Limitations to community involvement in rehabilitation of historic areas

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Abstract

Sustainable development considered today by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) as a powerful motivation for urban conservation. Basically, it is a process of urban development based on constant reuse of existing built and natural resources, associated with a low input of energy for adaptation to new requirements conceived in society. This process founded in the local culture, and its capacity to encourage rehabilitation strategy and re-use of historic buildings.

Housing renewal of historic areas in the urban conservation strategy, besides being a process of returning a property to a state of utility, is also a tool to preserve architectural and historical significance. The main aim of housing renewal in historic areas is mainly to supply comfort for the residents by improving their living conditions, keep the population live on site, reuse of forgiven traditional crafts, and to raise the cultural awareness of the architectural patrimony and the cultural heritage.

This paper explores the dialogue approach as one of the applied techniques in community involvement in rehabilitation of historic areas and mainly in housing renewal projects. The limitations of this technique at different phases of the rehabilitation process are discussed. During survey, design and construction stages, there is a constant interaction, at different levels between technical and social matters, and between professional advisers and building users. The advisers should thus consider both social and technical aspect of the improvement work. The paper conclude that keeping an ethic of conservation and maintaining good quality of work through community involvement are one of the essential measures that the professional team should consider during the rehabilitation process.
1 Introduction

In order to discuss the role of community involvement in conservation of historic areas, a short introductory to the new trends and conceptual approach in conservation of cultural heritage considered by the International organizations such as, UNESCO, ICCROM, ICOMOS are discussed. This will help the reader to see the connection between cultural development and sustainable development.

Cultural heritage considered today as one of the key elements in building sustainable society. The World Commission on the Environment and Development (WCED) defined sustainable development as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. And sustainable economy in more practical terms is the product of sustainable development. It maintains its natural resource base and continues to develop by adapting and through improvements in knowledge, organization, technical efficiency and wisdom. The WCED set nine principles for sustainable society, among them principles, which are directly related to cultural heritage as non-renewable resources. These principles are: minimize the depletion of nonrenewable resources, change personal attitudes and practices, enable communities to care for their own environments and provide a national framework for integrating development and conservation.

From the perspective of sustainability, cultural heritage is understood as a non-renewable resource. It carries some of the most important cultural values of a society (identity, memory, self-consciousness and artistry), and is a resource capable of attributing values to new things through the creation of new processes based on established values. As a product of humanity, a city is an artefact composed of several historically recognizable parts of strata. There may be no historic center as such, nor specified historic areas, but rather an historic urban structure that regenerates itself through the use of characteristic elements and processes.

Historic towns and cultural landscape are being recognized as an essential part of cultural heritage, for Example by the Council of Europe and the UNESCO World Heritage Committee. In the late 1980s, the issue of conservation and management of historic urban and rural areas was seen in a new light, partly as a result of increased concern for the environment and conditions of poverty in many developing countries, and also in part due to the major natural disasters, political changes and armed conflicts. Increased attention was being addressed to social issues and community involvement.

In 1995 a workshop on Urban Conservation Initiative was held at ICCROM in 1995 with participation of UNESCO, World Heritage Center, ICOMOS, Organization of World Heritage Cities, and the several other organization. The participant agreed about the complexity of the situation, and attempted to define problem area. It was essential to consider historic urban areas together with their social and cultural context and not to look only at the material part of this heritage. Urban conservation was seen as a long process guided by necessities, where change and rate of change were integral elements of any sustainable development Jokilehto [1].
A city is a functional entity that must satisfy the requirement of its users. A town is considered ‘historic’ if it is associated with relevant concept and values. Such association is often seen in the elements of the city that have been there for a long time and have contributed to its identity, for example, ancient monument, public square and other physical features. The tendency today is to understand cultural heritage in its broadest sense Greetz [2], as containing all the signs that document the activities and achievement of human beings over time.

2 Ethic and measures of conservation

In the urban planning context, revitalization means the planning measures that are necessary to improve the physical, social and economic activities of a historic area or a historic town, which has lost its original functional vitality and as a consequence, historic buildings and urban spaces have become redundant and dilapidated. The aim of revitalization should be an appropriate balance between conservation and development. The revitalization of historic area which is economically run down may require the rehabilitation of a large number of typical dwellings as well as obsolete buildings such as to ensure a minimum intervention and minimum loss of cultural values; this also makes sense economically. The closer the new use of rehabilitated building is to its original use, the less the work will cost and the better it is for the urban plan as a whole.

