CONSERVATION VERSUS RESTORATION – A STORY ABOUT LAYERS OVER TIME

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ABSTRACT:

History is a collection of accumulating layers over time. This is the very nature of buildings and landscapes and on a larger scale of urban growth.

However, heritage and its cultural values are too often qualified only by age in order to be respected. This paper will discuss the layering of history over time in an urban environment, the collective significance of these layers and the opportunities for conservation practice to recognise, enhance, and add to these values. Only through recognising the richness of layering it is possible to tell a more complete story. This approach offers the opportunity to conserve rather than restore heritage and thus enable opportunities for continuity of engagement and enhancement of these values.

Keywords: cultural heritage, protection, values, building conservation, restoration, significance

THE STORY WE WANT TO TELL

Conservation practice in New Zealand fails to adequately safeguard our cultural heritage and, specifically, the layers of history-over-time that contribute to our cultural heritage. The opportunity to remedy this critical shortcoming lies in incorporating the collective and differential significance of these layers in our built environment. Despite well-meaning institutional and statutory frameworks promoting conservation, current attitudes toward heritage are primarily age-based, and carry an expectation of clean, pristine, and often sanitised appearance, which is achieved through 'restoration'. Unfortunately, such misguided efforts persist in practice and, consequently, distort and remove the richness of our cultural heritage and our (hi)stories. We argue that only through recognising this richness of layering is it possible to tell a more complete story than currently is being told. Language is a basic tool of story–telling; the functional importance of using the appropriate language in safeguarding the built environment is explained in this paper. Conservation and restoration are commonly confused and used interchangeably. The consequence of this results in an approach (so-called 'restoration') that freezes a particular layer of time and prevents the story unfolding in its richer complexity. To conserve means to embrace these significant layers, plan for their protection and incorporate them in the future.

In this exploratory review paper we specify two key components which frustrate efforts toward this end. Firstly, we must address misleading terminology where conservation and restoration are used synonymously to detrimental effect. Secondly, we assert that conservation practitioners hold a critical position in realizing and incorporating the collective and differential significance of layers into our built environment and governing mentalities. Arguably, only through recognising the richness of layering is it possible to tell a more complete story than currently is being told, and effectively protect our heritage.

We recognise three key groups of players involved in the scripting, performance and review of New Zealand's history: the public, conservation professionals and statutory stakeholders (such as local authorities and the New Zealand Historic Places Trust). In this paper we undertake a review of professional practice focussing on conservation professionals in their services to the other actors (namely, the public and governmental institutions). In the first section of the paper we explore the current position of the conservation framework and institutional setting. In terms of the public, we then discuss the importance of built heritage in the urban environment, and the layering of history over time, including the collective significance of these layers. The importance of a common terminology is the binding link for successful communication between these three sets of players. In the second part of the paper, we critique the current practices and interpretation of conservation professionals in New Zealand. We use a number of illustrative examples throughout the paper to review and critique the current position of heritage held by these three groups. Our objective in this paper is to promote opportunities for conservation practice to recognise, enhance and add to our cultural heritage values. To be able to experience rather than just hear the (hi)stories of our cultural heritage, and allow for further layers through future growth, we need to simultaneously include exciting new architecture and the conservation of historic buildings within their context. In telling our (hi)story, it is important that conservation prevails over restoration in safeguarding our built heritage.

The stories we cannot tell

This paper focuses on one very strong branch of urban planning: the conservation of the urban environment and it's the layers over time, which needs to be respected when conserving cultural heritage as described above. Other branches are similarly important but are beyond the parameters of this paper: key issues that are left untouched include: the development and

objectivity of the assessment criteria for cultural heritage significance; the question of responsibility for built cultural heritage in New Zealand; and the vital and complex interrelationship between the three key stakeholders that needs critical attention. Assessment criteria for cultural heritage cover a broad range of values but the prevailing professional practise in New Zealand still emphasises age as decisive element. The three key stakeholders have a complex interrelationship that needs critical attention but, unfortunately it cannot be addressed in this forum.

SETTING THE SCENE

In this section we address three elements that express the current position of conservation in New Zealand. We begin with an overview of the relevant statutory framework and institutional setting. Then we discuss the importance of built heritage in the urban environment, and the layering of history over time, including the collective significance of these layers. It is asserted that a common terminology is missing in New Zealand, to the detriment of conservation practice; communication is the binding link for successful outcomes.

