The significance of Historic Urban Landscape in the protection of World Heritage Sites

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Having compared the structures of World Heritage Sites in the Visegrad countries (V4) to that of the whole of Europe, we could conclude that there are no major differences between the two. In six out of the ten categories of World Heritage Sites (historic city, urban monument, religious monument, castle/fortress, landscape, natural), there is no significant difference between the European and the V4 averages. However, there are many more historic towns and villages as well as fewer industrial and archaeological sites in the V4 countries compared to the whole of Europe. (See Table 1.) In my previous paper, I made a brief analysis of World Heritage village sites in Central Europe, but I didn’t mention much about urban sites. Compared to the three village sites, urban sites are much more numerous: four cities (Budapest, Krakow, Prague, Warsaw), nine towns and three urban monuments are on the World Heritage List, and an another nine urban sites are on the Tentative Lists of the V4 countries. Therefore, urban heritage protection of World Heritage sites also has a major importance in Central Europe.

Since the number of urban World Heritage Sites has reached a critical threshold globally, UNESCO is preparing a new Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape, which is due to be signed in 2012. This legal framework is the result of a 30 year development on reflections on protected urban territory, which will definitely bring new challenges to Central European cities and towns on the World Heritage List. Similarly
to the historical analysis of the notion of cultural heritage,\(^3\) I am convinced that it is useful to do the same with the notion of Historic Urban Landscape.

Thus, in this paper, I propose a conceptual analysis of this term in the following four phases: (1) the place of Historic Urban Landscape in the development of the notion of World Heritage regarding the complex relationship between tangible and intangible heritage; (2) the birth of the notion of Historic Urban Landscape itself and its importance; (3) a swift conceptual analysis of Historic Urban Landscape as opposed to Historic Area based on the difference of the twin-notions of space and territory; (4) bridging the birth of the concept of (Historic) Urban Centre to that of the notion of Historic Urban Landscape. Although the notion of Historic Urban Landscape is universal, the examples in this paper will be taken from the Central European context.

**Historic Urban Landscape related to the notion of World Heritage**

Since 2005, the first official definition of the term, Historic Urban Landscape, has indisputably gained a major importance in debates concerning urban centres all over the world. In the draft of the Recommendation, the necessity of this high level definition of the term is partially explained by the large number of cities concerned: “Today, historic cities constitute the largest heritage ‘category’ on the World Heritage List, with over 250 inscribed sites out of more than 900.”\(^4\) In Europe, this percentage is much higher, since one third of the 368 European World Heritage Sites are urban.

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and we have already mentioned their importance in the Central European context. If we wish to understand the significance of urban world heritage sites, we need to look at the short history of the World Heritage List. The history of World Heritage is marked by Conventions and Recommendations. From the point of view of the Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape, the following documents are unavoidable: the Recommendation on Landscapes and Sites (1962), the Venice Charter (1964), the World Heritage Convention (1972), the Recommendation on Historic Areas (1976), the Florence Charter (1982), the Washington Charter (1987), the Intangible World Heritage Convention (2003) and the Convention on Cultural Diversity (2005).5

The number of the World Heritage Sites has grown considerably since its foundation in 1978. In Europe, this expansion was most dynamic in the 1990s, and by the beginning of the 21st century, more than 120 European cities had become protected, including many European capitals.6 Urbanisation and the changing character of city centres went parallel with this extensive scope of international heritage protection, so it is no wonder that the first clashes between the two took place in the most recent decade. In certain cities such as Cologne, Dresden and Vienna, this conflict received international attention, while in others, such as Budapest, it remained on the UNESCO-Member State level, but the inherent discrepancy between the various social actors called for a general solution, or at least a general framework of problem solving.

The birth of the notion of Historic Urban Landscape
The city of Vienna, recognised as a world heritage site in 2001 and shortly after threatened to be classified as a site in danger due to the planned construction of high towers near the city centre, hosted the first conference on Historic Urban Landscape in 2005, and gave place to the definition of the Vienna Memorandum,7 the first official tentative to describe Historic Urban Landscape.

5 I did not use the official names of these documents to save space. For full denominations see: www.unesco.org.
The Vienna Memorandum and the notion of Historic Urban Landscape should be understood in the conceptual evolution of the term "cultural heritage", since the above mentioned UNESCO documents are all centred around this term, shaping it as well as codifying complex social, cultural, and economic developments related to the changing character of our perception of the past. I have written lavishly elsewhere about the cultural heritage paradigm, so I do not wish to describe this phenomenon in detail here, but some significant characteristics of this paradigm should be noted to comprehend how the concept of Historic Urban Landscape came into existence.

