

REUSING HISTORICAL SITES AS AN ADDED VALUE TO TOURIST'S ATTRACTION IN ALGERIA

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It is now widely accepted that the preservation of cultural heritage has to go beyond simple restoration and renovation actions. If some listed historical monuments have managed to be sustained throughout millenaries, many of them, less important or just neglected because of lack of money have disappeared. The argument in this paper is that the adaptation of historical buildings to new functions is very important for their survival. They have to be integrated in the socio-economic life, and adapted to the needs of contemporary life. This does not mean that they should be completely transformed but that any conservation strategy should look at the ways they could be reused. Indeed, if in the past, most historians defended very strongly the authenticity principles, and restricted all interventions on cultural heritage, the Venice Charter indicates clearly that *«the monument conservation is always promoted by assigning them to a useful function in the society. Therefore, we must within these limits, conceive and authorize the improvement required by the customs and usage evolution»*¹. In Algeria, many monuments were restored without taking into consideration their possible reuse. The concern has always been on restoring and some monuments are not even open to the public. Different examples will be presented to try to demonstrate the benefits of reuse as an alternative to insure the survival of monuments beyond the restoration, throughout new destinations. Indeed, a successful conservation does not focus only on the restoration but goes beyond that operation to contain the operation of reuse which mainly goes hand in hand with it.

Keywords: Cultural heritage, Reuse, Adaptation, Tourism.

Introduction

In contrast to neighboring countries, Morocco and Tunisia, in Algeria, the preservation and reuse of cultural heritage does not seem to be the main concern of public authorities. Many preservation studies were launched but on site nothing is done, and the main listed sites are decaying. And even when some restauration projects were achieved, they were restored without taking into consideration their possible reuse. The concern has always been on saving, preserving buildings turned mainly into museums and visited only on official celebrations.

This paper is based on the recommendation of the Venice Charter [1] that indicates *that «the monuments' conservation is always promoted by assigning them to a useful function in the society.*

¹The international council on monuments and sites (ICOMOS). *International Charter for the conservation and restoration of monuments and sites (Venise Charter, 1964), Article 5, [online]. Available on* http://www.international.icomos.org/charters/venice_f.htm

Therefore, we must within these limits, conceive and authorize the improvement required by the customs and usage evolution». It looks for the mean to insure the survival of monuments beyond the restoration, throughout new destinations.

On Promoting Buildings' Conservation Based on Useful Functions

The notion of cultural heritage re-use has greatly changed, from a pure practice of exploitation to another practice more respectful of the cultural heritage with all its values. Thus, even if the assignment of a cultural heritage to a new function is a very old action, the term of «*Re-use*» dates only from this last decade, and, because of that, it is confused with several other concepts which express the same idea, the one related to the occupation of cultural heritage without thinking of its conservation for the future generations.

This profusion of concepts attests of the difficulty of the subject which precisely evolves around the dialectic «*form/ function*», which would not be successful only if there is a good adequacy between the new function and the existing form. It is therefore necessary to choose between the conservation of the monument as it has existed and its transformation in order to integrate it in the contemporary life and to meet all present days' needs.

F. Choay [2] expressed the same idea, namely the existence of a conflict between the values of contemporaneity in particular the values in use and the ones of recollection such as the value of antiquity and history of a cultural heritage. In addition, a new step is essential, which take a great interest for the establishment of a balance between the (historical and/or cultural) values of a cultural heritage and contemporary needs of public (economic; cultural, historical and identity). Thus, this procedure must take into account the assumption of responsibility, the respect of the values of cultural heritage and its authenticity. And that could not be done only by finding a step which will ensure a relation between the cultural heritage and contemporary needs of the public without compromising those of future.

To ensure this relation, a new step of intervention is essential, that of the «*reuse*» as it tries to find a destination to the cultural heritage while ensuring a better conservation of this one. Hence, some authors [3] think that allotting a new destination to a monument is a difficult and complex operation which should not be based only on one homology with the original destination. It must, first and foremost, respect the material state of the monument in such a way it will not be transformed, and to worry about the activity which should take into account all its historical dimensions to integrate them in the contemporary life. Because of that, the reuse is an intervention which consists in reflecting the future activity of the cultural heritage, and that, by carrying out very tiny transformations in such a way to respect at the maximum its authenticity. Which means that the changes brought will have to be minimized.

Reuse, a Key Issue to Sustaining Cultural Heritage

The new will of reflecting the use of a cultural heritage for a best conservation is due mainly to the concern of ensuring the survival and the durability of this nonrenewable cultural resource for the future generations through a new intervention which is «the re-use» in particular that the UNESCO added, in «*The Universal Declaration of UNESCO on the Cultural Diversity*» [4] adopted in 2001, a fourth aspect to the concept of sustainable development, namely the right to the protection of various identities, of cultural expressions and also cultural heritage.

In this sense, we note with the fact that the concepts of reuse and of sustainable development overlap as both of them are founded on the idea of an obligation of intergenerational solidarity. Therefore, when we talk about re-use of a cultural heritage and in particular ancient monuments we automatically speak about heritage which has to be transmitted to the future generation. And when we speak of sustainable development we refer to development «*which responds to the needs and the aspirations of the current generation without compromising the possibility for the future generations to satisfy theirs*». Thus, this new intervention respond to our needs, not only social and economic ones, but also the one relating to

identity without compromising those of the future generations to meet their own needs such as mentioned in the conference of Rio 1992. Indeed, it aims at raising awareness concerning this type of cultural heritage in all its authenticity and to enhance it like a testimony of a continuity between the past and the present and like vector of the future through a step of sustainable development.

