

Training and Education in Crafts for Conservation

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This document summarizes outputs from CIF scientific working program 2005-2008. During this period the intention of the committee was to explore the role and position of crafts and craftsmanship in the concept of cultural heritage preservation and to draft requirements on related training and education systems. The topic was considered in framework of midterm program of CIF formulated during the workshop held in July 2005 in Svaty Jur (Slovakia) and discussed on working meeting in Marienstadt (Sweden) in 2006 and conference held on 19 – 21 October 2007 in Pisa (Italy).

In this context this document refers to the essential consideration - Crafts as the final executive step in the conservation and/or crafts as an integral part of development of an overall conservation concept.

Preamble

Maintenance, restoration and new construction of buildings in cultural environment are processes based on human capacity to use the construction materials and skills in order to create and maintain appropriate quality of built environment - environment corresponding to physical and spiritual requirements for human life and sustainable in the natural conditions. Tangible materials and physical conditions of the site on one hand and intangible skills based on through generations' accumulated empirical knowledge on the other are inseparable entities.

Under pressure of accelerated social and technologic transformation this link is corrupted. Our efforts in efficient preservation of cultural heritage stand or fail on capacity to reconstitute the balance between material requirements and implementation skills all that by taking in account challenges of new technologies.

Our educational concepts have to face the needs of complex consideration of maintenance, restoration and construction processes and enable the restitution of the link between craftsman, builder, architect, construction engineer, restorer, researcher, construction technology developer and especially the house owner and his community.

1. Training concepts in the optic of the role of crafts in conservation process

2.1 Crafts training

Target group: craftsman

Objectives: Traditional skills development

Due to modernization processes the traditional construction techniques were strongly influenced and even overridden by progressive technologies. These became meanwhile also a subject of preservation. Nowadays the issue of conservation of modern movement architecture is a challenge. Forgetting and rediscovery are actual topics in discussion about the continuity of the art of construction. To fulfill the requirement of authenticity of craftsmanship it is necessary to reconstitute the craftsman's skills and approach their original quality. This can be done by use of residues still present among craftsman and by reconstruction of technology on the basis of historic documents and contemporary technologic research. Such research, if aspiring to achieve practical output, cannot be done without participation with experienced craftsman.

Use of new products from conservation and building materials industry

Part of craftsman skills was and continue to be to know from which source to provide construction materials - to get an appropriate quality and good price. With increasing mobility of people and goods the availability of products on construction site considerably augments. Genuine materials are replaced by "more convenient" ones from remote places. Traditional construction materials are produced in modified technologies and often brought to market as "ready to use" with intention to shift the qualified work from construction site to factory. New products based on completely new material bases with declared high performance features emerge. For specific needs in conservation industry special products are developed. To apply the outcomes of research and progress in construction and restoration industry in an efficient way is conditioned by right choice and qualified application. All that depends on knowledge and practical experience.

Capacity building in participation of craftsman on integral conservation process

In the optic of contemporary theory of conservation the objective of preservation of cultural values is their integrity. Not only the material but also the authenticity of craftsmanship is required. The decision making process on conservation/restoration is in general following legal framework, if any, involving preservation authority and designer. Some experts might be invited in addition. It seems to be questionable if all these highly educated people have the capacity to reflect the link between "what to do" and "how to do". It does not mean that craftsman knows best what is necessary in the specific case and circumstances and that he/she should get "free hand" in handling with an object of cultural value.

Specification of required works delivered by contractor is a must of a conservation/restoration project. To produce such a document in qualified manner craftsman can contribute with his added value. There is a necessary prerequisite for such cooperation – involved parties should “speak the same language”.

2.2 Academic training

Target group: architects, civil engineers, restorers, art historians and many other professions

Objectives: Incorporation of craftsman’s knowledge in all steps of conservation process such as survey, design, site supervision

Specialization of professions in construction and in conservation/restoration process of built cultural heritage is creating gaps in capacity to assess the needs and to design the intervention in a holistic manner. The orientation on practice in academic training remains often only on declarative level. In the field of new construction the whole process expects benchmarking or some kind of object oriented programming of successive steps from concept through architectural design, technical implementation design, implementation plan and final execution.