Statutory framework for conserving the urban environment

The following is a brief description of each of the main key players and the scale of co-existence in the provision of guiding principles for cultural heritage protection as theoretical frameworks with practical implementations. The four major groups of key players are the Local Government, the New Zealand Historic Places Trust (NZHPT), the Department of Conservation (DoC) and the International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) in New Zealand.

These statutory stakeholders have developed guiding principles that serve their particular needs to achieve their specific goals in the greater task to safeguard what is culturally important for New Zealand's population. Over the last decades these statutory stakeholders progressed in their aim to protect cultural heritage with a range of policies designed to assist in the conservation of those values. These guiding principles are often planning-based and relate to the physical evidence of urban history, which in addition to landscapes, roads and infrastructure includes buildings. The doctrines established by these stakeholders regulate the architectural micro environment of individual buildings as well as the macro environment in an (urban) planning sense. The collective presence of buildings and the various layers of time reflected in those buildings contribute largely to the readability of the urban environment and the ability to tell its municipal story.

We begin with the overarching statutory framework of the Resource Management Act (RMA). The New Zealand RMA is a nationally applicable statute that aims to "restate and reform the law relating to the use of land, air, and water"[1]. One of the purposes of the RMA is to promote the sustainable management of New Zealand's physical resources; one of them is our built environment. At regional and local level the RMA guides the protection of these physical resources in a way that provides for community wellbeing. This includes environmental, social, economic, and cultural wellbeing. Part of cultural wellbeing is the protection of the community's identities and herewith their history and heritage – tangible or intangible. The protection of historic heritage from inappropriate subdivision, use, and development is listed in the RMA as a matter of national importance. A logical development of this position is that historic heritage has evolved over time which implies that all the layers of this growth have to be respected and protected.

The RMA also provides guidance for regional and territorial authorities in their governmental role. This includes, amongst an array of topics, the introduction, setup and contents of a local district plan, its focus, interpretation and implementation. The District Plan embraces the management of the urban environment and as part of this, our built heritage. In reaction to the requirement of the RMA with regards to the protection of built heritage a number of territorial authorities have developed strategies that include the identification, assessment and scheduling of significant physical cultural heritage within their district plans. These Heritage sections cater particularly for the contribution to cultural wellbeing and commonly incorporate schedules of significant heritage areas (designed or natural), collections of buildings and also individual structures.

For Auckland City Council the extent of the resources which the Central Area section of the District Plan is concerned with in respect to cultural heritage protection is stated as: "[T]hese resources cover a wide spectrum. For example, they include dominant landscape features, such as the volcanic cones; historic buildings, places, and highly regarded townscape inherited from former generations and sites of high archaeological value."[2] These different ingredients make part of the recipe of the urban environment. Further, the District Plan prescribes the adoption of:"... suitable measures to secure the preservation of identified heritage resources, ensure that new development in close association with heritage places recognises and makes provision for the visual and physical protection of such places. The 'Central Area' contains many significant heritage resources that may be threatened by development and other pressures, and therefore requires protection and preservation."[3]

The New Zealand Historic Places Trust (NZHPT) is also a major stakeholder in the safeguarding of cultural heritage. As a crown entity, it is concerned with the recognition and promotion of New Zealand's historic and cultural heritage. The NZHPT has set up criteria to identify the value of heritage and procedures of assessment. These assessments usually result in the registration of significant buildings and places in the Register of the NZHPT. Another crown entity that is involved in the conservation of cultural heritage is the Department of Conservation (DoC). However, on a daily basis DoC is predominantly responsible for a vast area of land including a variety of natural resources and heritage. The built heritage that DoC is concerned with is unlikely to be in urban areas and is therefore not necessarily representative for urban history and development.

On a professional practical basis the ICOMOS has established a charter that has the potential to lead professionals at national, regional and local level who are entrusted with the protection of cultural heritage. The policies, principles and processes of the ICOMOS New Zealand Charter for the conservation of places of cultural heritage value[4] are applicable to cultural heritage areas such as urban centres, as well as individual buildings or sites of cultural heritage significance. This charter is internationally recognised and adopted by all major conservation agencies and stakeholders and most qualified conservation professionals in New Zealand. These professionals are part of various disciplines and are concerned with the theoretical development, interpretation and practical implementation of conservation matters.

This section has prefaced the main story, told at Territorial Local Authority (TLA) level, with regards to the protection and conservation of built heritage. The RMA is the driving force that compels governmental stakeholders, particularly TLAs to consider the built heritage as important in their ruling. In the following section, we discuss a selective, and necessarily brief, overview of the evolution of New Zealand public cultural values.

