

## Urban Conservation of World Heritage Cities

### Project or Process

Michael Turner (Member of the World Heritage Committee, UNESCO Chair for Urban Design and Conservation studies, Jerusalem)

### History

In the Bible in the Book of Genesis, we find that cities were established by individuals; they were one-off feats of the circumstances of time and developed their own mythological power. "And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch."<sup>1</sup> Although the archives of Mari give us amazing information on the administration of the cities of Assyria and Egypt, the formal history of cities begins with their description. The cities were meeting points for the clans the common waterhole of the nomadic tribe. The hieroglyphic for city was a crossing point enclosed by a circle. It was much later when Herodotus, the father of histories, who was looking at the product of time described the cities he visited in the known world; without documentation and other evidence it was hard to determine the process, the secrets of the past historically belonged to the gods. Herodotus had visited the Temple at Hera and wondered that some of the columns were of wood and others replaced by the new, cutting-edge material worked stone.

Growth was minimal and change took place under the cloak of socio-political revolution. It also was relevant to natural disasters and wars, as history was always written by the survivors. A new rule brought about a new architecture – *new lamps for old* was no mere saying. While technologies were developed in the prehistoric world, the changes were small though dramatic. The use of the arch, the hydraulic mortars, engineering discoveries were all brought to support the administration.

Nevertheless the question of growth and change was addressed by the philosophers. Plutarch in the first century BCE wrote in the *Nine Greek Lives*<sup>2</sup> that the thirty-oared galley in which Theseus sailed was preserved by the Athenians. At intervals they removed the old timbers and replaced them with sound ones, so that the ship became the classic illustration of the disputed question of growth and change, some of them arguing that it remained the same, and others that it had become a different vessel.

Let us first examine two of the diverging attitudes of the Western World to accepting the new - the Greek buildings in the upper town at Pergamum and the Roman Forum at Pompeii. The differing attitudes to growth related to the capacities of the society to accept 'other' cultures and the way that the new ideas were integrated into the social and physical fabric of the urbs. Cevat Erder<sup>3</sup>

In a parallel article<sup>4</sup> Simon Goldhill mentions that the past gives us interesting models for thinking through these matters. In my part of the world, Greek was the language of the administration and culture for some eight hundred years. Greek society set itself against "the barbarians", those who couldn't speak Greek. In the wake of Alexander's conquest of the Persian Empire – from Greece to Afghanistan – the Greeks built Greek cities, with theatres, gymnasia, temples and other signs of Greekness. But only rarely did the Greek elite attempt to force their cultural values onto others. Rather, they set up their way of doing things, and, if you wanted the benefits of Greek society, you had to join in. Greek society established what the privileged cultural values were, and progress in society meant assimilating to this standard. And most did: Jews built buildings in Greek style, learnt Greek and translated the Torah into Greek. Muslims translated Aristotle into Arabic and set about adopting and

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis: 4:17

<sup>2</sup> Plutarch, *The Lives*

<sup>3</sup> *From Conservation to Consciousness*, UNESCO

<sup>4</sup> EU Partnership for Peace – Promoting the Understanding of Shared Regional Heritage.

developing Greek science. Christians studied Greek philosophy and rhetoric and wrote the tracts and theologies in Greek, the language of the Gospels.

The Roman Empire had a different model. When they conquered a territory, the Romans restructured the local cities on Roman lines – that's why Jerusalem, destroyed and rebuilt as Aelia Capitolina, has a *cardo* and *decumanus*, the typical main-streets of Roman town planning. The Roman authorities took over the local gods, and assimilated them into the Roman pantheon. They left the local elite in charge, as vassals to the state of Rome. If you paid your taxes and did not revolt, you could reap the benefits of the *pax Romana*, the peace of the Empire. It is interesting to recall the dialogue of Claudius and Vitellius as narrated by Robert Graves in the Ostia port extension project. The comment was made that the Republic could not build like the monarchy of the Kings and Queens.<sup>5</sup>

### Grids

Grids were in! Everybody was adopting them! And the development of the Egyptian Temple of Karnak and the plan of Miletus were important prototypes for the orderly structure of the cities. As the sites around the region show, Greek and Roman cultures picked up a great deal from the local communities as they brought a great deal to them. Zones of contact between communities were opportunities not just for the exercise of power but also for cultural transmission – intellectual, social, cultural exchange. The greatest monuments of the region reflect this – think of the Dome of the Rock, which uniquely perfects Christian Byzantine architectural examples; or the beautiful mosaics of Sephoris, bringing Byzantine art to Jewish houses; or the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, with its overlay of Classical architecture, Crusader rebuilding, and modern eastern Christian style.

### Circles and Squares

It is all about circles and squares – nature and man in the curve and right-angle. Le Corbusier wrote that..... The circular ideal cities and the grid-iron open-ended societies rivaled with each other in different periods and different parts of the world. Places as far away as a fishing village in Mexico structured themselves independently in similar mediaeval forms in Europe. Was it nature or nurture? Parallel to the urban evolution of the Western World, the urbanization of Asia focused on the reflection of anthropomorphical forms in the Mandala and the definitions of *fung shwei* within the socio-political structures of governance of the Forbidden Cities. Under these conditions, it was the spirit of the grid that determined the format of the city.

