in Latin America to define those people with mestizo traits, mix of indigenous and white races.

Templo Mayor Mexico City, Mexico

Another case is the city of Cuzco, where the acculturation process was and has remained, different. Formerly it was the capital of the Inca Empire and with the arrival of the Spaniards became one of the most important cities of the Viceroyalty of Peru. On top of the Inca stone architecture, the Spanish houses were built. Today the Historic Urban Landscape of Cuzco is proud of its outlines where the cultural syncretism is manifested in the conciliation of the Inca foundations and the colonial walls.

Historic Urban Landscape - streets in Cuzco

What happened to the historical centers of Chicago and of Santiago de Chile present contrasting examples of reconstruction in a new style, the one destroyed by fire and the other by earthquake, that reflect on the issue of historical permanence and the assessment of its permanence.

In the great fire of Chicago approximately 6 square km of the 19th century city was destroyed. The disastrous fire of 1871 lasted three days. As a result of the disaster, the fire code of the city of Chicago changed, making way for the age of the skyscrapers. The possibility of designing a new city was led by the emerging School of Chicago, founder of modern architecture movement. During the reconstruction period, creativity flourished and new ideas emerged to make Chicago the global icon of the modern skyscraper.

Artistic realization of the fire, by John R. Chapin,
originally printed in Harper's Weekly
The northeast of Randolph Street Bridge is shown.   ***Chicago´s skyline***

Authenticity as a key concept of living heritage: preserving the message of vernacular architecture

Material authenticity does not necessarily manifest itself in all cases as suggested by the principles of architectural heritage conservation[11]. The use of traditional techniques widely promoted in all recommendations on conservation of traditional values will drag time poetically.

The Charter on the Built Vernacular Heritage[12] states that these local constructions are the fundamental expression of the identity of a community and its relations with
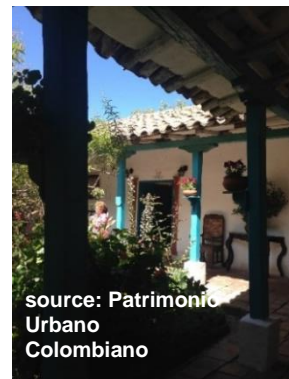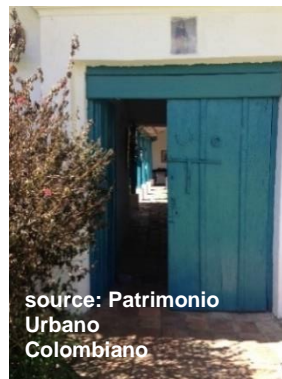
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[11] The principle of minimum intervention preserving the original form, material and substance; recognizable as a new when introduce new materials and techniques; and the principle of reversible when in the future if all of the new elements will be detached they will not displace the original elements.

[12] ICOMOS Charter on the Built Vernacular Heritage, ratified by the 12th General Assembly in Mexico, in October 1999

the surrounding area. How else can a peasant intervene in his house if it is not built with the region´s materials and applying ancestral techniques that keep alive the inherited architecture? Such is the case of my grandparent's country manor house, which underwent an interior remodeling, in which basic services were introduced. In the eyes of professionals in a recent classification of Colombian rural architecture, it was classified as an eighteenth century house, and the recent changes in details were cataloged as authentic. The answer is that vernacular architecture is the natural and traditional way in which communities have produced their own habitat and the continuance of doing so can never be mistaken as a mimesis. The unmerited label of "false historical" that in 1963 was published by Cesare Brandi in the Theory of Restoration, referring to monumental interventions where it was emphasized that "returning in time implied a falsification" should not be applied[13].

In this way, authenticity will remain implicit as part of a continuous process, which includes necessary changes and continuous adaptation in response to the social and environmental requirements of an individual or a community. There will be nothing explicitly sophisticated as the European charters admonish.

Manor House GOTUA in Firavitoba, Colombia

The Brasilia Charter[14] on authenticity and materiality states that an important part of the architectural heritage, especially that referring to traditional and vernacular architecture, is made up of materials that are ephemeral by nature, such as the earth, plant elements, wood, etc., and that in these cases, the renewal of living cultural practices, as well as the substitution of elements with traditional techniques, constitutes in an authentic response.

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[13] Brandi, Cesare. Theory of Restoration. Istituto Centrale per il restauro, Firenze, 2005
[14] Regional Document of the Southern Cone on Authenticity, ICOMOS Argentina, ICOMOS Brazil, ICOMOS Chile, ICOMOS Paraguay, ICOMOS Uruguay, V Regional Meeting of Icomos Brasil, 1995

The same occurs with the constructions of the aboriginal communities, which have always maintained their own spatiality and construction traditions, constantly reconstructing their environment without any other reason than the perishable nature of the building materials.

These are works with traditional techniques of the indigenous cultural heritage, which periodically replace parts of the buildings, or the same building in its entirety, defining the concept of the conservation of the architectural heritage not only in the material framework, but also in the immaterial, as use and vocation of social practices and traditional management methods.

