

DYNAMIC INTEGRITY AS AN APPROACH TO THE CONSERVATION OF HISTORIC URBAN LANDSCAPE (HUL): THE CASE OF OLINDA AND RECIFE[♦]

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Abstract

HUL is a tentative approach to deal with complex urban heritage areas. Although there is a great effort in the conceptualization of new categories of properties, seeking to understand them in context, advances in conservation planning have not been sufficient to ensure the continuity of cultural significance in complex heritage urban areas. Integrity is the key concept to assess the state of conservation of heritage properties. However, the current concept of integrity, is not capable to deal with the complexity of the HUL. On the other hand, there is a tendency in heritage field to define conservation as the regulation or control of change. This assumption is problematic since it emphasizes the changes of meanings, values and attributes, instead of the idea of continuity. Controlling change means fixing the attributes that express the meanings of heritage areas, and this is a task fated to be unsuccessful in complex cities or, even in not so complex urban sites. Considering the role of integrity on conservation processes, besides the challenge to deal with continuity of significance in not static contexts, this paper advances the concept of dynamic integrity. It is a heritage quality that may be attributed to properties whose attributes are capable to express past and present meanings, and therefore values, in a context of change, without relying exclusively on records of memory. So, dynamic integrity emphasizes continuity in changing urban context and may be a key concept for the new HUL approach. To exemplify the application of the concept it is made a brief analysis of the integrity of the case of Olinda and Recife, in Brazil

Key words: Integrity, complex urban heritage areas, continuity, change.

Introduction

This paper brings a new definition for the concept of integrity. The problem discussed here is centered in the following questions: How can integrity be made an operational concept in an urban context of change? Is it still a useful concept? If yes, what must be changed in its definition?

The rapid urbanization and transformation of existing cities have put the conservation of urban heritage areas in the center of urban planning activities. However, the traditional notion of monuments, groups of buildings or cities parts, is not sufficient to protect their characteristics and qualities from fragmentation, degeneration and subtraction of significance. There has been a change of the spatial scale of conservation and the emergence of new approaches to deal with heritage properties in large territorial scale, such as the *Historic Urban Landscape* (HUL) approach launched by Unesco in 2011.

However, there are not enough advances in the designing of new instruments for identification, protection, management and monitoring for the conservation of large urban areas inserted in a context of high pressure for change or transformation. This seems to occur due to treatment of integrity according to its traditional concept of “physical wholeness”.

This paper discusses the notion of *dynamic integrity* considering the current approach the conservation of HUL and the idea of maintenance of cultural significance. The combination of these two

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key ideas in conservation imposes the challenge of dealing with an urban context and a heritage property from the perspective of complexity.

1. The conservation of HUL

The HUL approach to the conservation of urban heritage areas arises after a long period of critique of the theory of conservation. Since the 1980's, the long and sound tradition of the conservation theory that comes from Ruskin, Viollet-le-Duc, Boito, Giovannoni and Brandi, has been revised according to the 'postmodern' standpoint. The Burra Charter opened this revision when it defined conservation as "... all the processes of looking after a place so as to retain its cultural significance" and associated the significance to the interpretation of "... different individuals or groups" (Icomos, 1999).

The conservation of urban heritage is an activity involved with maintenance of present and past cultural significances. To achieve sustainable conservation, managers of urban areas and other stakeholders act on the attributes of the heritage that convey cultural meanings identified throughout intersubjective processes.

The attributes can be of a material or a non-material nature. The social agents involved with conservation may keep, change, restore, reshape or substitute the attributes of the objects. They may also produce activities that help to foster meanings as part of the collective memory of society, through educational and cultural activities. The actions of managers should be guided in such a way that the meanings, the integrity and the authenticity of the objects attributes are maintained. This means that sustainable conservation seeks to maintain the condition for the interpretation of the relation attributes-meanings between generations, because it should: first, carry forward the present meanings of heritage to future generations; second, maintain records of meanings given by past generations for the use of present and future generations and third, leave opened to future generations the possibility of interpreting and associating new meanings of past and present to heritage. But in order to do this, it is fundamental for sustainable heritage conservation to keep the integrity and the authenticity of material or non-material attributes of the objects.