Although the elements of urban quarter protection can be traced back to the 1933 Athens Charter, it was the 1964 Venice Charter, which determined the frameworks of city protection, and the 1972 World Heritage Convention placed it into the general context of heritage protection based on sites. It did not happen by chance that UNESCO codified and institutionalised cultural heritage in the early 1970s. The shaping of the notion of cultural heritage went hand in hand with several social and cultural changes, out of which I only list those which are relevant to our topic: the future oriented modernist approach was gradually replaced by postmodern presentism; the term "cultural heritage" gradually incorporated almost every trace of the past (first objects and monuments, then cities, landscapes, species and even human communities); great theories (ideologies) explaining social development were fundamentally questioned; accordingly, the humanities as well as social sciences (including economics and urban studies) undertook a set of paradigm shifts commonly labelled by the term "turn"; linguistic and/or cultural turns in the above-mentioned fields perfectly suited the multiplication of identities; the multiplication of identities and the strengthening of local voices led to a wider scope of democratisation and academic recognition of these social changes.

By the beginning of the 1980s, urban planning couldn't avoid these developments, and the expansion of the cultural heritage paradigm brought new aspects into the shaping of city centres: ambitious modernising plans were disfavoured to urban habilitation in city centres; the surroundings

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of historic monuments gained more and more attention from the point of view of protection, which valorised old buildings with less monumental/architectural interest; a sort of urban hermeneutics developed gradually in the urban planning of historic city centres, in which not just the will of the author (city planners and architect, etc.) was taken into consideration, but also the perception of the receptor (inhabitants and stakeholders etc.); the widening scope of stakeholders led to the legislative process of participation in several Western countries.

The social and cultural background of the 1972 World Heritage Convention changed considerably in the last decades of the 20th century: the expansion of the notion of cultural heritage led to the continuous redefinition of urban heritage. The protected city centres were no longer considered as merely aesthetically attractive and/or historically significant ensembles of buildings and monuments, but also as social habitats which should be preserved in harmony with their natural settings and through mobilising their residing communities. Although the World Heritage List includes a few protected urban views (for example Budapest, 1987 and Paris, 1991), the vast majority of protected urban sites refer to built monuments or a built area of historic interest.

**Historic Urban Landscape opposed to Historic Area**

The UNESCO Conventions and Recommendations show us the conceptual evaluation of the notion of the urban centre as a site of protection. For the sake of a quick analysis of this development, let us choose texts between the 1976 ICOMOS “Recommendation concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Role of Historic Areas,”¹⁰ and the 2008 UNESCO “Draft Elements of a Future International Standard-Setting Instrument on the Conservation of Historic Urban Landscapes.”¹¹ In the beginning of the examined period, the historic area was used to describe the city centre. Later, the historic townscape was considered more accurate until the 2005 Vienna Memorandum, when historic urban landscape came into use. These conceptual shifts seem to follow the above-mentioned social and cultural changes. Since the three terms refer to spatial entities and seem to reveal

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a coherent development in time, their analysis by methods of social history can be easily justified.

Spatial entities and their social appropriation have recently gained a major importance in the explanation of social phenomena and that of social change. Many scholars speak about spatial turn\textsuperscript{12} referring to space as a container of continuity in the era of multiplied temporalities. In this sense, spatial entities appear to be the conveyors of identities rooted in the past. Linking identities to places happens through the appropriation of space by a society or a community. According to the tradition of French history writing,\textsuperscript{13} space becomes territory through this process of identity building and through the marking of places of memories in a given territory. The appropriation of space and the creation of a comprehensible territory takes place through denomination and delimitation. Accordingly, the level of territoriality of spatial entities can be measured by the character of their appropriation, denomination and delimitation of the given society or community. Certain terms belong entirely to the spatial inventory (plain, for example, is not appropriated, has no special denomination and has vague limits), while others are totally territorial (country, for example, is appropriated by a nation, has a significant name and has borders). Each appropriation has its own history. There are certain periods which prefer the elaboration of certain terms: 19th-century European nation-building was really keen on the definition of country and fatherland, for example. In certain cases (in France), both became clearly territorialized, ie appropriated, while in others (in several Central and Eastern European cases), there are still difficulties delimitating countries or fatherlands, not to mention the process of overlapping the two.

Let us see how the terms used in \textsc{unesco} documents can be placed into the matrix of territorialisation. (This matrix can be resumed in the Table 2.) Both area and landscape are appropriated and designated, especially with the “historic” attribute. However, the difference of the level of territorialisation, ie the appropriation of phenomena defined by these terms can be judged by their delimitation. While the area should be clearly delimited by border(lines), the landscape has no limits, or its limits are

\textsuperscript{12} For a comprehensive introduction see Stephan Günzel: \textit{Raumwissenschaften}, Frankfurt am Main 2009.

ambulant: they follow the gaze of the observer. On the one hand, landscape seems to define a lower level of appropriation, while on the other, this appropriation is more individual and more flexible than that of area. If the replacement of area proved to be necessary in the documents protecting city centres, one can ask why it was not changed to the more urban specific, townscape. This term also includes the gaze of the observer, so is less territorialised than area, but it belongs to the inventory of architects, urbanists, and alike, so the appropriation is more specific than that of landscape. Accordingly, urban landscape was chosen to become the appropriate term to describe and incorporate all the complex changes which have been happening to city centres since the 1970s. (Table 2.)