The significance of built heritage in the urban environment

In order to safeguard built cultural heritage as prescribed in the statutory frameworks and guided with the relevant charters as discussed in the previous section, it is necessary to understand how the built heritage contributes to a liveable urban design.

New Zealand had historically derived cultural values from European colonial immigrants. These values needed to be adjusted to meet the requirements that arose in New Zealand through the strong influence of the culture of the Pacific and Polynesia. The values we protect need to reflect the culture from which we derive those values. The valuation process needs to respect the fact that a number of different values are attached to build heritage and as Daifuku[5] pointed out half a century ago, these values are subject to change due to changes in culture. The significance of those values is derived from a culturally unique set of tangible and intangible measures such as historical or architectural significance, symbolic or commemorative significance, and for New Zealand the significance for Tangata Whenua (local native people). However, age is one of the criteria that is mentioned commonly and seems to have the greatest impact on protection.

The general awareness of the need for heritage protection has very old roots, but only developed in Europe seriously and overall over the last 250 years[6]. Obviously, the cultural development including the pacific influence was different to the European, although New Zealand was linked very closely to England till the 1960s. New Zealanders took off from the ideas Mother England and the Church tried to implement onto the country and made its own distinct way out in the pacific. This was a way, where very un-European ideas mixed over time with pacific traditions and Asian customs and formed a unique New Zealand view.

The pressure that formed in Europe to avoid losing culture and keeping tradition and heritage within the countries boundaries and the destruction possible through wars, around the time that New Zealand was colonised, was an effect of an increasing number of people with different heritage, living on a restricted landmass. This unavoidable cultural closeness in Europe could not be compared to New Zealand. Here the pioneering spirit and the aim to build a new country from scratch was the focus of the growing population. Even today, we can still experience that pioneering attitude of New Zealanders. Conservation has only found its way to NZ relatively recently.

So far built heritage has not been effectively considered by urban designers despite the prescriptions in the RMA. This section explores the significance of built cultural heritage in urban planning generally and with specific reference to the three major stakeholder groups: the public, the professionals, particularly the ones involved with the Urban design Protocol and the Urban Design Panel, and the government.

Public attitude is one of the major keys in heritage protection. Public awareness is crucial to establish a sense of value and appreciation of heritage buildings[7]. According to the outcries that recently have been voiced in many municipal centres in New Zealand to keep valuable heritage buildings alive and as part of the urban environment, the public awareness is increasing and obviously, the public values their built heritage. We can see for example in Auckland City where a district plan change has just emphasised the importance of these built urban icons how the public voice has been heard.

Heated discussions over the last few years have brought a long overdue policy and process into life. This is particularly true in Auckland where topics such as the Britomart Precinct (one of New Zealand's biggest conservation project on an urban precinct scale), the Waterfront (that needs an overhaul in Auckland City Council's and the Auckland's public opinion), and lately the

rise or fall of the Jean Batten Building (an outstanding example of more modern art-deco history in Auckland's inner city that has got permission to be demolished) have stirred up emotions within the public. Hence, Auckland City introduced the Urban Design Protocol and an Urban Design Panel that is supposed to keeping watch for so many pitfalls that have raised people's frustration levels in the past. This obviously is a first step in the right direction

Lyon and Cloues state, establishing a value that is related to cultural heritage motivates the public to save historic places[8]. Obviously, the value of a building and the public awareness for those values are linked in the attempt to save existing buildings. As mentioned before, the value of heritage is directly linked with its particular culture. This has to include, as Powell[9] points out, current cultural influences as well as indigenous cultural interest within a country. Kate Clark[10] describes the value assigned to heritage as justification of heritage protection and the basis for support and restrictions placed on heritage. She takes the public interest as important within the valuation process and pleads to include this aspect in any management plan for cultural heritage.

A number of different criteria exist in New Zealand to identify values. Commonly, the criteria established in The Historic Places Act (HPA) 1993, Part II, Section 23 are used to assess the significance of a building or place (local, national or international significance). These criteria are the basis for the assessment of significance for the register of historic places by the New Zealand Historic Places Trust.

The TLAs that have included the statutorily-required heritage section and a schedule of protected built heritage have often developed their own method of evaluation; and in the example of the Auckland City Council have come up with a scoring system that is applied to determine the value of an individual building. However, they have also in many occasions put planning measures into place that put the character of particular areas under protection within the framework of designated heritage zones. The older layers of individual heritage buildings within a grown urban area are the keys to the readability of the history of this area. The heritage zones are on a larger scale the building blocks of our urban environment and present a layer of history of urban growth.