If Alexander the Great showed the spread of cultures to the east, the truly First World War of Ghenis Khan in the early thirteenth century returned the gesture with eastern control, till the gates of Moscow in the west. In each of the cultures from Gibraltar to Suzhuo, independently and collectively the grid was applied as the project of life. It survived because of its adaptability; it allowed the process of change.

The grand living of the renaissance gave way to grand ideas and cities as projects or monuments once again were fashionable. And if you could not build a whole city a large chunk of it was the next best thing. Bath was a wonderful example of this. The political scene ordered the physical environment. Claudius' and Vitellius dialogue on the Republic was all the more true in the later empires of Napoleon.

And in 1840, with the coming of the camera, world ideas spread rapidly, and together with the industrial revolution old formulas were no longer relevant or applicable. The immediate changes were in the form of the urban revolution. These were dramatic changes that appeared in the guise of progress and the cities were irreversibly transformed. The polemics accompanying this period were fast and furious. Pugin bemoaned the industrial changes<sup>6</sup>, while H.G. Wells was insistent that it was the "English spinster who wanted Italy kept under glass"<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Graves, R.I, Claudius

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<sup>7</sup> New York Times, 1920

In the new era, it was a different sort of rule that developed the city but money and power were still a major consideration. The social reformers of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in the wake of this industrial revolution and as a reaction, marked the start of a unique social uprising in the form of the Garden City movement and the City Beautiful. Canon Barnett with Edwin Lutyens and Victor Hugo were the champions and social liberators of this new order. Modernism grew out of the Arts and Crafts Movement and the Bauhaus was the epitome of this dichotomy. The love-hate relationship which Le Corbusier had with the past was an indication of the evolving attitudes of the twentieth century. He looked for forcible solutions developing his ideas from his keen historical analysis, but indicated that against this there were barriers to change including 'the respect for the past'.<sup>8</sup> It is interesting to compare the writings of the City of Tomorrow with the relevant chapter in the Athens' Charter of 1933 on the historic parts of the city.<sup>9</sup>

### Growth and Change

The project and process are not mutually exclusive and they exist within the limits of growth and change.

How is growth determined and when does it become change. I suppose that visiting my grandchildren after a monthly interval evoked a gasp of 'how they have grown' from the elders to be met with an amazed look of my daughter implying that she did not feel that they had grown at all. A point of view is always critical to appreciate the perspective and depth of focus. In the seminal article by George Miller in the Psychological Review of 1953,<sup>10</sup> a clue

Galileo contemplated on the issues of change and looked at the animal world, while some centuries later the botanists and biologists of the first part of the twentieth century developed the General Systems Theory and cybernetic concepts of growth and change. But it was Stephen Jay Gould who wrote in one of his classic essays of the New York Times about growth and change between the Norman and Gothic Churches.<sup>11</sup> Once a butterfly, there is no going back. With the dramatic changes of the twentieth century and the inception of the Modern Movement, paradoxically growing out of its Art and Crafts roots, the Modern City arrived as a reaction to the socio-political issues of between and after the Wars and the nationalists quest for new Capitals in the population dispersion policies of the re-emerging countries.

### The Lessons of World Heritage

The World Heritage convention is not to be read in isolation of the heritage of the local communities, but a perspective whereby we can better understand our heritage. It provides a method of working and a process of self-evaluation that is indispensable. In the consideration of the

Outstanding Value and their criteria with the evaluation of the attributes through integrity and authenticity in the Operational Guidelines can provide a useful tool in the considerations of project and process,

### Management and Cities of the Twentieth Century

The Modern Movement was itself a product. The World Heritage Convention, in its own endearing and inimical Operational Guidelines has evolved an active format of cultural significance and OUV. These terms might be used to develop the intellectual base for determining the project and process

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<sup>8</sup> Le Corbusier, The City of Tomorrow

<sup>9</sup> The Athens' Charter, 1933

<sup>10</sup> Miller, G. The Magic Number of Seven plus or minus two

<sup>11</sup> Gould, S.J

components of a site. The merging of planning and architecture and its component forces is the essence of looking forward and considering new tools as the Historic Urban Landscape..

The urban pressures of speculation, socio-economic gaps and the resulting crass building are taking their toll on the fabric of the city, and an innovative approach is needed that will integrate the urban processes rather than the isolation, conceptually, politically and socially of conservation areas, This is the essence of sustainability.

So where are we going? There seem to be diverging approaches looking at deductive or inductive studies, on one hand the individual building as a building block and the other the city form.

Are the approaches between museum and integrated development or possibly between the concepts of sustainability and the cultural approach? How far can we take the Historic Cultural Landscape as a paradigm?

Operational Guidelines/ Buffer Zones /Core Zones and sustainable management directed by stakeholders.

- the various approaches
- their communalities and differences,
- their usefulness in devising guidelines and modalities for the Conservation and Development of Historic Cities

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D'Arcy Thompson; On Growth and Change

Erder, C. From Consciousness to Conservation, UNESCO

Galileo

Goldhill, S; PUSH project

Gould, S.J.

Graves, R. I, Claudius

Le Corbusier, The City of Tomorrow

Miller, G. The Magic Number of seven plus or minus two  
from the New York Times, 1920

Plutarch, The Rise and Fall of Athens – nine greek lives.