

VALUE FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF OTHER STAKEHOLDERS:

THE SOCIAL SELECTION OF MEMORY

Il valore visto dagli altri stakeholders:

selezione della memoria e società

Values and Sustainable Conservation
The Case of Dockyard "Willemsoord",
Den Helder, The Netherlands

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Cultural Heritage Sites versus Industrial Sites

Up to now, conservation of cultural heritage sites has focussed mainly on landscapes and historic city centres. For these sites, being coherent ensembles of nearly unchanged rural or urban elements, the Venice Charter and the criteria set out in the World Heritage Centre's Operational Guidelines function very well as a framework for preservation. However, in the past ten years places of a different nature have been selected for listing; industrial sites. These sorts of areas contain groups of objects "the cohesion and value of which, from the archaeological, architectural, prehistoric, historic, aesthetic or socio-cultural point of view" are not so easily recognized. Neither are they, as is the case with "historic towns, old urban quarters, villages and hamlets as well as homogeneous monumental groups", "carefully preserved unchanged"¹.

Factories are rarely appreciated for their architectural-aesthetic qualities. Industrial sites have – because of the technology-advancing character of the manufacturing processes they accommodated – always been changing. Building value for these kinds of sites is therefore dependent on values and interpretations different from those for typical cultural heritage sites. As a consequence, conservation of industrial sites is subject to discussion of what constitutes its authenticity, since it can rarely meet the usual qualification criteria of original design, materials, workmanship or setting. Instead, "authentic interpretation of an industrial complex demands that it should be seen as a workplace, and as the source of products which had an impact on a wider world, as well as a place where particular technologies were employed, or an example of entrepreneurial skills"². In addition, the International Committee for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage (TICCIH) states that, besides being of technological, scientific and aesthetic value, industrial heritage is of "social value as part of the record of the lives of ordinary men and women, and as such it provides an important sense of identity".³

Building Value and Sustainable Conservation

Since the key to sustainable conservation is broad support by all stakeholders, building value is one of its most important goals. This may be even more the case for industrial heritage. Building value is a process that enables a historical object to make the shift from plain old object to valuable historical object. It is usually started by conservationists to safeguard historical buildings from demolition or unwanted alteration. This first phase of the process of building value

1. The citations are taken from the 1976 UNESCO Recommendation concerning the safeguarding and contemporary role of historic areas, Definitions 1.(a).

2. Trinder, B., 'Authenticity in the Industrial Heritage', Proceedings of the Nara Conference in Authenticity, Trondheim: Tapir Publishers, 1995, p. 403-406

3. TICCIH, The Nizhny Tagil Charter for the Industrial Heritage, art. 2.III.



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consists of the attribution of values and the designation of the object as 'monument' or 'listed building'. The second phase consists of the actual preservation of the values, for instance by restoration or adaptable re-use. However, in this phase ideas often arise on which values exactly constitute the essence of the monument. As this kind of value judgement is always very much a product of its time and culture, the monument will be turned into what is thought to be a good representation of its essential values. The last phase consists of the perception of values and the appropriation of the object as an element of the shared cultural memory. Now, at the end of the process the building has become cultural heritage (see figure 1).

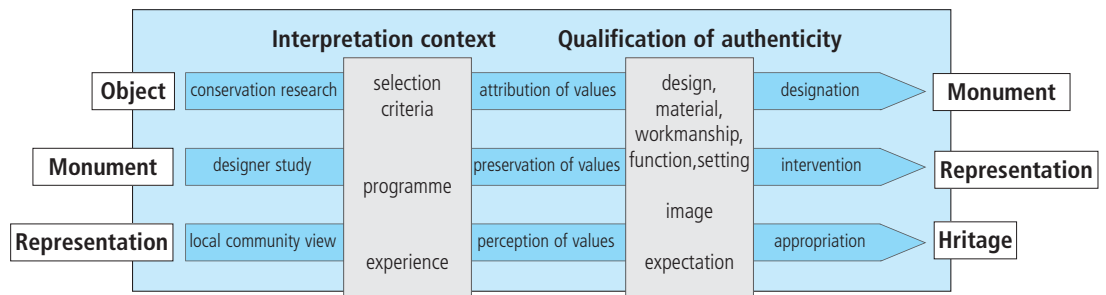


Figure 1: Building value as the process from plain, old object to cultural valuable heritage

As shown above, building value is in fact a reconstruction of the historical object into cultural heritage, carried out by stakeholders such as conservationists, architects and members of the local community. However, they all interpret values within their own context and qualify the authenticity of values according to their own point of view. So to really come to sustainable conservation all stakeholders must be able to interpret and agree upon the values.

Dockyard "Willemsoord", Den Helder, The Netherlands

The first phase of this naval dockyard was built by Jan Blanken in 1816-1827 and the second phase by L. Valk in 1857-1866. Until 1993, the complex was used by the Dutch Royal Navy for maintenance and building of naval vessels. After that, the municipality of Den Helder became responsible for the management of this area. In 1997, the terrain of the dockyard and twenty buildings were listed as a historic monument. In 1998, the new urban master plan was approved. Several buildings were restored or reconstructed and adapted to new uses. In 2004 the new dockyard was opened to the public as amusement and business park "Cape Holland", offering the visitor a mixed programme of naval related museums, creative offices and attractions like a theatre and amusement arcade. However, visitors (both locals and tourists) stayed away.

What went wrong? This question can be answered by analysing this case within the theoretical framework of building value as set out above. The three stakeholders who took part in building the value of this site were the National Department of Archaeology, Cultural Landscape and Built Heritage (RACM), who listed the complex as

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historic monument, the combination of urban designer and Quality team, who respectively designed and supervised the new plans, and the members of the local community, who shared a love-hate relationship with the dockyard as it had great impact on their lives, but was always a no-go area because of the highly classified activities. The RACM valued the rareness of the dockyard, the historical-technical development of the site and the architecture and typology of the 19th century buildings. The urban designer and the Q-team gave special significance to the rationality of the original site design by Jan Blanken, the empty, non-urban and closed character of the site and the industrial patina of the buildings. The local community valued the dockyard for giving identity to Den Helder, impulsing the growth of their city and as a part of the memory of so many locals who worked at the dockyard.

In the end, Blanken's original design of an orthogonally arranged, bare and closed plan was reconstructed. Only buildings that had a functional or spatial relationship within this setting were preserved.

Conclusions

In the case of dockyard "Willemsoord", only the professionals' articulated cultural-historical, architectural-historical and building-historical values were integrated in the master plan, leaving the social-historical value underexposed. Consequently, the image of the dockyard created by the urban designer was a reconstruction of the original design from 1822 in which the site was a bare, closed area. This image did not coincide with the values and expectations by the local community of a identity-affirming and reopened area of the city. Because the inhabitants of Den Helder could not fully appropriate the dockyard as part of their cultural heritage, the process of building of value was not completed, resulting in non-sustainable conservation. The example of "Willemsoord" shows that in the case of industrial sites the incorporating of the socio-cultural values is essential for successful, sustainable and broadly supported conservation.