Maloca is an ancestral communal house, used by the natives of the Amazon.
Is a sacred space, built by the community and represents life itself.
It is replaced every ten years approx. when the group moves to another place
to allow the regeneration of the area where they were settled.

Taking account of the heritage´s immaterial framework, the issue of authenticity and its message maintains that buildings and sites are material objects that carry an identity, but that tangible support should not be the sole objective of conservation. The original message of the buildings must be preserved, as well as their interaction between it and its new and different cultural circumstances that will make room for other messages, which are as rich as the first.

Based on this principle, the new work or its permanent replacement will not alter the perception of the authentic building because there should be correspondence between the material object and its meaning.

"The Vernacular Patrimony not only follows to the material elements, buildings, structures and spaces, but also the way in which it is used and interpreted by the community, as well as in the traditions and intangible expressions associated to it"[15].

It could be concluded that the connection between authenticity and identity is strongly influenced by the perspective of the vernacular, because it is created from the context itself, and that framework gives it a use and domiciles it as a permanent cultural form.

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[15] ICOMOS Charter on the Built Vernacular Heritage, ratified by the 12th General Assembly in Mexico, 1999

Authenticity: the authentic and the identic

The presence of a heritage stimulated only by its material aspect leads to a reconstruction that can be identical, a replica of the historical form, but that will no longer be the authentic one because it no longer has the relationship linked with the creative process that engendered it as a product of its time; instead, it will have become a work for the future, following the construction´s historical knowledge, with materials and techniques of the present, which of course, will express a vision more of the future, than of the past.

This cultural heritage's attitude leads to a series of questions about doing something identical in its formal aspect, without necessarily using the original construction materials and methods, but incurring, with all the coherence, within the social practices of the actual community; in this case, authenticity would have continuity as a socio-economic issue. On the other hand, maintaining the Historic Urban Landscape will appeal to the architectural memory, a material global commitment, which will necessarily imply gentrification.

Regarding applied technology, echoing what happened at Abu Simbel, the transfer of constructions from one place to another are also examples of how a property becomes like "furniture", losing much of its integrity and link with the place that gave it its authenticity. These actions turn reconstruction into a contemporary activity, a manoeuver of the qualities of authenticity such as the conditions of continuity and coexistence.

"movable" architecture

This would also be the case of a material heritage´s existence established by oral tradition; the reconstruction of a fantastic place that has been planned as a space

of recognition and appropriation so that locals and visitors can recognize the aspects of *Aracata´s* environment, the town where the Colombian recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature, Gabriel García Márquez was born.

It is important to note that Marquez´s original house, where he lived as a child, was demolished over forty years ago. The reconstruction was inspired from several sources. The first was the imagery of Marquez´s description in his autobiography '*Vivir para contarla*'. Other sources included explorations made on the premises, as well as different testimonies from family and friends, such as the writer´s mother Luisa Santiaga Marquez.

The reconstruction project led by the Ministry of Culture looked to recreate the characteristics of the architecture of the region, houses of planks and *bahareque* with zinc tile. This type of reconstruction could be considered as a modern component of the built cultural heritage, since it is a governmental interpretation of a place that seeks a physical anchorage for the memory of a historical figure.

Reconstruction by oral tradition – Gabriel García Márquez´s house

There is also another case of interest: "*In the twentieth century, the movement for the reconstitutions gained a special boom in North America, where the replicas of historic buildings are used as living museums and are a means of presentation and interpretation of the historical past much appreciated by the visitors. The most famous example is the reconstruction of the city of Williamsburg (Virginia) in the 1930s: 350 buildings of the 18th century was restored in a state of ruin and others from later periods were demolished to create an interpretation center for eighteenth-century colonial America"*[16].

Living history interpretation is a special form of communication that involves movable property and a pedagogical method to transmit and share certain values that contribute to the understanding of that site.

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[16] Christina Cameron, Should We Rebuild Cultural Heritage? The UNESCO Courier, no2. 2017

Williamsburg, an American city founded in 1632, was rebuilt with the purpose of recreating a "lost" historical site. This outdoor museum consists of a large majority of reconstructions of buildings and gardens from the colonial era, which, supported by numerous actors dressed in period costume, allows one to make an amazing trip to the British historical past of the origins of the nation, the white Protestant culture, dominant in those times.

Governor´s Palace   *Urban view*

All the cases allow us to consider that these types of management will recover not only the testimonial and documentary capacity of the space, but also the ability to stimulate the viewer, which was one of the essential factors that led to its reconstruction. It is possible to say that the inhabitants of these sites re-signify their heritage in a different way to the original consideration, under the framework of a social or tourism dynamic, where the economy of the place is also a way to manifest cultural patrimony.

This type of reconstruction is practiced serving as a witness of another era, as a means of interpretation, turning the property into an object. It is released from its essence to give continuity to the socioeconomic and contemplative functions of current times.

