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Heritage conservation ideologies analysis – Historic urban Landscape approach for a Mediterranean historic city case study

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Abstract This paper highlights the different ideologies in the history of the conservation movement. It shows a long progress of theories implied through history since it started in early classical ages until the modern globalisation era, and highlights certain points as optimistic strategy to be applied in the conservation of historic city. The ideologies' reviews both the material-based approaches in conservation applied in the beginning of the conservation movement in Europe and the later values-based approaches developed internationally.

After reviewing history of ideologies, the methodology used in this paper is carrying an evaluation for the contemporary approaches – in the first part of the research – by analysing them according to three factors: selectivity, authenticity/integrity and sustainability, in order to find the optimum ideology that counters the challenges of the 21st century in historic city's cores. As a result of the analysis carried out, the Historic Urban Landscape approach was verified to be that optimum ideology. The application will be in the form of recommendations that address each step considered by the theory. The second part of the paper focuses on The Historic Urban Landscape Approach, and it includes its application specifically on a Mediterranean historic city (the old city of Tyre-Lebanon) and favours it as the optimum conservation ideology.

The research aims to validate the progress in the conservation approaches by examining its historic evolution. The evaluation of the actual approaches in conservation projects demonstrates the positivism of the communal ideology to sustain these projects.

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Introduction

The term Conservation is a multi-disciplinary practise involving many subjects: the environment, art and architecture, and archaeology. The first part of the paper discusses the Conservations' concepts by reviewing the historic roots of conservation ideologies. Through a chronological listing of the different ideologies, four conceptual approaches are examined in this paper: the physical approach, the social and economical approach, the planning and management approach, and the communal approach. The definition of the continuous debates of modern conservation focuses especially on selectivity, integrity, authenticity and sustainability. The findings from the contemporary ideologies' assessment identify the optimum approach to be applied for Tyre old city case in Lebanon.

“Conservation movement study: chronological evolution of ideologies

According to the “International Council on Monuments and Sites” (ICOMOS) [1], conservation means developing a place to preserve its “cultural significance”. The following discussion of the “conservation movement” analyses the different ideologies; it analysis the history of conservation and its development. There are five main turning points in the history of the conservation movement: the “French revolution” 1789, the “First World War” 1914, The “Second World War” 1945, “Collapse of the socialist bloc” 1989 and the beginning of the present “Globalization Era” [2].

Prior to 1789

Starting with the pre-classical era, the conservation process began unconsciously due to a religious reason.

During the 5th-century-BC, in classic Athens, the ideology for conserving old building was related to their public demand for pietas (focus) due to the glorification of the city's power.

In the 4th-century-AD, in early Christian Rome, two tendencies were distinguished: disintegration of old buildings versus using material from old buildings to construct new ones. The few concepts adapted in this stage could be described, according to Jokilehto (1990), as the “memorial” [3].

During the 15th century (renaissance era), collecting antiquities were a trend and the early restoration started with Alberti who “turned the system upside down” [2] and posed a theory and a practice.

During the 17th century, the European civil war initiated a large movement of restoration after destruction, and the century witnessed the first replica/rebuilding of destroyed urban ensembles. Further, the concept of antiquarianism was emerging in countries especially those involved in fighting and expansionism [2].

In the first half of the 18th century, the ideology was known as the scientific restoration, which is the minimisation of interventions while restoring historic monuments and buildings.

Post French revolution period

After the “French revolution” in 1789, the conservation movement took a widely different national form. The French

approach made no distinction between restoration and conservation, and opinions such as “Viollet-Le-Duc's” advocated Stylistic Restoration [4].

In 1840s, a debate began in England on the principles of conservation and restoration of historic buildings divided conservators into two opposing groups: restorers and anti-restorationists.

- a. The first group was concerned with 'faithful restoration' or 'conservative restoration' reflecting the approach of 'stylistic restoration' invented by Viollet-Le-Duc. It was criticised and called 'destructive restoration'. This restoration aimed to achieve the unity of style in the structure and the form, at the same time, the restorer took decision to complete the design as he saw convenient.
- b. The second group was aware of 'historic time', so they insisted to 'protect and conserve without intervention'. This ideology was defined as 'preservation' same as 'conservative repair' or 'anti-restoration'. “John Ruskin” (1819–1900) initiated this movement in the mid 19th century. Ruskin criticised restorers for the destruction of the historic authenticity of buildings and he called for “protection, conservation, and maintenance”. “William Morris” (1834–96) was the leader of the “Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings” (SPAB). SPAB had leading principles: 'conservative repair' and 'to stave off decay by daily care'. Morris drafted a new society Manifesto, which became the formal basis for modern conservation policy.

A middle way between the 'faithful restoration' and the 'preservation' was presented by Patrick Geddes (1854–1932) and named “Surgical approach.” Geddes's approach is a selective urban renewal approach, which called for minimum intervention without adding new elements and maintenance to extend the age of the building [2].

Table 1 analyses the history of conservation movement from early ages until 1800.

Period between two world wars

In this stage, the “scientific restoration” ideology appeared in Italy and leads to an international assembly in Athens in 1931 to declare the modern conservation policy influenced by the scientific restoration.

The 'scientific restoration', advocated by Gustavo Giovannoni (1873–1974), is an integral approach initiating the concept of area conservation. Giovannoni's theory, known as 'thinning out the urban fabric', compromised between Modernisation and Conservation by keeping heavy traffic outside historic areas, avoiding new streets cut into them, improving their social and hygienic conditions, and conserving historic buildings [2].

The Athens Charter (1931), promoting to modern conservation policy, became the fundamental guideline for other international historic preservation documents. Until the declaration of this policy, the approach to conservation was still a “material-based” approach [5], which is concerned with minimal interventions to heritage, with respect to material structure, to ensure its protection.

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