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Cultural Petition on the Preservation Project

“It is on proper diagnosis and prognosis that the future of our discipline (which in the present interdisciplinary development we are increasingly frequently calling ‘heritology’)”

Andrzej Tomaszewski, Florence 2009

1. Introduction

The preservation of the cultural estate reaches its aims when it makes man able to use in a free way his nonmaterial capacities in the respect of the ethical values. For this reason the preservation faces with social problems strictly connected to the human ecosystem. The observations contained in the following paragraphs, aim only at introducing a complex theme, as today, in a world so oriented to globalization, this argument requires attention and deeper studies, necessary to become able to compare different cultural realities.

2. Cultural Petition

The preservation of the cultural estate, when faced in a sectorial and limited way, does not have any valuable validation in both theoretical and applied context. The preservation of movables, real estates or intangibles has different positive aims when it allows men to live in strict relation with the their environment practicing actions related to their cultural values. The methods that allow recognizing a *value* depend from the social, economic and political context where men have developed. The need to research these *values* rises from the opportunity to have real and cultural references that allow men to make their choices and to make sense to their present and future life. In this way the relation between *values* and *needs* rises. It is related to another interesting subject that deals with the change of the living condition in the today's society that modifies the relation between *preservation* and *fruition* of monuments and of the whole city.

These concepts are the foundation of theories and of interventions that are practiced to protect and preserve the heritage of the world. More precisely, if we analyze the methods and the intervention criteria performed in different social, cultural, economic and political contexts we can note a common factor related to the relation between the historical value and the use value. This last relationship is not submitted to fix criteria but, on the contrary, is based on continuous new interpretations strictly related to the cultural environment.

A cultural petition is an ethical action that moves and justifies the human activities; for this reason it doesn't need any explication. The preservation needs rise from its satisfaction. A preservation project realizes this satisfaction through the knowledge of goods. When this knowledge makes the need of conservation real, it becomes possible to find all the criteria and intervention procedures respecting the principles contained in all the cultural petitions that move the human activities. The cultural petition, as an ethical action, is strictly connected to men and their environment and so it has got an ecological meaning; starting from this point the preservation project becomes concrete as ecological action. In this sense the preservation of the cultural estate becomes one of the essential references for the collectivity growth, and on this, States and formative institutions play an ultimate role.

Trying to show this indissoluble connection between men, cultural goods, knowledge and preservation we put in comparison two realities geographically and culturally very different. It's not in an offhand way; both are well known fields where the preservative process walks on precise ethical principles and consequently on cultural petitions that we can't generalize as they find their reasons on men and on their environment.

3. *The preservation in Japan*

As concerns the cultural preservation in Japan, the image reflected is that of a strong cultural diversification compared to West. At first, the space doesn't exist as physical entity but is perceived as related to the pass of time. A meaningful example of this is certainly the constant activity of reconstruction applied every twenty years to the suggestive shintoist sanctuary of Ise-Jingu in Ise. The definition of space itself, the MA, doesn't mean "sense of place", that's to say a perception of space that varies depending on different individuals every time they enjoy of a particular place, the idea is that the real existence of everything doesn't coincide with a physical reality; the experience of visiting the place is predominant, as the poetical evocation of the place in its beauty connected to nature. More than preserving the matter it predominates the will of conveying the constructive



Fig. 1. Ise Jingu is a Shinto shrine located in the city of Ise in Mie prefecture, Japan (in Isozaki, Arata. *Japan-ness in Architecture*. Cambridge (Mass)-London: The MIT Press, 2006).

technique and the ability in its realization. This last aspect is very important because it permits to pass on methods and operative criteria, that in our western hemisphere are lost or that we try to recover using analytical approaches on the existing.

Another important aspect of the Japanese preservation is the awareness of the change, as an essential part of the existence; so we talk about "impermanency". There is nothing that we could classify as permanent, in the different areas (animated or nonliving, organic or inorganic) unavoidably the reality, as the life itself, is always changing and subject to metamorphosis. The impermanency of the reality is a cul-



Fig. 2. ZEN Garden: the impermanence. Shosei en Garden, Kyoto (Photo: Olimpia Niglio, 2009).

tural petition of primary importance in everyday life as in preservation and finds its roots in the Zen culture.

4. *The preservation in Colombia*

Very different is the situation in Colombia, where we find a preservation culture more addicted to dogmatic references. We remember Colombia's history starting from the XVI century but its real origins are farther in time. Starting from the first colonization the huge social devastations and the consequent cultural distorting have determined the total deletion of the country's values. Meanwhile the scant source of references transplanted from West Europe, and their lack of integration with its reality, has produced a serious estrangement of man from everything that has been realized. So, starting from the XIX century, we witness a true will of nullify all the colonialism signs, then, we face the arrival of the republican movement to end with the American colonization, so the permanency of devastating actions in every field (social, economic, cultural, ethic, historical, etc.) that in the XX century stimulated the birth of the modernizing movement; the result of all these examples is a reality that can't follow its natural evolution due to historical reasons. That reality is still strictly conditioned by external factors that, starting from the XVI century, have perverted

Figs. 3-4.
Bogotá,
San Ignacio
Church.
Restoration
by Institute
"Carlos
Arbeláez
Camacho para
el patrimonio
arquitectónico y
urbano-ICAC"
(Photo: Olimpia
Niglio, 2010).



and debased the civilization values of this territory. Starting from the middle of the XX century and thank to the work of the professor Carlos Arbeláez Camacho, founding father of the first “Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas” in Bogotá (from 2001 “Instituto Carlos Arbeláez Camacho para el patrimonio arquitectónico y urbano”, Pontificia Universidad Javeriana) the attention focused on this alarming situation and so it started the recovery of what the historical events had wiped off.

The preservation in Colombia, after sixty years from the first experiences of restoration in architecture, is always more oriented to retrieve the authentic values, also the archaic ones, typical of the community. It isn't a problem of preservation of the matter, it is more something oriented to retrieve and so preserve the historical, artistic and ethic values, that put the basis of the existence of the architecture object of study assuring the authentic preservation of the above quoted values in the respect of the differences cultural requirements, with the awareness that they are basic to put man back together with his environment.

Figs. 5-6. Bogotá Faenza Theater before and after the restoration, by Claudia Patricia Hernández and Alfredo Montaña Bello (from: Hernández Molina, Rubén; Niglio, Olimpia. *Experiencias y métodos de restauracion en Colombia*. Rome: 2011).



5. *Conclusions* in itinere

All the examples quoted and here only summarized are useful to show how the cultural requirement is fundamental in a preservative process. The two cases of study have apparently different methodological approaches but the common point is the essential role of the cultural requirement, fundamental for a planning revolution that could encourage the integration between man and environment, civilization and material needs. It will not be the cultural universality but the intellectual sensibility that, respecting men and the distinctive features of their environment, will encourage the preservation of the estate in the name of the different cultural requirements that will intervene in the definition of the policy for the defense of the humanity estate.

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