Approaches to building re-use allow us to work out a whole strategy which helps to find the good way of integrating and presenting the cultural heritage such as monuments and to preserve the nature which was transmitted to them through history, and to transmit them intact to the future generations. This would enable us to know the monuments and the culture of the society which produced them without neglecting its cultural and historical values.

The Reuse of Ancient Monuments: A Matter of Authenticity

In order to be able to re-use an ancient monument, considered as a unique and non-renewable cultural resource, in such a way as to guarantee its preservation, we should fully understand and know its meaning and its values, in such a way as to ensure the continuity between the past and the present.

This continuity could be insured only with absolute respect for the authenticity of the monument. The authenticity of an ancient monument is something which has an inestimable and precious value; it offers us the possibility of contemplating a monument that vouches for thousands of years before, and which brings us the history to our present, and which is ready to bring it to us in the future.

The «Nara Document on the authenticity» indicates that «depending on the nature of monument or of site and on its cultural context, the judgment on authenticity is linked to a variety of information sources. This information contains conception and form, materials and substance, use and function, tradition and techniques, situation and site, mind and expression, original state and future history. Those sources are internal or external to the work. These sources offer the possibility of describing the cultural heritage in all its dimensions » [5].

We note that this development includes all the authentic values of monument. It is also very important for the conservation of monument. Therefore, with regard to the conservation of ancient monuments, the conservation of the message linked to some authentic traditions must be done, because the ancient monuments are based on the authentic traditions of different cultures, and they are thus authenticated by authentic testimonies which should be safeguarded in such a way.

However, the monument is an authentic form created from an authentic material, for an authentic function using authentic techniques which are basically connected to the site and the entourage of the ancient monument. The authenticity of the monument is represented on this basis by the forms, materials, techniques, and also by function. We will even be able, accordingly, to talk about «*the future*» that could not be done only by ensuring a best integration of the monument in the contemporary life which would deal with the respect of its authenticity. For this reason, it is essential to preserve at least one option - forms, materials, techniques, site and also the function- for the authenticity, thus, in order to be able to be aware of the message that the monument, «*object of memory*», wants to transmit it to us, and that we must in our turn transmit.

The authenticity is thus put into question, considering the transformations undergone by the historical building over time: the form which has always changed the material which was continuously replaced, interventions in the substance (interventions of restoration), change in the original function by assignment to new functions. Thus, the new use of the monument must be carried out in such a way that the modifications brought to the primitive internal structure of the ancient monument be as tiny as possible and the external structure be completely preserved with a view to respecting the authenticity of monument. The general structure of construction and its aspect, on the whole and in details, will have to be preserved as much as possible.

The authenticity is finally, a fundamental characteristic for the appreciation of all cultural heritages. The enhancement of this one by restoration and landscaping must take account of this concept because if not, they will deprive the future generations to benefit from their inheritance.

The Decay of the Algerian Cultural Heritage

A large part of the rich cultural heritage in Algeria, from the sumptuous Ottoman palaces, to buildings from the colonial time, is decaying. This is partly due to the unsuited re-use of these historic buildings.

Many buildings with a great patrimonial value are transformed either into administrative structures or museums without taking into account of the function needs and characteristics. These are the two most widespread steps of re-use of ancient monuments in Algeria which are arbitrarily assigned. Indeed, these assignments which are carried out without taking into account the authenticity and the originality of this heritage are causing the degradation and the marginalization of this heritage.

In Algeria, the concept of reuse of ancient monuments for their integrations within the contemporary socio-economic life does not exist, because, mainly, of the total absence of legal tools which deal with this dimension of conservation of ancient monuments. In addition, the classification or the inscription on the additional inventory is regarded as the end of the action of conservation of a monument. Once a monument is classified, we think that it is in such a way well preserved of all risks, with, sometimes, an operation of restoration when it is necessary without being concerned about its becoming.

The lack of legislative and theoretical tools is thus responsible for the absence of a policy of «*Sustainable preservation*» and of re-use of the cultural heritage. Public authorities are unfortunately, concerned about these monuments only once they listed.

a Re-Using Cultural Heritage, a Matter of Decision Making Process

The reuse of historical buildings is also quite complicated mainly because of the complexity of the decision making process. Indeed, added to conventional building actors such as architects and government representatives, historians and artists and other cultural organizations have to be consulted, which makes any decision quite long and complicated. Table1 shows that only some tools are available to implement such operations [5].

Conclusion

The conservation of historical buildings must be considered not only according to the restoration but also in term of integration in the socio-economic life through its re-use, and that can be done only by considering the authenticity of the values of monument which it is necessary to respect and take into account. The reuse which must meet the socio-economic needs of the public must also consider the significant elements of the memory of ancient monument which can be only architectural permanence having to determine the right choice. This collective memory (of ancient monument) is an element of comprehension of the significances of what preexists. It is necessary to recover this memory to be able to restore a meaning and an identity to the ancient monument which can be evoked in an allusive or symbolic form in the project of reuse of a monument.

The reuse is, thereby a project respecting the memory of ancient monument which becomes, thus, an essential object to understand the meaning of what existed and legitimates the future interventions which result from this. The interpretation of the memory of ancient monument through the project of reuse aims at the precision of a meaning and an identity and their restore in a symbolic and symbiosis form with the history ancient monument.

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