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INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE: TOOL TO BUILD THE FUTURE

Abstract

Under the leveling globalization process, cultural heritage remains an opportunity. According to Brian Graham, cultural heritage is "that part of the past which we select in the present for contemporary purposes, be they economic, cultural, political, or social." Can cultural heritage become a tool for developing more integrative and sustainable urbanism?

The psycho-physical impact of the built environment's form on our being, and how architectural form transforms into space and tactile matter, will connect architecture to the societies that created them, showcasing globally-recognized intangible cultural heritage. Architecture, particularly the built space, if understood as the result of actions aimed at or derived from construction, creates, in itself, a natural language common to designers from different backgrounds. It is capable of acting as a "bridge" between cultures and attitudes for the critical reading of design. This applies as much to tectonics in the case of analysis at the scale of the building as to morphology in the case of studies at the urban scale. It shows how the development of a built environment can be culturally integrated, providing the opportunity to plan and design socially sustainable urban development that could reconnect disjunctions resulting from the intensified development of the last decades

Intangible architectural cultural heritage: tool to build the future

Under the levelling globalization process, cultural heritage remains an opportunity.

What do I mean by cultural heritage? UNESCO defines it as "the legacy of physical artefacts and intangible attributes of a group or society that are inherited from past generations, maintained in the present and bestowed for the benefit of future generations". According to Brian Graham, Cultural heritage is "that part of the past which we select in the present for contemporary purposes, be they economic, cultural, political, or social", to bring it in the future. (Graham, Ashworth, and Tunbridge 2000)

Historically, the interest in preservation is recent, it was being developed in the late 19th century in England when many historic sites were damaged by the spread of the railway network throughout the United Kingdom. (Ashbrook 2013) Soon, a campaign began in Parliament for legislation to protect the monuments from destruction. The law came to an end under the liberal rule of William Gladstone under the name Ancient Monuments Protection Act 1882. In 1877, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings was created, by designer William Morris, to prevent the destruction of historic buildings, followed by the National Trust, in 1895, which purchased estates from their owners for conservation.[1]

State production of normative and legislative bodies for governing and protecting heritage and cultural diversity has in most instances become during the time a catalyst for change. (Bendix, Eggert, and Peselmann 2012) Yet, even though they integrate a sustainable approach, involving both the built environment and local communities attached to the place for a better transmission

[1] https://www.spab.org.uk/, visited on 05/03/2022

to future generations, disjunctions constantly occur between the expectation and the results. The negative impact on the economy, the social sphere and the environment for concerned areas seem difficult to avoid. (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2006) Rupture in the local economic network, rapid change in living standards, the eviction of the local population, implementation of new commercial services all inevitably produce new forms of social and economic marginalization (locals vs outsiders or migrants, wealthy inhabitants vs dispossessed) and transform former lifestyles (gentrification of neighbourhoods, dislocation of residential communities, relocation of affected inhabitants to outlying neighbourhoods).

Furthermore, the rich past of legacies in both tangible and intangible heritage, are increasingly challenged due to the pressure to create new development, modern infrastructure and a better lifestyle for their inhabitants (Labaldi and Logan 2016) going towards what is called "Global Culture". A completely new cultural system, or system of culture, emerging from the diffusion of cultural values, beliefs and practices worldwide and which takes on new attributes, and becomes transformed in the process(Hexham and Poewe 1997) reating 'a single 'homogenized' system of meaning'(Tomlinson 1999), set on universally shared images and practices and thus, on an altered condition of universality.

What we call "globalisation" is a phenomenon that always accompanied the historical evolution of human beings, curious and experimenters of new techniques since prehistoric times. However, there is no doubt that exchanges and contacts are a phenomenon that in the last two centuries, and even more so in the last decades, have experienced an unprecedented intensification to reach the present day in which we speak, rightly, of globalisation. (Cronin 2003)

These topics set up some research questions: What is the

relationship between today's cultural plurality and their cultural heritage? What are the implications of transcultural models on the human condition, transformation, and hence their effects on the society that live in the built environment? What factors from the past inform these processes?

This new set of universally shared images and practices (Franklin, Lury, and Stacey 2000) disregarded human experiences, both in terms of place attachments and identity as well as everyday life practices linked to intangible heritage. Since the place is a specific space with its historical phases that sculpt its character, people are attached to their places, as the place derives its very existence from the people who shaped it over time. People adopt intangible elements that shape their personality from their place's collective consciousness (Norberg Schulz 1992) and at the same time their constructions, an essential element of a place, reflect the expression of the societies and the people who created them, showcasing that worldly-recognized intangible cultural heritage.