In our opinion the conservation/restoration process ask much more for continual and integrated approach. To comply with such requirements pose additional requirements on specific knowledge in the field of materials, structural behavior, construction techniques and construction site management. To demolish, cut out and replace with new ready element is not an acceptable approach. Craftsman’s intervention is interactive and difficult to prescribe in advance. That is why the research on historic buildings, conservation/restoration design and final execution of works ask for understanding of the role of a craftsman in all stages of the process.

2.3 Specialized training

Target group: experts in conservation methodology and research
product and technology developers
teachers and trainers

Objectives: Integration of practical experience in exploration of the past in actual conservation work and cultural development for the future

Conservation/restoration is a discipline appealing on various sciences. All of them have own progress and internal development. The role of conservation

specialist is to reflect such progresses and integrate partial inputs in the discipline. In opposite direction questions towards scientific disciplines should be asked in specific matters. For the needs of the discipline appropriate methodologies of research should be developed. In the optic of needed knowledge for integrated conservation/restoration there is generally neglected or underestimated the aspect of the essence of craftsmanship. It is understandable that the available historic documents describe socio-economic circumstances and display characteristic tools or site arrangement but they do not describe the work itself. We know there was in the past another system how to keep the crafts alive – transmission of knowledge from master to apprentice. In order to be able to set concepts for conservation projects and execute the necessary work we should deepen our knowledge about the intangible value of craftsman's skills. We should use his eyes when analyzing site and drawing solutions. It is obvious that research and science are not able to replace his practical experience by extended studies. Craftsman must become member of the research team and contribute to formulation of new approaches.

2.4 Public instruction and sensibilisation

Target group: general public, decision makers, youth and many other groups

Objectives: Foster the appreciation of cultural heritage by interpretation of values

The basic prerequisite for future preservation of cultural heritage is appreciation by people who use it. The society is in constant transformation and values recognized in the past are confronted with new conditions of life and new requirements on practical performance of built environment. As we see in many cases these new requests are not necessarily in conflict with models from the past. The quick transformation is causing the preference of new offers without testing the impact of their acceptance on the whole system. Performance of a craftsman is inseparable from the overall quality and integrity of built heritage. If we want to stimulate preservation and integration of values of the past in contemporary and future systems of values, it is necessary to assist by educational means in understanding of these values including the value of craftsmanship.

Explaining of practical aspects and economic benefits related to conservation and appropriate use of traditional skills and materials

The fundamental role of crafts is to use materials in the best way in order to fulfill requirements in construction of buildings. It depends on capacity of the craftsman to offer the best and help to his client to find an economically acceptable solution. In the palaces of socio-economic disparities access of people to convenient

housing conditions is often not possible. Good practices show, that traditional techniques and materials available on site are a possible solution. Preservation of existing skills, their social rediscovery and adaptation on new conditions is necessary in this field.

Built heritage is an asset. The development of tourism mobilizes funds which might be attracted by the quality of cultural heritage. But as every use also the use of built environment is consuming the material substance. The craftsman is somebody who can keep these assets in good conditions. That is why as secondary contribution to services related to tourism also employment of local work capacities is important positive argument in favor of training and promotion of craftsman.

Enlightening of political dimension of preservation of cultural heritage and its integration in new development

Housing and quality of built environment are essential elements of human life conditions. Cultural heritage is the best from the past what our predecessors have created. These assets are important part of our recent built environment. By dealing with built heritage we must be aware that this is a non renewable source. Traditional construction techniques and their use in conservation/restoration enable to keep this vulnerable element in good conditions.

Traditional crafts and use of techniques and materials can contribute to improve conditions of life in difficult economic conditions by affordable housing concepts and employment opportunities. In relation to tourism industry crafts represent an economic resource and contribute to job creation.

Retention and development of cultural heritage is suitable because of its social and economic power. The craftsman plays a key role in such approach.