Conservation and Management of the Historic Core of Split

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ABSTRACT
Conservation rather than restoration, the use of traditional materials and techniques, emphasizing the maintenance of properties and reconstruction of urban infrastructure are some of the basic principles of the recent conservation practice in the historic core of Split. Restoration of key buildings has been used as good practice examples. The objective of the new Management Plan is to preserve the Spirit of the Place by minimizing conflicts between cultural values and stakeholders’ interests, with a need for development and change. In line with its Action Plan, the City has launched several projects, some of which deal with the improvement of infrastructure and with the enhancement of energy efficiency in historic buildings.

KEYWORDS
Historic core, conservation, Management plan, cultural values, World Heritage, infrastructure, energy efficiency

THE HISTORIC CORE OF SPLIT – A UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE
Founded in 305 as a fortified villa of a retired emperor, Split developed into a medieval town, keeping traces from all periods and incorporating them into one harmonic whole. The historic core of Split was declared a World Heritage Site on account of its well preserved architecture from all periods, but also because of the fact that it is still a living organism with all urban functions. It has been threatened by the rapid growth of the modern city, by the pressure of commercialization on the ground level of properties, and by unfavorable changes in the social structure of the population. Badly managed and steadily growing «cultural» tourism has made an additional impact on the quality of life in the historic core.

CONSERVATION OF THE OLD CITY CORE
During the last two centuries the historic centre of Split has been a laboratory for practicing theoretical conservation principles. The centre of Split (like many other historic cities) has been too often understood as a container of fixed values, almost «frozen in time». Values-centred conservation acknowledges that values – and therefore ideas of cultural significance – are not fixed, but evolve over time. Culture is a process, not a set of things with fixed meaning. Today, we are in a position to reconsider our approach to conservation, and make a fresh start with a changed perspective.
Restoration of key buildings such as the Cathedral (Diocletian’s mausoleum), the Baptistery (the Temple of Jupiter) and the Golden Gate has been used as good practice examples in order to display the basic principles which should be followed in everyday practice, such as conservation rather than restoration, the use of traditional materials and techniques, emphasizing the maintenance of properties and reconstruction of urban infrastructure.

**MANAGEMENT PLANS**

Back in 1979, the historic core was inscribed on the UNESCO list of World Heritage sites according to the usual practice of the time – without well-defined borders, without a buffer zone, and without a Management Plan. Thirty years later, the making of a comprehensive Management Plan was not only an urgent need, but also an obligation according to the new UNESCO standards. That is why the City’s authorities have commissioned it, together with the Management Plan for the substructures of Diocletian’s Palace, which is an integral part of the same whole. The Plan was produced by „SolArc“ (Giora and Shahar Solar), in close cooperation with the Service for the Old City Core.

Management Plans are considered to be one of the most important tools for the protection of cultural and natural heritage. The Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (February 2005) require the preparation of a Management Plan or the existence of a management system for every WH site.

Management Plans for cultural heritage sites are the most holistic and comprehensive documents, which provide the vision, direction, tools and suggested actions for the long term, sustainable protection of the sites and their cultural values. A management plan should cover all the existing tools which make the development and protection of the site feasible, and make sure that there are linkages which make these tools useful (for example – legal tools alone, without enforcement, do not function, conservation plans without skilled professionals are just papers, different projects, including plans for infrastructure, without proper coordination mechanism among the different responsible authorities, might cause damage or waste resources, no consideration for community values and needs make the plans non sustainable, etc.).

A Management Plan is a cultural value driven plan. Therefore it refers to issues which have an impact on, or are impacted by the cultural values. At the same time, it should take into consideration other values, as expressed by different stakeholders. However, it is not a substitute for detailed plans and conservation plans, which should be prepared as needed and following recommendations of the Management Plan and its Action Plan.

By definition and as a matter of principle, a Management Plan is a living document, and should be easily amended, updated, extended and implemented in phases. Therefore, if some previously unnoticed stakeholders’ values appear, or when circumstances and concepts change, the way is open to improvements.
We are convinced that in order to make the Plan sustainable it is very important to achieve consensus and understanding of its scope and objectives. That is why the City has organized a series of round tables for different stakeholders, represented by experts and by members of institutions, interested in the issues concerning the historic core. The conclusions of these discussions are being analyzed and will be presented to the City Council, and then incorporated in the final version of the Plan.