In summary, the development of heritage values in the public and regulatory domains is much contested: for instance, the public often want more heritage protection but councils face political resistance from property owners and developers and NIMBY (not in my back yard) attitudes. Professional practitioners are operating between these competing fronts, and bringing their own interpretations to bear. The different actors have different opinions and argue over the significance and the protection of certain layers. The 'rules' fail to recognise the layers of heritage, with the outcome of a restoration-based 'cotton-wool' approach to heritage. In the process, parts of our history get lost.

The importance of layers over time for the readability of the urban (hi)story

In the previous section we discussed why cultural heritage is important for the public and how policies reflect this fact. Within this section we will explore the multiple dimensions of heritage as they affect the process of conservation and the implications of including all levels of history in our urban design reflecting our inheritance.

Urban revitalisation and cultural heritage protection are both supposed to be part of our living environment. The renewal of urban centres is an ongoing activity that ensures we do not outlive our environment. Heritage has been seen in New Zealand in the past as a luxury that we as a pioneering country are not particularly interested in or maybe do not need. However, heritage is a stabilising element in our culture and the link to our history.

The layers of time are significant for the protection of built cultural heritage and for the city to tell its story. The current emphasis on restoration of buildings and character areas encourages a 'cotton wool ' approach to heritage. Arguably, the instruments employed in the name of conservation are too blunt; they need to be sharpened to allow for the significance of dynamic life reflected in the layers of time within built cultural heritage.

While imagining layers an onion springs to mind. Although, within individual buildings this comparison can be quite fitting: …a new layer of paint over three coats of outdated ones, redecoration over existing material, enlarging with additions over older structures and other methods of concealing earlier layers of building fabric are common. The process is called modernisation and has been used on occasion on every building that has served its occupiers for some time and in particular when occupiers have changed.

The layers are a result of changed needs and likes and accommodate on-going and future use of a building. These layers, as the skins of an onion, grow over each other and obscure the earlier evidence of time. What we see is modern, new and up-to-date. The building lacks the key evidence that links to the past and therefore can only represent modern living and does not express heritage character. In most cases unless we undo the layers we can not read the story the building may be able to tell. This is true for a single building, as well as the growth of the urban environment.

For this reason the same analogy seems undesirable, when it comes to layering over time in a heritage sense. The layering process here is not one-dimensional. To put layer upon layer that conceals important earlier one distracts from the heritage significance of a building and in an urban planning sense does not reflect the growth of a city. To be able to read the (hi)story of a building, an area, a city or a country, the best layers of each significant period need to be conserved.

This means that new additions and herewith modern layers are welcome to allow for ongoing use and appreciation as long as they are sympathetic with the existing fabric and do not detract from the heritage character of the building or area. The ICOMOS New Zealand charter states: 'The evidence of time and the contribution of all periods should be respected in conservation." [11] This ensures the best of both worlds, the protection of valuable heritage as a point of identification for the public and the growth and development needed in an urban environment. The purpose of conservation according to ICOMOS is: '… to care for places of cultural heritage value, their structures, materials and cultural meaning. In general, such places:
(i)   have lasting values and can be appreciated in their own right;
(ii)   teach us about the past and the culture of those who came before us
(iii)   provide the context for community identity whereby people relate to the land and to those who have gone before;
(iv)   provide variety and contrast in the modern world and a measure against which we can compare the achievements of today; and
(v)   provide visible evidence of the continuity between past, present and future.' [12]

It is important to conserve the layers of time that are telling the story of history in relation to their significance of their cultural heritage values. It is also crucial that these heritage values are not linked solely to a timeline. Heritage and its protection are still too often limited by age in order to be respected. 'Age-based' heritage protection leads to loss of significant heritage fabric that has accrued over time, hence to a nostalgic distortion of time.

That approach has contributed to 'cotton-wool' heritage protection which results in restoration instead of conservation of buildings. In cases where age is the driving force for protection the rationale is to bring a building or an area back to its original and untouched form. If it is anticipated to produce a museums piece that is a representative example of a certain time, style, construction method or a learning object this approach is valid. This tactic presents a sanitised history, one that is re-created to be pretty and positive. Before the Second World War, Le Corbusier and Wright believed life is dynamic and historic monuments are relicts of a dead culture. These views seem to be based on the approach of restoration for museums purposes instead of conservation for everyday life and exclude the possibility of incorporating heritage values in modern urban planning.