Intervention practically always involves some loss of a value in cultural property, but is justified in order to preserve the objects for the future. Conservation involves making interventions at various scales and levels of intensity, which are determined by the physical, condition, levels and causes of deterioration and anticipated future environment of the cultural property under treatment.

The intervention method should be minimalist to bring help for more urgent needs. There is a need to maintain the maximum of authenticity Larsen [3]. All the additions have to be distinct from the original conditions. Thus the best way of preserving building as opposed to objects is to keep them in use. A practice which may involve what the French call ‘mise en valeur’, or modernization with or without adaptive alteration. The original use is generally the best for conservation of the fabric, as it means fewer changes. If additions are required, they should be built in materials that are compatible with those of the existing structure. If additional materials are not available new materials should utilized in a manner that does not underline the conservation of the original structure.

To make sure the mentioned objectives are achieved, one should keep an eye all the time on the ethics of conservation measures. These could be defined as follows:

- The condition of building before any intervention and all methods and materials used during treatment must be fully documented.
- Historic evidence must not be destroyed, falsified or removed.
- Any intervention must be governed by unswerving respect for the aesthetic, historical and physical integrity of cultural property.
- Any proposed intervention should;
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- Be reversible, if technically possible.
- At least nor prejudice a future intervention whenever this becomes necessary;
- Not hinder the possibility of later access to all evidence incorporated in the object;
- Allow the maximum amount of existing material to be retained;
- Be harmonious in color, tone, texture, form and scale, if additions are necessary, but should be less noticeable than original material, while at the same time being identifiable.
- Not be undertaken by conservator/restorers who are insufficiently trained or experienced, unless they obtain competent advice. However it must be recognized that some problems are unique and have to be solved from first principles on a trial-and-error basis.

Stovel [4] in the Bergen preparatory Workshop held in January-February 1994 and summarized five aspects of authenticity that are:

- Form, Design.
- Material, substance.
- Function, use.
- Contexts, settings, spirit.
- Techniques, tradition and process.

3 Community involvement

During the last two decades, there has been a considerable movement towards the direct involvement of the public in the definition of their physical environment.

In 1964, Otto Koenisgberger set out an alternative approach to conventional planning, consisting of a series of action plans controlled by a set of performance standards and forming part of a guiding concept for the whole urban region. It was in response to his frustrations, and those of his practicing colleagues, to an orthodoxy in planning which they saw as unresponsive to the needs of fast changing cities and failure amongst planners and city officials to recognize the urgencies of the tasks involved in solving its problems and controlling development.

What has emerged in practice, as Cook [5] has pointed, it is a planning framework, flexible, simply structured, untied to any specific sequence of operation, guided by informed improvisation, reiterative and adaptive in its processes, and based on action and experience rather than lengthy surveys or study. Within this framework, practitioners are ‘free to start’ to make mistakes and to learn on the run, Chambers [6]. It is a framework guided by the imperatives that ‘poor people are creative and capable, and can and should do much of their own investigation, analysis and planning; that outsiders (funders, experts, public officials) have a strategic role to play as convors, disseminators, catalysts, facilitators and policy formulators creating opportunities for discovery and a context for work which can be understood by all.'
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Planning today, through action planning, has a new task, that is to create conditions in which members of a community can engage in public reflection on substantive matters of concern to them, and also on the rules and norms of inquiry they customarily enact. The challenges is: how best to proceed in a context of uncertainty, indeterminacy, diversity, mutual causality, increasing complexity and often accelerating change. Pretty & Chambers 1993 [7]

Burns [8] classifies participation in four categories; awareness, perception, decision, and implementation.

On the other hand, Wulz [9] sees that the concept of participation exists in different forms and stages of participation between the poles of expert autonomous architecture are identified. These stages are: representation, questionnaire, regionalism, dialogue, alternative, co-decision, and self-decision.