THE MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE HISTORIC CORE OF SPLIT

The document itself starts with definitions and identification of values. It continues with the description of existing situation in the historic core, its protection measures, conservation and actual management, accompanied by analysis, assessments and recommendations. A SWOT (Strength-Weakness-Opportunity-Threat) analysis is followed by a suggested Action Plan.

The objective of the Plan is to preserve the Spirit of the Place (Genius Loci) by minimizing conflicts between cultural values and stakeholders’ values, with a need for development and change. It proposes a new model of management, in order to improve the planning and coordination of activities which aim at better quality of life of its inhabitants and of the economy, while securing the long-term, sustainable protection of cultural values of the place.

Infrastructure

An important place in the Management Plan is given to the infrastructure. The historic core of Split, being a living place since more than 17 centuries, is crossed by infrastructure of all kinds and age, starting with an extensive sewage system of vaulted channels from the Roman period, which is blocked by a thick layer of organic deposit, and has only partly been explored and surveyed.

The recent infrastructure which is currently being used can be divided into:

- Macro infrastructure – such as sewage, drainage, water supply, electricity, telephone, cable TV.
- Micro infrastructure – installed by citizens for their immediate needs (antennas, air conditioning etc.).

Planning, implementation and maintenance of infrastructure (above or underground) can have a big impact on the built heritage. Questions and uncertainty regarding the management, maintenance and liability might also damage the built heritage and influence the life in the historic core.

All wet infrastructure has tangible impact on the cultural heritage. Excavating for laying sewage and water supply pipes is an intervention in the archaeological context, leakage from one of the systems might cause stability and conservation problems, in addition to the nuisance to inhabitants and visitors. Since the location of the existing infrastructure lines is underground, maintenance and replacement affect archaeology and cause conflicts with archeologists who sometimes wish to excavate large areas, before the location of new lines. A thorough survey of existing wet infrastructure is needed, followed by replacement of old pipes accompanied by conservation and archeological supervision.
Electricity has three main negative impacts on the built heritage: danger of electrification and fires, visual disturbances of the lines or the electricity connection boxes and small transformers located in strategic locations, and radiation which might cause cancer, if the exposure is severe in length or intensity. The link between safety and conservation in this case is obvious. Replacing old lines and redirecting them underground will not only be for the benefit of the built heritage and the visual aspect, but it is also safer since it reduces drastically the danger of fires and electrification. As with other infrastructure, replacement of old lines and redirecting them underground should be accompanied by conservation and archeological supervision.

The impact of telephone infrastructure is mainly visual – lines and boxes crossing the space, attached to facades and located in strategic locations. As with electricity, redirecting the lines under ground will be for the benefit of the city. A network of cellular antennas is needed in order to have a good coverage and low radiation for users. Around the world, two models are common: the first includes big antennas with high capacity and intensity of transmission and the second includes many small antennas with better geographical coverage and lower transmission intensity. Impacts of the cellular technology are double:

- Visual obtrusion in the historic core itself and in the buffer zone (since the existing antennas are very big and high, they are impacting a large area).
- Exposure of users to radiation from antennas (the amount of radiation depends on the size of the antenna and on distance from it).

From both aspects, the model of many small antennas (located discretely on the lighting system or other infrastructure) is better than the model of few big ones.

New technologies (3rd generation mobile phones, internet hot-spots, solar panels for heating or electricity etc.) are being introduced faster then the planning process in general, or the development of best physical solutions for the application of these technologies in particular. A policy for dealing with new technologies is needed, which should determine if and how an infrastructure can be introduced (some technologies are not applicable in the historic core). Although the ideal solution for location of infrastructure would be service tunnels accommodating several types of infrastructure, they require large spaces, and are not usually feasible in the narrow streets of the historic core.

Two main kinds of TV antennas are common in the historic core: regular antennas and satellite dishes. Many of the antennas are located in strategic locations on facades and on the edges and ridges of roofs. The main problems that are being caused by wrong location or bad installation are physical damage to buildings and visual disturbance.

