Cultural heritage and urban sustainability: a case study from Central Anatolia

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Abstract

Sustainability is a notion searching a compatibility between use and the protection of the resources. The environment either natural or man-made deserves to be conserved as they are limited and have to be in use of future generations. The built-environment is composed of modern constructions as well as the remains of the past. They reflect a cultural evolution and have a distinct identity. Thus, cultural built heritage is a concern of urban sustainability and its conservation requires a multi-disciplinary, multi-period effort. Conservation being a well developed facet of planning is connected with the concept of liveability and the management of cultural heritage.

In this paper a small town in Central Anatolia is tried to be introduced within its historical context and current situation shortly, and its future is tried to be discussed under the light of the above given concepts.

1 Introduction

The term sustainability has been a key word for various subjects and professions concerning the continuity of human life with his surrounding. The definition covers the basic principle that there must be compatibility between use and the qualitative and quantitative conservation of resources. In this sense, sustainability can be thought of in two main categories, each of which cannot be considered alone. When the protection of the environment is mentioned, it includes not only the natural but also the built environment. Here, in this paper the main concern will be on the sustainability of the built one. Even in this case the subject needs to be limited, as the built environment implies constructions of all types including transport means, infrastructure, public utilities where the
individuals spend their time living, working, dwelling, recreating, shortly surviving and as a result of these, causing modifications to the natural environment [1].

Such a definition leads to the fact that sustainability of the built environment is in direct relation with a continuous change, preferably in a condition of evolution. The built environment is subjected to grow, develop, decline and adapt. This state of evolution is unavoidable and necessary, as it replies to the economic and social demands of the day, and is parallel to the technological improvements. It is acceptable unless it ruthlessly sweeps away the existing and starts from the very beginning.

Spatial development of the built environment brings the concept of sustainability if a re-use is realised. There is a close relation between the terms of sustainability and conservation. Indeed conservation activity covers the fact that the existing and what is borrowed from the past, must be handed down to the future. Aiming to pass those of the past to the future, while being used currently, the term conservation bears the idea of sustainability as both terms have the notions of 'receiving and transmitting' in them.

Settlements are not merely arenas for economic and social progress but a display area for a considerable amount of collections from previous cultural achievements. Larkham [2] notes depending on Clark that, civilisation can be defined as 'a sense of permanence' and describes the civilised man as 'he who feels himself belonging to somewhere in time and space'. Urban space is not merely composed of the new and active buildings. Furthermore, what is new for today is the cultural asset of the future. Cities are composed of a variety of immovables some of which give an identity to the physical space. Most of the buildings that identify an urban space is a collection of the cultural heritage, composing an important part of the built environment. Cultural heritage is a wide-ranging concept where monuments of amazing appearance, may take place together with the modest size and effect residential zones. Traditional city centres, gardens, open-spaces, arteries connecting all, are encompassed in the term [3]. The internationally accepted conventions beginning from the Venice Charter-1964, extending to Amsterdam Declaration-1975, Florence Charter-1981, Granada Convention-1985 and La Valette Convention-1992 all cover the definitions and principles on conservation of cultural heritage in the context of sustainable urban spatial development. Especially, the resolutions of the 1996 Helsinki Conference of European Ministers emphasize the need to develop further, the concept of integrated conservation mechanisms by incorporating the cultural heritage within a process of sustainable development.

Urban spatial development is a multi-aspect policy in which the enhancing and conservation of the cultural built heritage meets the needs of the modern society. Therefore, it is severely in need of the co-operation and participation of the concerning groups.
Cultural built heritage can be defined as any kind of construction activity that mankind has gathered up his intelligence, skill and knowledge. The aesthetic view of the subject is another concern, as it depends on the worldview, artistic taste, cultural value and evaluation of the period upon which the asset is examined.

2.1 The definition and meaning of cultural built heritage

By definition cultural built heritage is composed of monuments, groups of buildings in urban and rural context, and of sites. The sites can be interpreted as the archaeological (the remnants of the settlements of past civilizations which are out of current use), and the urban. As defined by the Council of Europe [4] ‘historic towns and quarters in urban and rural built-up areas, having a homogeneous and / or distinctive character’, can be accepted as the cultural built heritage. The next century will probably consider the abundant industrial zones within the lists of preservation.