This approach to conservation does not start from values and this is very important to note. Values are determined only after a three stages process, composed of: 1) identification of objects and attributes; 2) assessment of meanings or significance and 3) the judgment of the integrity and the authenticity of the attributes of objects. Values are the outcome of the process when the cultural relevance of the object is compared with other heritage objects. Only after this, it is possible to state that the object is more or less valuable in relation to other objects of historical, artistic, scientific and other types of cultural values.

2. Cultural significance, complexity and the HUL approach

The historic urban landscape approach is an answer to the management of urban World Heritage Sites under development pressure. The enlargement of the concept of heritage associated with the growing perception of its importance to the social, economic and environmental sustainable development raised management problems that were not usually associated with the conservation of urban heritage areas. For example, the zoning instruments, as the protected and buffer zones, have shown low efficacy under circumstance of high urban pressure for change.

The new perception that maintenance of cultural significance is the main goal of sustainable heritage polices, makes zoning boundaries a weak instrument for defining and redefining social, economic and cultural meanings and therefore values of the material and nonmaterial urban heritage.

The Vienna Memorandum (Icomos, 2005) was an alert to the fact that the inclusion or suppression of architectural artifacts and urban infrastructures in buffer zones, or other close areas to the protected sites, may change the cultural significance of the World Heritage Sites. Considering this problem Unesco suggested a "landscape approach for identifying, conserving, managing and valuing historic areas within their broader urban contexts, by considering the inter-relationships of their physical forms, their spatial organization and connection, their natural features and settings, and their social and cultural values" (Unesco, 2011).

From the analysis of the main documents produced by Unesco and Icomos in drafting the HUL, it is possible to infer that the core of the approach is composed of two main ideas: first, the conservation management must deal with the *complexity* of contemporary cities and second, sustainable conservation seeks to maintain the condition for the interpretation of the relation attributes-meanings over time, and that means cultural significance.

3. Complexity

The recognition of cities and urban heritage areas as complex systems is at the center of the management problems faced by HUL.

Landscape came into the scene to complement or replace the categories of monuments, groups of buildings and urban sites, in order to integrate material and non-material values of urban areas. Urban landscape is a highly abstract concept that exists only within an *interpretative model* or a *discourse*. As a category landscape has the merit of been synthetic and comprehensive. However, it is too broad and bold to cover practically everything that happens under the range of heritage objects. Partially recognizing urban heritage areas as complex phenomena, Unesco defined HUL as "...the urban area understood as the result of a historic layering of cultural and natural values and attributes, extending beyond the notion of 'historic center' or 'ensemble' to include the broader urban context and its geographical setting".

The layering and the extension characteristics are important for analyzing HUL, but are not enough to capture the complexity of the urban areas of nowadays. Rosane Piccolo Loretto (2011) framed a more comprehensible view of these defining HUL as *complex urban heritage areas*, that are characterized by four characteristics:

- 1, have many layers of significance overlapped in space and time;
- 2, are composed by subsets that do not have necessarily spatial continuity, but show some significant relations among them;
- 3, are inserted in a urban context of development and subject to pressure for change in use and spatial configuration, and
- 4, are subject to the emergence and action of many stakeholders that act competitively.

It seems that this definition is close to the reality of the nowadays cities and provides analytical elements to operationalize HUL with practical tools.

4. Significance

Significance is a synthetic representation of the identification, assessment, judgment and social validation of past and present cultural meanings associated to urban heritage areas (Zancheti, et alii, 2009). In this way, cultural significance expresses the continuity of heritage meanings, in a context of change of material and non-material attributes, as well as functions and uses of HUL.

The meanings carried forward from the past are grasped by the memory of individuals, with the help of instruments that support social memory such as books, documents, photographs, buildings, and so forth. The supports to memory mediate the choices between the past and present meanings of the objects. Also they mediate pass judgment on the values used in determining the conservation action of the heritage. To be effective, the outcome of this judgment must be socially validated. If not, it is expected that conservation actions will be the source of conflict between the stakeholders.