If we want to include places of cultural heritage value in our everyday life, we have to ensure the protection of the significant elements and need to allow the addition of new layers to achieve a viable and living environment. Sympathetic professional urban planning is the appropriate tool to realise this aim.

The importance of a common language to be able to tell our story

Previously, we demonstrated the desirability of heritage layers in reading our urban environment. This section will describe the potential for misinterpretation caused by inappropriate use of language in the process of conservation. We limit our exploration to the common terminology used in New Zealand. To include terminology used in other countries would only add to the confusion and would not reflect New Zealand's particular linguistic culture.

The uncertainty we experience when discussing the protection of cultural heritage begins with the inconsistent use of terminology and usually results in misunderstandings that fire up a debate on what to keep and why. Through simple misinterpretation discussions are easily going off the track.

Appropriately qualified professionals in New Zealand consider conservation as the generic term for safeguarding an area, place, structure / building or artefact of significant cultural heritage value. The term conservation builds the outlining umbrella for a procedure that embraces a number of different concepts. These concepts comprise then conservation processes that are implemented to ensure appropriate protection of cultural heritage significance.

In this paper we focus on the terms conservation and restoration as the most commonly confused words. The remaining four concepts that are embraced by the conservation procedure are arguably more self-explanatory and generally not as much misinterpreted.

The following diagram summarises the correlation between the various conservation principles in increasing amounts of intervention, their processes, and the appropriate terminology that is based on the ICOMOS New Zealand charter[13]:

CONSERVATION					
Concept:	non-intervention	preservation	restoration	reconstruction	adaptation

Process:		• stabilisation • maintenance • repair	• reassembly • removal		

Table 1: Conservation Practice

The ICOMOS New Zealand charter gives general definitions for a number of specific terms used in the conservation of significant cultural heritage. For clarification the definitions for terms critical for the understanding of this paper are included as follows:

Conservation:
'…means the process of caring for a place so as to safeguard its cultural heritage value.'[14]

Restoration:
'…means returning a place as nearly as possible to a known earlier state by reassembly, reinstatement and/or the removal of extraneous additions.'[15]

The Charter also states that restoration"… should only be carried out if the cultural heritage value of the place is recovered or revealed in the process."

If we are using these definitions in their precise meaning, restoration does not imply, as commonly practiced, to bring a place back to its original first form but to any significant earlier form that needs to be known and not guessed. The measure for protection is the value of the cultural heritage which determines the appropriate degree of restoration or any other process of conservation for that matter.

We have now established an understanding of a common language that is relevant to better comprehend further discussions related to the protection of the built cultural heritage in the urban environment. The use of the appropriate language enables us to explore the difficulties of the current practical implementation of the safeguarding of heritage in our cities.

THE CURRENT PRACTICAL INTERPRETATION OF CONSERVATION

With the introduction of a number of New Zealand urban design and conservation examples we are able to review and critique the current situation and provide an overview of the difficulties we face despite the policies in place that supposedly offer for a solid framework for the protection of built heritage in New Zealand.

As the ICOMOS Charter example shows, there is technically no favour given to age per se but to cultural heritage significance. However, in practice conservation has a different interpretation. There are many different approaches to conservation and a list of factors is responsible for this, such as cultural diversity and physical location. But within each and every country, conservation professionals and statutory stakeholders perish in their individual opinion on what heritage protection embraces. This paper is too short to even scratch the surface of the ramifications of heritage protection but it will be able to point out one very common and generally unquestioned preconception when talking about heritage: the preference of age-based protection that ignores the significant layering, instead of value-based safeguarding which we support in this paper.

In the following two sections we concentrate on two specific problems which frustrate conservation in its comprehensive practice in New Zealand. Firstly we discuss the equality of heritage values where age is prioritised over other values in practice. Secondly we explore the

attitude that our heritage must be 'restored' to a clean and pristine appearance. Only through recognising the richness of layering through appropriate *conservation* processes is it possible to tell a more complete story than currently is being told. In conservation practice this determines the difference between successful archiving of our history and rewriting it.

Some heritage is just more equal

In the Historic Places Act heritage values are set out to be non-hierarchical and non-competing. In particular, in Section 23 where the Criteria for registration of historic places and historic areas are laid out no particular reference is made to age as a critically qualifying factor. There is no requirement for significance in all criteria categories. This means that age might not be a criterion at all, but for example social or spiritual value or architectural significance is the reason for protection.