The dialogue form of participation is most often based on informal conservation the architect and say what they think about the project. The dialogue model is based on the concept of using people’s knowledge as a source and asking them to comment on the architect’s proposal while the design process is in process. The dialogue model has principally for aims:

- The democratization of planning by informing the local residents about the project proposal at an early stage.
- Through the early reactions of the local residents, the architect receives innovative impulses and suggestions for his work on the project.
- The architect gets to know about the special regional characteristics.
- Since the dialogue is carried out in face-to-face situation, neither the collective user nor the architect is any longer anonymous.

This form of participation is based on two-way communication: information from the architect regarding his proposal, and at an early stage in the design proposal. Participation, however, ends there. The architect reserves for himself the right to make the final decisions. The participation time factor can be divided into three periods: during the survey, during the design phase and during the construction maintenance phase.

4 Technical aspect of housing renewal

Rehabilitation based on repair and maintenance of the housing stock, which is a diagnostic in approach aims at providing an understanding of how the buildings were constructed, and how they have been changed through time. The following is an attempt to try to introduce the reader to the different phases related to housing renewal that are based on technical issues.

Housing renewal projects mentioned in this paper are those ones that represent the majority of housing stocks in the historic areas, which are not listed as individual buildings. Their importance and significant value comes from their contribution to the urban fabric and spatial qualities in the historical context. The fund for different phases of the project is mainly shared by the owner, street association, local housing organization and other governmental bodies.
4.1 Analysis phase

Analysis phase starts with survey and inspection. Survey includes documentation, inspection reports. The documentation is very important and takes a lot of time in order to trace all the changes. Great emphasis is placed upon the initial inspection of the historic buildings. This has to embrace the whole problem comprehensively. The work of survey will help the architect to understand the changes that have happened to the structure through time. Because the repair and maintenance is focused on recognizing and diagnosing faults, it is important not only to recognize the construction but also to distinguish where possible between the original and the later changes, and to diagnose faults. This is achieved in a systematic sequence check up list to cover the whole building. This includes mostly source of dampness and deterioration of the buildings, the condition of electrical and sanitary installation, the condition of floors, roofs, ceilings, windows, and doors.

In this stage advisor of rehabilitation project is involved with users. Owners and occupiers are often known at inspection. Advisors or team of professionals should know how to approach users in a positive way and bring people as much as he/she to the design aspect. This could be achieved through what is called a preference survey. The best way to carry a preference survey is to visit each household and discuss with residents their needs and take notes on their observation of the building, and if they are aware of some problems in the stability or installation of the buildings. The architect has to check by himself/herself and to verify their observation. This could help him/her in the diagnosis process and in setting up a method of repair and maintenance. Users also help in diagnosis phase by telling the client their observations about the building during the time they were using it. At the same time, the architect should check user's observations about the history of the building.

4.2 Design phase

Rehabilitation requires a different way of working to design new houses. It is different both in construction and work of organization. The time on site and knowledge of it must be much greater. This time is spent on understanding the nature of structure and supervising the work on site. Site work cannot be expected generally to be as smooth. Though the scale of design may be limited, this does not make it trivial. Changing houses to modern standard while preserving their essential character require considerable sensitivity.

The architect is all the time aware that the design proposal will fit in the general objective and policy defined for the rehabilitation process. Intervention practically always involves some loss of a value in cultural property, but are justified in order to preserve the objects for the future.

It is necessary to inform people in this stage with proposed changes. The architect has to talk to the residents in details and on site about the design proposal. Sometimes problems might rise that the information gathered from the survey is constantly changing. Ownership may be altering. Residents are
changing their minds also when the repair process starts. One way to overcome this is to inform people with the type of modification they will have in their house, and to be sure they are fully aware of it and accept it.

The design project is accompanied with the general bid specification. Several purposes are served by a complete and concise set of general bid specification. Especially important, the general bid specifications facilitate brevity in the individual job specifications. Without a reference document such as the general bid specifications, job specifications would have to be quite lengthy in order to precisely describe the work to be done.