In spite of the holistic character of significance, it cannot be used directly in managing HUL, since it is not objectively or completely known. Significance is operational only in the format of a statement of significance, which is a partial subset of the meanings that compose the significance of the object. For Mason (2004), institutionalizing the statement of significance as a guiding element in the process of conservation tends to perpetuate the meanings presented in the statement, which prevents other meanings from emerging or fading away. Mason concludes by adding that significance should "change, and involve multivalency and dispute and be contingent on time, place and other factors" (Mason, 2004, p. 65).

The following topics search to characterize the specificity of the significance of complex urban heritage areas using the six description of a conscious complex system proposed by Geyer (2003, p. 15):

- 1, *Orderly and chaotic*: Significance is not totally controlled. It may show an orderly structure that changes with the current cultural patterns, but may also presents emergences and losses of meanings that are not normally predicted;
- 2, *Non reducible to elements*: Significance means more than the summation of the sets of meanings of their singular objects or their attributes;
- 3, *Partially modeled*: Significance cannot be totally organized into comprehensible models of interpretation. The explanation models of the significance are always partially tied to specific field of knowledge and to social perspectives of the agents involved with the areas;
- 4, *Boundaries and uncertainty*: Significance is tied to the urban areas but its composition | territory is not completely known. There are no clear spatial or social boundaries where the significance is objectively identified;
- 5, *Adaptation and emergence*: Significance is changing continuously adapting to the social milieu and is open to the emergence of new social meanings;
- 6, *Conscious agents*: Significance is the outcome of social process of conscious agents acting competitively or cooperatively.

Following from these characteristics, cultural significance of HUL should always be reviewed and updated considering the continuous movement of society and the effects of these changes in physical and functional aspects of urban areas. It must be open to the addition of different significant elements or the opposite, the oblivion of meanings that occurs more frequently and at great speed in complex urban areas.

5. Continuity facing gaps, damages and losses of attributes

The adoption of the significance triggered the redesign of many conservation management instruments as, for example, the heritage conservation and management plans.

According to James S. Kerr (2000, p. 1), a conservation plan of a heritage site is “...a document which sets out what is significant in a place and, consequently, what policies are appropriate to enable that significance to be retained in its future use and development. For most places it deals with the management of change”. This definition shows the strong association between conservation and management of change, and this association is not arbitrary or casual. It was a way to bypass the barriers imposed by the ideas of permanence derived from the restoration theory, centered on material and physical aspects of objects.

Significance is the outcome of the constant tension between two parts of a same process – permanence and change – of the cultural meanings of the material /physical world. The emphasis on change opens a door in the conservation process to all sort of pressures for change independently to their origins and purposes. This has been the case of many regeneration projects of historic centers that are under pressure for adopting new typologies of buildings in buffer zones.

The concept of *continuity* is good for characterizing the objectives of the conservation management of HUL. The associated ideas of cohesion, flow, connection, sequence, succession, progression, wholeness and interrelationship express the capacity of continuity for dealing with permanence and change.

There is easy to define continuity since it has been a tricky problem since Aristotle. The philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce, starting from Kant, proposed a new definition of continuity that escapes from the traditional conception of succession and of collections of similar things. Peirce's definition associates continuity to the diversity of the collection elements and the **connections** between all subcollections to form one being (Potter & Shields, 1977). It is a definition very interesting when adapted to continuity of past, present and future significances of HUL.

The shift from pair “permanence and change” to continuity in conservation management immediately focuses on the representation models of significance when there are space and time discontinuity between significant attributes, objects, subcollections and collections of objects of HULs.

May the continuity of significance be maintained in the presence of “gaps or damages” in the significant elements? May it be “filled” with elements of a different nature as the records of memory that perform all types of documents from the past?