Air condition condensers are also located on roofs, facades and in windows. The main problems caused by them are:

- Physical damage to buildings, by drilling, anchoring etc.
- Visual disturbance, when in publicly exposed areas.
- Acoustic disturbance.
- Water condensed in the cooling process. If not properly disposed of, water can damage buildings by accumulating in the ground and in walls and by dripping on public spaces.
THE FOLLOW-UP OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Even before the Management Plan for the historic core of Split has been officially adopted, the City has initiated several projects in line with the Action Plan. Some of these projects have been finished, others are in progress.

Following the recent removal of the signage which disfigured the facades of old buildings and spoiled the overall ambiance of the historic core, a new information and presentation system was put in place. Small and unobtrusive panels were mounted on facades with bilingual (Croatian and English) information about the meaning of street names and directions toward the main landmarks, about individual listed buildings and about the businesses located in small streets off the main pedestrian routes. Apart from the great improvement in the orientation and information of visitors, the new signage has changed the way in which the local inhabitants perceive old buildings which had previously often escaped their attention and had been mostly unknown.

A plan for improvement of accessibility of public spaces and most important historic buildings is currently being prepared.

A series of studies of infrastructure in the historic core has been prepared, or is being planned. Among them is the study of the Roman sewage, which will be cleaned, surveyed, restored and used for drainage and as a tourist attraction.

Energy efficiency

The study of the increase of energy efficiency in the historic core will take into account the use of renewable sources of energy through efficient and ecologically acceptable systems. Although solar panels are officially not allowed in the historic core of Split, the Management Plan proposes to reconsider such perspective. However, it is probably unrealistic to expect a broader use of solar energy in the historic surrounding. On the other hand, it is possible to contemplate the use of the energetic potential of ground- and seawater. Due to the specific geological situation, the city of Split, and especially its historic central area abound in sources of fresh water. On the large scale, an air conditioning system could be devised, using drainage channels in and around the old city core. An example of a more localized use of such a system is the fish market which is being planned for revitalization and renovation. The neighbouring area is rich in ground water, and both the building and the merchandise need air conditioning.

The split air conditioning is the most often used system because of its low cost and ease of installation. The widespread use of such a system has resulted in disfigurement of many facades in the historic core. It is clear that in the near future conservation regulations will become more strict and the owners will be asked to take down the exterior units from the facades facing the public streets. In preparation for such a situation, the City will prepare a study of the possible solutions of installation of air conditioning systems in historic buildings. At the same time, the improvement of energy efficiency can be analyzed through the restoration of the exterior parts of historic buildings, without deteriorating their historic and aesthetic values.
Another area where vast energy savings can be made is the public lighting. A good example is the new lighting of the Peristyle and of the Cathedral of Split, where a large number of strong floodlights has been replaced by a much smaller number of low intensity spotlights, resulting in a much more appropriate atmospheric setting.

At the level of individual buildings, the improvement of energy efficiency can be implemented not only through the use of appropriate insulation materials, but also through a well coordinated system of management, revitalization and maintenance of buildings. The new management model should ensure a continuous restoration and upkeep of historic buildings, using technically proven procedures, approved by conservation authorities, which would increase energy savings. Maintenance is a key for good housekeeping, and ensuring continuous maintenance prevents unnecessary waste of time, money and energy. Of critical importance in the implementation of systematic management and maintenance is the financial framework which should be created on the basis of experiences of other cities, adapted to local conditions.

CONCLUSION

Although much effort has been made during the past fifteen years in restoration of the historic core of Split, it has proven hard to influence local authorities to put the emphasis on improving living conditions and on the maintenance of urban infrastructure. Conservation activities are usually considered to be luxuries, especially when leaner times force a reassessment of priorities. Our built heritage has a reputation of being a burden to the owners and the community. Restoration is indeed a costly operation, especially after many years of neglect, with poor or nonexistent maintenance. However, recent studies demonstrate that preservation can be a powerful economic engine, by creating more jobs, increasing tax revenue, raising property values, and encouraging community reinvestment, while improving energy efficiency.

Historic preservation is much more than nostalgia; it should be recognized as a powerful tool for economic development and community revitalization.

REFERENCES

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