There are several common characteristics of the protection of urban sites which are present in the very first documents: the demand for conservation, the special attention given to local urban practice, the survey approach, the recommendation for programming and planning, the involvement of locals in the decision-making processes, and the educative value of the historic settings. Thus, these elements did not justify the choice of a new term. Among other causes, the 2008 and 2010 drafts emphasise the importance of the appearance of intangible cultural heritage in UNESCO’s cultural heritage management. The implementation of the new term, landscape, seems to be explained by this expansion of the notion of cultural heritage. Whereas townscape refers to the totality of the material/tangible cultural heritage sites and objects of an urban settlement, and landscape is supposed to depict the immaterial/intangible aspects of urban cultural heritage. Theoretically, the landscape could unite the levels of local practices by the inclusion of the individual (through his or her view), the community (through its value-bound definition) and society (by taking the genius loci into account). According to the will of heritage preservers, landscape expresses the “layering of the significances”.14 ie

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the protection of different levels of traditional urban practices through preserved tangible frames and through the documentation of these practices.

Consequently, the lower level of territorialisation of landscape allows to incorporate a broader scope of stakeholders. Whereas area or even townscape are determined by an external hand or view (by the voyeur\textsuperscript{15}), landscape adds to this the view of the walker. In this sense, the academic, who can be a monument protector, an architect or a historian, is expected to change the scales of his/her view alternating his role of a voyeur to that of a mediator. The rising awareness of the locals is not just reflected by the legislation of the participative principles, but by the frameworks of monument protection as well as by the changing fields and characters of scholarship.

Historic Urban Landscape takes into account the complexity of present-day (historic) city centres: they cannot be described through their unique functions (traditional urban activities), by simply opposing other parts of the city (sociologically, geographically, from the point of view of urban planning, etc.), or by their mere aesthetic value (monument protection). They are considered a bearer of local identity, which is expressed by specific – intangible cultural – practices. The definition of the city centre through its identity needs a new academic toolbox, which supposes a new (post-turns) set-up of the elements of traditional disciplines. In return, the concerned disciplines themselves are due to change by this assemblage.

\textbf{Bridging (Historic) Urban Centre and Historic Urban Landscape}

In order to make the historical embeddedness of the notions describing the city centre and the cadres of its protection more obvious, let us see the birth of the centres which are protected by the successive conventions of UNESCO. It is a common European and, belatedly, Central European experience that privileged cities and towns lost their territorial intactness through the territorialisation of the modern state, which made their city-walls disappear and forced their territory to integrate the suburbs.\textsuperscript{16} The previously closed cities must have opened themselves, both physically

\textsuperscript{15} The distinction between the voyeur and the walker is used by De Certeau. Michel De Certeau, \textit{L'invention du quotidien}, 1. \textit{Arts de faire} et 2. \textit{Habiter}, cuisiner, \textit{éd. établie et présentée par} Luce Giard, Paris 1990.

\textsuperscript{16} Many remarkable analyses have been made to show this process. For Košice, an urban site on the tentative list of Slovakia, see Gábor Czoch, "Területi és térszerkezeti változások Kassán a 19. században", in: Gábor Czoch, \textit{A városok szívei}, Pozsony 2009.
and socially, to the surrounding areas. The formerly intact closed cities/towns, became open city centres and the objects of waves of modernising and/or historicising urban planning.

By the last decades of the 20th century, however, urban planning gradually became less confident concerning its aims and tools. Following the characteristics of the cultural heritage paradigm, it started slowly sliding from its modernist (future-based) approach towards a more presentist one, in which conservation gained a primary importance. Accumulating dissatisfaction expressed by successive generations of urban planners concerning the ideas and deeds of their forefathers as well as the gradual disapproval of great modern social theories, mitigated the original vigour of amending social problems and inequalities through urban planning. Moreover, since the built environment failed to reflect the aimed ideal society, this ideal society was harder and harder to envision, with pragmatism and protection of the existing environment becoming the norm. In other words, urban planning has experienced its cultural turn, as ideologies were gradually replaced by identities.

Considering all these social and cultural developments, Historic Urban Landscape seems to be the proper term to describe the contents of contemporary historic urban centres and the doubts related to its definition. The lower level of territorialisation expressed by the choice of landscape allows a larger scope of social actors to identify themselves with this territorial entity, but its inherent reference to the intangible cultural heritage leads to questions of utility of this quite recently defined notion in an ever-changing urban setting. In any case, the interrelatedness of place, local community, local practices and local identities through legislation and the use of urban cultural heritage protection has presented itself as a new exciting field of study.

In the Central European context, the Historic Urban Landscape and the Historic (Urban) Area have their own characteristic, since urban privileges – and their built expressions – often survived longer than they did in other parts of Europe, as well as the fact that modernist-futurist urban interventions were often more radical due to the period of communism. The last two decades have witnessed quite modest urban development, and even significant urban decline. Central European experts should definitely add their experience stemming from these peculiarities to the general debate on the definition on Historic Urban Landscape.