Anthony Tung (2001) in studying the heritage continuity in Rome shows that, in spite of the enormous changes in the physical fabric of the city, its residents and visitors identify continuity between the present and the past (even going back to the antiquity) by interpreting the significant material and physical layers of the city and recurring to the living cultural memories. The attributes of the material and physical attributes and the living memories of Rome “transmit” information from the past to the present without canceling new meanings. People can apprehend continuity of the significance in the presence of “gaps” in the subsets of significant attributes and objects. This can be explained due to the perception of a relationship between continuity and the maintenance of the significant relations among the material and physical attributes of Rome in long periods of time.

The records of cultural memory are important because they are resources reinforcing the perception of the significant relations between the attributes. The documents may “fill the meaning gaps” existing amongst attributes which would be important to express past cultural significance of the city. The documents may help to memorize previous existing relations but *cannot* substitute or reestablish them. The documents are always historically dated expressions of the “world vision” of the individuals or social groups that produced them. They reflect the understanding of a period of time but cannot give to present generation access to *all* information that might be in the objects of the past.

The case of Rome is important to show the relevance of the material and non-material attributes, that is of integrity, to continuity in the interpretation of the significance of the city.

The changes in the theory of conservation tends to insert the idea of integrity into a *dynamic context* in which continuity of cultural significance is not necessarily negatively affected by certain changes in the material | physical attributes.

6. Some interpretations of integrity¹

The Unesco standard definition of integrity is: “a measure of the wholeness and intactness of the natural and | or cultural heritage and its attributes”. This definition is based on the permanence of attributes for the continuity of the significance of the place. The “damages and losses” would mean reduction in the capacity of the integrity to convey cultural meanings.

Integrity is an important concept for the theory of conservation and is an object discussion especially within the ethics of conservation (Clavir, 2009). However, integrity has not been subject to clear procedures for its assessment in complex urban heritage areas.

Initially, integrity was a quality associated to natural heritage and meant the wholeness of ecosystems and environments. In 1995, the National Park Service defined integrity as the ability to convey the significance of the place. According to this definition, integrity must be grounded in an understanding of the physical characteristics of the attributes of the place and the way they relate to the significance. Still in 1995, Gordon Bennett coined the concept of commemorative integrity, meaning the health or integrity of a historic site. His proposal was made to provide tools to monitor the state of conservation of historic sites of Canada. To this author, the state of commemorative integrity is given when: the resources that represent the significance of the site are not compromised or at risk; the reasons that establish the significance are disclosed; and the values attributed for the place are respected by all decisions and actions affect the site.

In the late 1990’s, the Nara Meeting on Development and Integrity of Historic Cities (1999), stated that integrity: 1, covers human activities related to the characteristics of the physical settlement; 2, is represented by the coherence of the historic area in relation to the merging of components; 3, includes

¹ This part of the paper is based on the research project of Rosane Piccolo Loretto (2011)

historical overlaps of the cities and 4, should be treated recognizing the link between socio-economic development, community well-being and preservation of historical characteristic.

In 2004, Miriam Clavir discusses the idea of *conceptual integrity* which is determined from the interpretation, not only of the object but also its relationship with its cultural context.

In 2005, integrity was finally conceptualized by Unesco in the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* consisting on *the intact character of heritage and of its attributes*.

A year after the Guidelines, Jukka Jokilehto (2006) suggested the use of three dimensions to evaluate integrity of cultural property: the social-functional integrity: meaning the identification of the functions related to social development of the place; the structural integrity: meaning the identification related to physical and material sources; and the visual integrity: meaning that is required to identify the aesthetic aspects of the place.

Lastly, Herbert Stovel (2008) defined integrity as a condition of qualifying heritage properties. For him, integrity is related to completeness and intactness of the property, advancing the idea that it should be understood as *the capacity* of the object to carry its significance, being more a matter of *communication* than a physical reality.

7. The dynamic integrity (DI)

The discussion of the concept of integrity has shown some conceptual overlapping. All of them point to an enlargement of its scope beyond the material and physical structure to include uses, functions and activities. However, it is important to underline that the concept has not surpassed the limits of the material wholeness and intactness of the heritage. It still continues to be strongly tied to the permanence of the physical and material attributes of the urban areas.