Cultural built heritage is mostly an inseparable part of the nature, or in other words it can be stated that they are the result of the collaborative work of man and nature together. In this sense the protection or the demolition of one, affects the other somehow. Groups of buildings as works of architecture in urban or rural areas, historic urban sites or area-based protection mechanisms rather than single monuments are meaningful. Cultural built heritage is not solely the concern of monuments, but the historical urban fabric, including the single outstanding buildings, residents, traditional city centres with commercial zones and even street furniture as their complement. Altogether they compose the character, cultural identity of the built environment enriched with the natural surrounding specific to the area. The notion of culture, covers the whole production of human mind and therefore carry a symbolic meaning. It is enriched by a continuous evolution in reaching a collective consciousness.

Sabri indicates that the ‘identity rooted deeply in the cultural values of a society, reflects in urban form as the “sense of place” at different scales’ [5]. The historical memory of a society is reflected on the built environment they have created. The meaning of belonging to a space is more than a moral effect, because it helps the society to progress, and to the continuation of the civilization.

The cultural built heritage is indeed a bridge between the history and future of a society with physical, tangible objects where the historical identity meets the current socio-economic importance attributed.

2.2 The concern of urban sustainability

The urban historical fabric, apart from being the identity of a society, is at least a considerable amount of existing building stock that is ready to be put into use efficiently. Therefore, their protection is a realistic approach in planning for
sustainability, as it will be a systematic recycling of the precious material at hand carrying an appreciation of history and meaning. These zones within the modern city play a catalytic role in environmental policies. Cultural built heritage is a prominent source of socio economic development by offering several opportunities. Although the relationship between the cultural value and the economic value may not always act in the same direction, the social value achieved is an important benefit for the inhabitants of the city. In fact, the city is a platform of social conflicts and economic competitions of various groups of interests [6]. The fact that must be kept in mind is that the aim of the economic activities is the human beings. The cultural built environment cannot be merely the subject of industrial and/or economic planning, as it is a reflection of the life itself. Indeed sustainable development is the sum of improvement activities that meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the capacity those of the future to meet their own needs [7].

The evaluation of the cultural built heritage within the principles of sustainability requires multi-disciplinary, multi-people and multi-period approaches, handling of technical and non-technical aspects. Among them conservation is practical tool to be used.

The conservation of environmental sources is the basic condition of the survivability of economic development.

3 Conservation and sustainability

In definitions given in dictionaries for the terms of protection, preservation and conservation more or less the same descriptions are given. Although they all mean to keep secure, under control, especially the last two carry a special role in urban progress. Preservation is perhaps the first step for the cultural built heritage to keep it still standing and safe. Mostly have a tendency of being related with legislative affairs. On the other hand, conservation involves preservation but is always more than that, because it carries the mission of bringing an area of cultural importance back to life.

Conservation of the cultural built heritage is not an isolated subject. It needs the co-ordination of the various sectoral policies such as the natural environment, urbanism, spatial planning, economics and social policy. Depending on this, several actors, both public and private, take a part to pursue a specific goal. The goal is not a physical effort only; it is a social one, which is traced at local, regional and state levels. Conservation brings with it tangible benefits like "net job creation, income effects for producers and suppliers, stimulation of investments, socio-economic stabilization of the neighbourhoods, potential magnet effects for high quality development and improved aesthetics of the area" [8]. Conservation is a well-developed facet of planning.

Heritage conservation has to be selective, because man protects what he uses. Buildings, which have completely lost their functionality, are left to decay, so change up to an acceptable degree is a necessity. Besides trying to conserve a single entity does not mean much. Generally if is accepted that conservation activity must cover a historical urban fabric with all its peculiarities. Such an
‘integrated conservation’ of the cultural built heritage is of eminent importance as they point mostly to the social depredation zones of the settlements. Integrated conservation is not only an effort to increase the physical conditions of the area but also a regeneration of derelict urban areas by achieving the well being of the people involved. The improvement of the conditions of welfare in the city and especially in historic urban zones is directly connected with ‘liveability’ and ‘management of cultural heritage.

3.1 Liveability and management of cultural heritage

The socio-economic development obtained is an important data in the physical improvement to achieve ‘liveability’. A better environment to live leads to a higher moral effect, resulting in better financial income. The liveability of the cultural built heritage is obtained through conservation.