Reality demonstrates that the essence, the integrity of identity, resides not only in the origin, but also on the very existence of its passage towards the future; accordingly, some historical events occasionally result in aspects that some may wish to be erased, and others, through reconstruction methods, will become paradigms of memory recovery.

That is why, the concept of authenticity, understood as heritage´s passage through time, will not be only represented in the form of the building but in its evolution through time. Because the objective of reconstruction will not have as a purpose to disguise the chronology of the property, but to be the result of an inclusive process, of collective decision making, becoming an option to be considered in the future evolution of the structure.

XXI century, a new era

Indeed we are living a new era; we have appropriated a twentieth-century concept that considers the history of cultural heritage as incorporating its interventions, in which it appears individualized in its peculiar form of being, not by the creative process that originated it, not even by its attributes, but by their way of "being", by the impact of its presence in society.

The permanence of the inheritance is expressed in the cultural value arising from its relationship with the social activities: its manufacture, undoubtedly one of its characteristics, will not be the main object of its subsistence; the environmental aspects of its location and the immaterial values that link it directly with the community will now be included. The story of its authenticity will no longer rely on constructive materials, as was required years ago for the maintenance of the manufacture, avoiding its replacement, because it conformed to the traditional continuity of the place; environmental and sustainability issues will currently guide the material decisions of the new intervention.

Nothing is built for eternity, nor is it good for all ages. With the passage of time countless buildings will be subject to change of use, but others will manage to maintain their essence because the community will insist on their stability. Today's interventions will mark a new direction in heritage conservation, rescuing the meaning of the intangible values of architectural heritage as a spatial attribute that links with people and events.

City of Popayan, Colombia, earthquake 1983 identical Reconstruction

The problems affecting cultural heritage are directly related to each nations' identity and respond to current cultural interest. With the entry into play of the functional

authenticity affirmed by Nara´s Document, the protection of the intangible heritage elements such as the community uses, links people and events with sacred attributes and rituals that can shelter any patrimonial site, and which often come to deserve equal or even greater consideration than the conservation of their material elements. Although the theories of the Nara´s Document seemed to be a simple justification of Japanese heritage traditions, UNESCO has come to realize that they have a direct application to the entire world´s cultural heritage. Nara has made us see that wherever it may be, the tangible is inseparable from the intangible; that the tangible heritage is simply the container of the intangible that gives it its relevance and social meaning. This is demonstrated in the European publications on heritage which since the late twentieth century have been adopting new positions on cultural heritage: cases such as the construction of the Sydney Opera House, declared a World Heritage Site, notify UNESCO that although the fabric is the factor giving rise to othe world heritage classification category, it is the users who will have the right to keep the theatre in operation with updated technologies, which could involve eventually intervening in the "original" building.

Conclusions

The conservation of Latin American's colonial heritage has been dominated by the European vision of the 19th century, revealed, in some cases, through the deteriorated presence of the architecture and urbanism of the historic centers. This does not apply in the case of vernacular architecture conservation, because the concept of conservation here is connected to the territory in a multidimensional way, considering the practices and the uses of its inhabitants.
This is how the preservation of the continent's heritage, linked to European history, although not in crisis, is no longer the *sine qua non* cultural manifestation of the post-colonized States. Today, the principles and criteria on the preservation of the territories' cultural heritage values, as material containers of the past, requires adjustment to fit the different ways of belonging to the world that surrounds them.

For Latin-America, while principles of authenticity and reconstruction are being discussed on the base of nineteenth-century European philosophy, reconstruction is not a problem for indigenous or rural ways of life. It is present as a daily way of living, as the natural trajectory of geographically-based construction sources that are viewed as perishable. Reconstruction does not exist as a fundamental problem; it is only a tool for cultural identity transmission.

But in the case of the urban architecture inborn from colonization, where European concepts are applied to it, reconstruction is seen as a punishment imposed on account of the lack of the building´s maintenance, as a repressive measure, rather than as a memory recovery exercise. It has become a legislative way to maintain

presence that does not have social appropriation: demanding its conservation the questions arise - of whose patrimony, or to be rebuilt for whom?

It is imperative to understand the concept of authenticity as something that is part of a permanent process of establishing meaning, where reconstruction is a task that responds to the social practices and uses of a community, or to a contemporary activity of the building´s presence message.

The arguments in favor of reconstruction should always consider the participation of the communities, either because it is a factor of transmission of traditional techniques, or because it becomes a tool of reconciliation, or an instrument of regeneration, where its legitimacy is a key ingredient in understanding the true meaning of cultural heritage and in establishing how it should be intervened with.

Therefore, reconstruction is not just a tool for recovering the traumatized authenticity of heritage! It is also a tool to give continuity to the fundamental values of cultural property. It implies both the preservation of the historical model and/or the recognition of a daily exercise of many other territorial manifestations that emerge with strength as additional source of cultural heritage.

Reconstruction marks a new direction in what the intangible values of the architectural heritage mean, supported by authenticity as a concept that surpasses that of the building´s material originality. Bearing in mind these concepts, architecture will be granted an eternal life.

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