To escape from this and dialog with the changing nature of the complex urban heritage areas, the assessment of the condition of integrity must take into account the dynamic aspect of significance since it has to assess the carrier capacity of the attributes to express contemporary cultural meanings, and consequently values.

Following Hobson (2004), we may say that heritage cannot act only as transmitter of “stable and self-evident values”, but it has to permit the “renewal and adaptation of values”.

Integrity must express the significance of HUL by: a vertical cross section of their significant layers and the linkage of horizontal relations between different and not necessarily contiguous heritage areas. So, the concept is expected to express past and present meanings without canceling *the emergence* of new meanings and, furthermore, the *reinterpretation* of old meanings. That means *continuity*.

The importance of the condition of integrity for heritage conservation relies on the maintenance of an *open field of interpretation for past, present and future meanings*, allowing a constant reinterpretation of heritage values (Zanchetti et al., 2009).

However, one cannot discuss the integrity of these properties excluding that the understanding of the transformations to which they are subjected is as important as the maintenance of its significant structures. Thus, conservation activities, within the idea of continuity, must identify and communicate with certain changes that areas can suffer, without considering them as undesirable effects.

However, what kind of change can occur without loss of continuity of cultural significance? What are the limits of acceptable changes in complex areas like HUL's? How to describe these changes? If it is the nature of cities are subject to change, how to recognize integrity?

Based on these questions, it is possible to affirm that the usual concept of integrity is not suitable to deal with most of the cities around the world due to the fact that significance is an opened and an unfinished social construction. Therefore, it is being proposed the concept of *dynamic integrity*, a heritage quality of properties that accommodate certain changes whilst maintaining continuity of cultural meanings in time.

Owing to this, it is possible to express past and present meanings without canceling **the** emergence of new elements and the reinterpretation of old ones. There is a capacity of the heritage area to

dynamically express past and present meanings without relying exclusively on records of memory to fill gaps in the set of attributes.

8. The case of Olinda and Recife

Olinda and Recife are old towns from the 16th Century. Recife was born as the harbor of Olinda and, after the end of the Dutch occupation of the town in the 17th Century, became the most important town in the sugar production region of the Northeast of Brazil. It became politically independent from Olinda in the 18th Century and has been a larger and developed city than Olinda since then.

Olinda and Recife were physically connected by an isthmus that served as the natural path for the communication between the cities. Also the isthmus was used as a defense structure, with some forts a place for In the 19th Century a road was opened and connected the cities making the isthmus obsolete as a communication channel. Olinda was inserted in the World Heritage List of Unesco in 1982, but the nomination did not include the isthmus or the Old Recife City Center where the harbor is. Since the nomination of Olinda, there has been a strong debate if the nomination should be revised to include the isthmus and the Old Recife City Center.

The main question in this debate is if the set Olinda - isthmus - Old Recife Center keeps its the integrity in relation to the significance of the Olinda nomination.

What follows is an analysis of the dynamic integrity of the set in three historic periods for the case of the Historic Center of Olinda and Old Recife City Center, using the categories of visual, functional and structural integrity, advanced by Jokilehto (2006), as the analytical elements to assess the dynamic integrity.

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From the 16th to the 18th Century

Social functional integrity

Olinda was the political and economical center of a vast region that was the main sugar production of the world in the 16th and 17th Centuries. Also, Olinda was the place of the main religious orders and congregated the housing of the prestigious social groups of the region. Recife was basically the harbor of Olinda and was occupied with port facilities, warehouses and some housing used by people working with the maritime activities. The isthmus was the main connection between the two urban areas and important part of the defense system of the region.

Structural integrity

Until the end of the first half of the 17th Century the Recife and Olinda had a similar form of urban structure. After that, they followed two different types of urban development. Olinda continued to be a mannerist settlement adapted to the tropics, with large plots, buildings of one or two stores and large churches and convents. Recife, by opposition, had a much dense urban area. The plots were long and narrow and the buildings had three or more stores. The isthmus was a large empty field punctuated by some fortifications .