Liveability is an aspect of long-term sustainability of housing and building and the urban habitat, describes the characteristics of a good settlement. A good settlement is expected to propose sufficient hygiene conditions, chance for sufficient education, work and recreation for the members of the society who uses it. The expectations not only cover physical but also social and economic upgrading. Useability appears to be the primary criterion of liveability.[9]

An important expectation of urban planning is the aim to improve the conditions for welfare and well being in the city. Management of cultural heritage must identify the mechanisms and strategies to co-ordinate the issues of funding, organization of public and private agencies. The policies settled must be coherent with all the interested groups. Even though they are announced on behalf of the communities, unless they are an active part of the play, the result expected will never be realised or at least will fail somehow. Integrated public strategies in using and managing the cultural built heritage as a source for long-term urban sustainability is a must. Public authorities, private organizations, local governments are decision makers and appliers. In case active public participation is included the management of the cultural heritage cannot be realised.

As a final factor, achieving a liveable cultural built environment is a problem of continuous finance. The source of income differs from one country to the other. In some the absence of state institutions is found unrealistic, while in others this is totally a matter of the decentralized authorities or only of the private sector.

It can easily be stated that heritage conservation is a multi-functional and multi-actor task that need the communication of all who are involved in the process. The cultural built heritage and urban sustainability integrity is tried to be tested in a Central Anatolian town as a case study.

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4 Incesu - an urban historic settlement from Central Anatolia

Recent archaeological excavations have revealed that the urban life in Asia-Minor has started as early as 5,000 B.C. The area has been the land of trespassers both from east and the west. Various groups choosing a convenient place to settle and build up a civilization of their own depended on their background and on what they have borrowed from the natives. In time they have been the natives in the eyes of the newcomers. The result is a mosaic of cultures where interrelations and correspondent effects cannot be denied.

Researchers claim that nearly forty different cultures have been distinguished either on or under the earth. This situation leads to the fact that existing Anatolian cities are established on archaeological remains. Decisions concerning urban development coincide with urban archaeology or at least with the traditional urban fabric, facing urban planners with the problems of sustainability.

Acting Anatolian settlements directly share the urban fabric of the 19th century with modern constructions. The 19th century Anatolian society was composed of Moslems and Non-Moslems. Moslem Turks and Christian Greeks have composed the Central Anatolian town Incesu, where the research is done. The research covers the architectural features as well as social and spatial characteristics. Currently a dense out migration is observed. Social and spatial problems are investigated to revaluate the cultural built heritage without compromising the future developments.

4.1 On the location and history of Incesu

Incesu is situated at the east end of the Central Anatolian plateau near Kayseri, the old Caesarea, and also the east end point of Cappadocia. The geological formation also points out to a certain state that Incesu is at the junction point of the Anatolian steps and the peculiar tufa composition of Cappadocia.

The settlement is hidden in a valley created by a small stream and is located at both sides of it.

It is not quite clear whether the area is used during the Antique period, but researchers claim that it is occupied by a native Anatolian group of either Phyrigian or Hittitian origin. This group has accepted Christianity during the Byzantine period. They have been named as the "Rum", the Turkish saying of Roman, after the Turkoman tribes have migrated to Anatolia starting from the 11th century [10]. Very few is known about the settlement during the Seljuk and Ottoman period. It seems to have been quitted in time, as the earliest document in the 17th century is about to re-establish it, by the construction of a monumental complex that will encourage new comers. The Ottoman archive sources of the mid 19th century indicate to the existence of the two societies, Moslem Turks and the Christian Greeks (Rum).

The settlement is now a county of the city of Kayseri and is occupied by the Turkish only, after the Greeks have migrated depending on the Exchange Convention in 1923 between the Turkish and the Greek states.
4.2 Cultural built heritage in Incesu

Cultural built heritage in Incesu is composed of monumental buildings and modest size dwellings surrounding them. Customarily the monumental buildings of an Ottoman settlement of small size are settled near the end points of the housing area. In other words, residential areas surrounded the religious buildings, somehow located at the two ends of the settlement. Thus the districts of the inhabitants having different religions are never separated from each other, but are dense around their holy buildings. As the population increased both communities have shared the districts in between. Thus, they have shared the same streets and have been neighbours.

4.2.1 About the monumental buildings

The most distinctive building in Incesu is an Ottoman complex /The Kara Mustafa Pasa Kulliye, which is composed of a mosque, a caravansarai, a commercial centre, a public kitchen, a Turkish bath, two schools and a building with an unknown function. The complex is located at the entrance of the town at the banks of the stream. Apart from the complex two mosques and two fountains from the 19th century are worth mentioning. The two Greek Orthodox churches are located at the two sides of the valley facing each other. One of them has a basilica plan as frequently met in Anatolia, the other must have been a complex having a monastery but now in ruins.