Job specifications clearly describe the work to be done. More than merely listing the options available, the general bid specification must furnish complete details about the product and its proper installation. Rehabilitation is a complex process, and without specific specifications, each job can become a nightmare of complications and confusion. Developing and using general bid specifications and bill of quantities are also worthwhile for many reasons, including the following:

- The rehabilitation staff can decide in advance the kind of work that will be done and the methods that will be used to complete the work. This will lay groundwork for all individual rehabilitation jobs.
- By prescribing the materials, methods of installation, and performance standards, the overall costs and quality of the work can be controlled.
- Of primary importance, the job of preparing individual job specifications will be simplified considerably. Using the general bid specification as a reference will preclude the need for lengthy work descriptions in the job specifications. It will also avoid duplication of information and make the job specification document easier for both the property owner and the contractor to read and understand.

To develop concise general bid specifications, it is important to have in depth knowledge of construction and rehabilitation. It contains basic categories such as; demolition and fill, concrete items, stone related items, plastering, pointing, flooring, painting, carpentry, iron work, plumbing, electrical, and insulation.

The main objective of quality rehabilitation should be to establish a long remaining economic life for the property. An official definition for remaining economic life is the number of years between the time of appraisal and the time when an improvement (structure) becomes economically valueless. Another important aspect is the longevity of the work. Generally, work of high quality tends to be durable.

4.3 Construction phase

This stage is critical to get good quality. The architect in this stage deals not only with residents, but also with the contractor. Quality control is necessary aspect in this stage. Contractor monitoring is important to maintain good rapport with contractors. The rehabilitation office keeps track of all activities and ensures that contractors are performing appropriately. Contract monitoring involves enforcing
the staring date, adhering to timetable, stopping work promptly if required and maintaining good quality in all work.

Pressure on time subjected on the contractor might rise from the residents in this stage. The presser of residents resulted from their discomfort as being moved to temporary unsuitable residents. Some time the residents cannot wait till the house is finished and start to move back before the contractor finally finished his work. This will of course affect the quality of work; for example enough time is required for a plaster of walls to be dried before applying the painting.

The experience of ASSIST 1970-1974 (1974 is an action/research unit of the Department of Architecture and Building Science of Strathclyde University in Glasgow, UK.) in Glasgow was a good example, the main intention of ASSIST was to allow local people more control over their housing renewal. The physical part of rehabilitation of the flats was part of a wider process of improving housing conditions for a mixed ownership block of 220 tenements flat in Gaven, Glasgow. Lamu, in Kenya, presents yet another case. The conservation of the old town with its magnificent housing is a landmark effort that marks the first comprehensive conservation plan developed and enacted with the involvement of the local community in East Africa. The proposed program is important because it incorporated a detailed study of the social fabric and the economic structure of the historic as well as the architectural characteristics. It went beyond establishing a comprehensive conservation plan and design guidelines, and focused on the active involvement of the local community in priority setting and providing training programmers for the restoration and maintenance of the building stock.

5 Conclusion

In housing renewal projects the architect is compelled to decide to what extent, and in what way, he is to take into consideration the wishes, demands and preferences of the residents. The architect in situation faced with many challenges where he tries to keep as much as he can the authenticity of the building, at the same time fulfill residents needs and keep high quality of work. Figure 1 presents the different measures that are recommended in any rehabilitation process in general and in housing renewal project in particular.

Participation in rehabilitation project is a useful method. When applying it, architect will be able to address residents' needs. He also should be flexible with the level of involvement of residents during the different phases of the project. This study recommends an evaluation of the process after the project is completed to measure people's satisfaction according to the objectives that has been set by the professionals see figure below.

Planning for effective participation requires an analysis of the issue that is to be discussed, the individual or groups that are to be affected, the resources that will be needed and the goals for which the participation is being initiated. While it is necessary to identify goals and objectives in a rehabilitation project that requires participation, it is also necessary to analyze the techniques that are available and the resources they require.
Cultural policies for the coming century must be anticipatory, responding to persistent problems as well as to new needs. Investing in the heritage, whether tangible or intangible, is increasingly perceived and used as an economic resource. But as a non-renewable resource it is not always approached in the most equitable and sustainable way. Respecting the past- while transforming it for the needs of the present and responding to the needs of the people is the way to redeem its legacy.

References