Visual integrity

There were a very well formal integration between the three elements, the rivers and the ocean. The isthmus acted as a strong visual integration between Olinda and Recife. The view from Olinda to Recife was very important in the symbolic representation of the urban system of the region.

19th Century

Social functional integrity

Functionally the main difference between the periods was the growing importance the urban structure of Recife in relation to Olinda in all analytical dimensions. Recife became a large city, expanding its area to a large territory. Olinda remained basically a residential town and did not face significant urban expansion. The isthmus lost its importance as a pedestrian path between the cities. The defense system became obsolete and was abandoned in ruins. The area continued as a large empty field.

Structural integrity

Recife faced a strong process of modernization of its urban fabric and infrastructures but kept the traditional building system similar to Olinda.

Visual integrity

The visual integration of the three elements was maintained and the view from Olinda to Recife was still very important for the symbolic representation of the society of the time.

20th and 21st Centuries

Social functional integrity

Olinda remains a secondary city in relation to Recife. It kept its function as a residential area associated to a cultural place. After the year 2000, the Old Recife continued to be a service center, specialized in high services center but the harbor lost its importance in the economy of the region. The isthmus was cut in two parts to improve the flow of the rivers to the ocean and to enlarge the harbor area. It became a kind of “marginal” area without activities, isolated from both cities.

Structural integrity

The area of the Old Recife City Center was enlarged by infill land to enlarge the port and create area for new urban development. There was a rupture with old urban fabric, the form of land occupation and the building tradition.

Visual integrity

There was an important change in the visual integration between the three main elements. The view from Recife to Olinda was partially blocked by the construction of large and tall warehouses. In spite of the permanence of the view from Olinda to Recife it was disturbed by the cut of the isthmus and the presence of the warehouses.

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The analysis of the integrity in the period of the 16th to the 21st Centuries shows the strong continuity of the topological organization of the three main elements of the regional urban structure. The visual integrity between the elements continued very strong and the basic functional elements are the same since the 18th Century.

To assess the integrity of the place, it is not necessary to rely only in the records of memory, since the strong link between the three places still exist and are very important in symbolic form.

9. Conclusion

This paper proposed that the objects of the HUL approach are complex urban heritage area, which are objects understood as conscious complex system that stress the uncertainties in the objective modeling of the object, its dependence on the action of conscious agents and its openness to the emergence of new facts and events in the system when it is still under observation and analysis. In this sense, the interpretation of cultural significance of HUL will follows the same characteristics of the conscious complex system, implying that the assessment the significance of the object of HUL is an ongoing process open to the emergence of meanings even in the analysis of past as well as the present significance. The idea of continuity was introduced as a substitute for the change, that has been disseminated as the main purpose of heritage conservation.

Significance was viewed as a dynamic concept open to additions, subtractions and superposition of meanings. However the objectivity of the attributes of this object should not be denied because it is clear that the attributes, material and nonmaterial, convey the meanings between generations. In a discourse on the significance of a complex urban heritage area the gaps in the meaningful attributes may be filled by records of memory, so making the discourse intelligible. The interpretation of the HUL by people however will continue to be dependent on integrity of the attributes. The records of memory are not sufficient to recompose the integrity of the attributes to express the significance of the past and the present, and leave open the possibilities to the interpretation of the significance in the future.

The concept of dynamic integrity was advanced to face the problem as a heritage quality of properties that accommodate certain changes whilst maintaining continuity of cultural meanings in time. To show the pertinence of the practical application of the concept the case of the complex urban area of Olinda – Recife was analyzed in a large period spanning from the 16th to the beginning of the 21st Century.

The final message of the articles is: conservation has to be focused mainly on continuity of significant attributes and their relations, in spite of the changing context and states of the attributes. Integrity must absorb the dynamic of significance. The conservation management has to be focused on continuity of significant attributes and their relations and not emphasize the management of change, in spite of the moving context and states of the attributes of the HULs.

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