From the architectural point of view, and in the modern conception of space, where priority is given to the space that is revealed thanks to the movement of the subject over time, reconsidering the construction and the structural modalities through which it must necessarily be completed, bring back the inevitably earthly nature of the building to a tectonic and tactile character as well as scenographic and visual, even if none of these attributes can deny the spatiality (Frampton 2005) and the empiricism of the different architectural spatial experience based on the cultural place where it is built and lived. While Kenneth Frampton in his book "Studies on Tectonic Culture" analyzes construction methods and characteristic architectures of some countries, such as the Roman methods of brick commissures, the traditional Japanese house, up to some works by Gaudi, reflecting on some keywords such as etymology, topography and ethnography that we they

help to contextualize the built and therefore to understand it, the Danish architect Jørn Utzon, proposes in his writings "Platforms and Plateaus: Ideas of a danish architect" a series of intercultural comparisons of an empirical nature, working on the transcultural element of buildings technologies and their physical and body perceptual impact in a critical approach.

Both reveal, leaving aside transcultural elements deriving from human anthropology, that there exists a strong link between construction, the space and the human approach and perception of it derived from one's own culture. This is the manifestation of how, in addition to tangible heritage, represents from the material construction, it reveals an intangible heritage too strongly linked to the place as they incorporate cultural, social and economic conditions found in a specific context from which historical processes and needs derive.(Picon 2005)

The discourse wants to transcend the importance given to ornament, an element of cultural explanation[2], and from complex epidermal formalisms, created in contemporary design, but wants to mend a detachment between container and content, returning to as the architectural element and its composition is perceived in different ways by different cultures.

Following these reasons, globalization has to be seen as "a complex and diverse phenomenon consisting of global cultures from many different nations and regions", and no longer conceptualized in terms of the emergence of a homogenized global culture. (Crane, Kawashima, and Kawasaki 2002) Used with the indefinite article, the global culture, in the singular, somehow implies processes of cultural homogenization taking place on a global scale, rather there are global cultures in the plural, a view that accords with Featherstone. (Featherstone 1990)

Cross-cultural actions need relentless reinterpretation, rethinking and re-signification, to not be formally transposed, to have the

[2] Luis Sullivan believed strongly in the power of ornament as a symbol and vehicle of transformation.

power to create future unique transcultural identities.
How it can happen in the architecture field? Can cultural heritage become a tool for developing more integrative and sustainable urbanism?
To address the paradigm of cultural heritage as a tool of sustainable urbanism has to be involved social and cultural anthropology and heritage studies. Despite narratives on cultural heritage giving rise to social engineering, changes can be implemented via architectural and urban models and planning. The societal impacts of the uses of cultural heritage are associated with the creation of a harmonious society in urban transformation.
Operations related to culture are frequently used to diffuse new ideas and mitigate the impacts of projects within society by insisting on the continuity between the past and the future, useful to reconnect the disjunctions mentioned above, balancing urban heritage with sustainable conservations across generations and providing urban transformation that respects to living traditions and their associated identity values (Taylor, Mitchell, and st. Clair 2017; Bandarin and Oers 2015; Osborne 2010), but able to adapt to a constantly changing culture through time and cultural exchange.
The psycho-physical impact of form on our being and how the architectural form is transformed into space and the tactile matter is a concept expressed by the Neapolitan philosopher Gianbattista Vico not only in metaphorical terms but also in corporeal terms, exposing how this is part of the legacy of a species that is going through a cultural evolution with which it also identifies its own way of experiencing space and building it. (Mooney 1985)
The built space has the power to create a common language for designers with different backgrounds and cultures becoming a bridge if we read constructions as the results of actions at or derived from it. This applies as much to tectonics at the scale of the building scale, as to morphologies in the case of urban studies.

(Bologna 2019) Because, as Frampton wrote ”Architecture process a marked capacity for being experienced by the entire sensorium; that is to say, senses other than the optic nerve are involving in experiencing architecture” and “ under most circumstances, materials and surface can be as much a part of an overall perception of architecture as the presence of visual form”. (Frampton 2005)
Architects can be able to read through an existing tangible cultural heritage, coming from the past, which preserves within itself intangible architectural cultural heritage of which the building itself is an expression, and is today a readable object of how a space or a building is culturally integrated, it becomes an opportunity that gives the possibility of planning and design socially sustainable urban development that could reconnect those disjunctions given by the intensified development of the last decades.

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