4.2.2 Traditional urban fabric

Incesu traditional urban fabric is the only example carrying its characteristics completely among the other Cappadocian settlements. As it has been in all Anatolian settlements it has been shaped depending on the topographical data. The dwellings are located parallel to the slopes opening to the stone paved streets that are formed along the land counters. Stairs or slopes connect the parallel streets to each other naturally (Fig. 1).

The dwellings are so arranged that they give the effect of terrace houses, each using the roof of the one before it for various purposes. The integrated fabric of the buildings is surprising as it is difficult to understand where one house ends and the other begin. Same is true with the topography. Natural and man-made environment seem to be an inseparable complex. This is partly because some of the dwellings make use of the topography with rock-hewn spaces.

4.2.3 Characteristics of traditional dwellings

Each dwelling is composed of more than one unit construction within a courtyard. At the first glance each unit can be described as a rectangular prismatic or cubic block, made of the local stones.

The main space composition of the house has a tripartite system; open, semi-open and closed. The living spaces are encircled around the multi-functional and multi-level courtyards. Most of the daily activities of the family like food processing, carpet weaving still occur in this open space. The closed spaces
opening to the courtyard carry service functions, some of which have rock-hewn extensions. The courtyards are enriched with semi-open spaces at the same level or at the first floor.

Stone stairs that help to reach to the closed spaces of the first floor find their place at a convenient corner of the courtyard. Here the semi-open space makes the crown of the house bearing one of the two decorative parts of the building (Fig. 2). It is a space of pleasure so as to achieve the best climatic effects in different seasons. The closed space, room, of the upper floor is indeed used for many purposes as living, sleeping, resting, entertaining guests etc. (Fig. 3)
4.2.4 Past and present social composition

Incesu reflects the typical social formation and its physical space composition of an Ottoman settlement in the 19th century. The Ottoman society is mainly composed of communities who live together peacefully in general. Although the beliefs have stopped marriages between different religions and even sects, the customs are frequently spoiled. However, they have been sharing towns, districts and even have been close neighbours for more than seven centuries. It shows that the Ottoman family regardless of religious differences has been the same in many aspects.

Firstly, patriarchal family organization is essential. It is a big family of at least three generations living together. It is an introverted family life, self-producing. Only the main consumption or luxury materials like salt, spices are bought. The rest have to be produced at home. Thus the spaces are shaped to reply to the needs of this society. Each room acts as the house of one family where all the daily activities are realised. The house has to serve to certain production processes as seasonal food preparing and storing, textile or carpet weaving, vegetable growing and drying etc. This means sufficient open space either under direct sun or in shadow. Apart from these, it is equipped with the technology of its day and its construction depends on the technology and materials available.

The research that was done during 2000 have clearly showed that most of the original owners have migrated. This has begun with the migration of the Greeks at the beginning of the last century. Internal migration speeding up after 1950’s to the cities for better job and life have resulted with a decline in the family composition. In general the cultural built heritage in many settlements of Anatolia left their places to new constructions or abandoned. The new nucleus family, composed of the parents and children, is after current technological progress. Incesu can be found luckier, as the neighbouring villagers migrating to the abandoned traditional dwellings, have occupied it this time. The new comers are accustomed to traditional life style, but this also lasted for one generation. During the last ten years the static life style, lack of social welfare activities, limited chance of education and economic downfall depending on agriculture accelerated a third migration. Those who still stay are mostly the old or the very poor who cannot find the courage to move. As a result of this condition Incesu is nearly an abundant town where the cultural built heritage is still trying to survive but no longer serving.

5 Epilogue or what can be done for Incesu?

It is certain that every society deserves to achieve the standards that urban contemporary life offers. Liveability somehow depends on urban quality, but the cost must not be paid with the loss of urban identity. The urban environment is not only the technological image of the day but a reflection of the society it is created by and carry an evolution in culture. Even though the society has changed the same cultural roots still give the spaces their meaning, their identity.
Unless a new economic means is inserted to the area which will help to raise the life quality it no longer possible to keep the cultural built heritage. Sustainability of the built environment and cultural identity can only be possible if the physical conditions and life style is progressed. Cultural built heritage is a must for urban identity and to safeguard the built environment sustainability is needed.

In order to achieve a better life in the future, education of the society on the subject matter, coherent socio-economic policies guided and applied by public and private sectors equally and active democratic participation where all the agents of the society take part is a must. Towards a future, sustaining the built and natural environment, within social equity.

References