In theory this looks very open minded and all-comprehensive. The practice however is not quite so generous. For the HPA age is a limiting factor as it is set out in Section 2. Here only places that can be associated with human activity before 1900 or any wreck of a vessel that has occurred before 1900 are defined as archaeological sites. This statement is expanded by the inclusion of any other place that is able to provide historical evidence through archaeological investigation, however, anecdotally only places before 1900 are really brought into the equation.

In the North Shore City District Plan heritage character is derived from age according to its Section 16.4.3, Residential 3 Zone: Built Heritage: 'The built heritage character relies to a great extent on the existence of a significant number of older houses. …The year 1930 has been chosen to include the full range of house types which are widely accepted by the community as making such a formative contribution to the areas.'[16] Clearly, everything that has been built after 1930 is treated with less attention. Age provides obviously for better and more rigorous protection than any other cultural heritage value.

The latest announcement by the Auckland City Council provides another example for the prevailing fortune of places that have reached a certain age. The New Zealand Herald reported recently that: 'The Auckland City Council will today make it harder to demolish old buildings in the central city - but the rules will not stop the Bank of New Zealand tearing down the historic Jean Batten Building for a new corporate headquarters. …The Herald understands the council will provide greater protection for 140 buildings in the Queen St valley and Karangahape Rd using a 1940 cut-off point. …The 1942 Jean Batten Building falls outside the 1940 cut-off point …'[17]

These examples show that priority is given to older heritage, which dismisses the opportunity of equality of heritage values. For the Jean Batten Building this is too little too late. It is not inevitably so hat everything old has automatically accrued cultural heritage value and everything modern has not. Here it is that the story becomes biased and old is perceived as equivalent with good and desirable in terms of heritage protection.

Unfortunately, this very rudimentary and un-reflected model has in the past provided the basis for public awareness for cultural heritage. Statutory stakeholders are bound to reflect the public's values and therefore have integrated cut-off dates into their frameworks. Professionals within and outside of the Councils are guided by these policies which reflect unfortunately not the broader conservation spirit needed but a narrow interpretation of heritage. The correlation between public opinion, policy development and their implementation seem to be stuck in a catch 22 situation.

As much as professionals work within the frameworks of the policies, the governmental policy is shaped by professional practice as well as the public awareness.

The lack of a more comprehensive approach, which needs to include a broad range of community based heritage values, the provision of policies that provide for equal treatment of these values and the professionals that implement these policies without bias towards a certain age, leads to a loss of heritage fabric that is required for telling the whole (hi)story. Changes made to individual buildings as well as to our greater urban environment to accommodate the New Zealand vernacular for example, are destroyed by taking a place or an area of early colonial foundation back to its original state.

Clean shaven and well groomed

The perception that our cities have to be pretty, and history has to show its sunny side, results in an outdated approach; one that prevailed in Europe until the 1970s and 1980s. This entailed to clean historic buildings from the patina that has accrued over the years to make them look pretty, give the impression that our cities are clean and everything is under control. Despite the fact that this is only a cosmetic mask, this has proven to be detrimental to history as well as the physical protection of built heritage. For reasons of physical protection as well as historical readability the patina of a building is part of the value and is only cleaned away, if these layers are physically detrimental to the building fabric.

The cleaning of historic buildings is potentially more common in Europe, where materials that accumulate layers of patina such as certain metals, brick and stone are more commonly used than in New Zealand. However, New Zealand is despite the lessons learned overseas[18], still cleaning away layers of patina. Examples such as the recent cleaning of Auckland University's Clock Tower building, the Central Post Office as part of the Britomart Train Station or St Matthews in the City in Auckland are witness to that.

This attitude of 'renewing' heritage by taking away the growth (physical as well as spiritual) is removing the layers of history. This may not be done to pretend that the present is more important, nevertheless it robs the city of a layer that is able to tell not only the buildings history but the history of the buildings environmental context. It sanitises the history, as often mentioned 'renewing' our legacy which is basically equal to rewriting history, taking the dark spots off.

For the sake of looking clean, protective physical layers are destroyed and the physical heritage protection becomes more difficult[19]. The ability to allow history to grow and with that the patina that is important for a building to be read in the context of the urban experience is a learning process that requires a radical change in attitude by the public and the professionals who are likely to overseas such work. The message of clean and intact comes over heritage.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONSERVATION PRACTICE TO RECOGNISE, ENHANCE, AND ADD TO THESE VALUES

Conservation of cultural heritage is a multi-disciplinary task that involves a variety of stakeholders, working towards a common goal. These different disciplines and agencies all contribute to the framework for cultural heritage protection as well as the implementation and the interpretation of conservation. However, they do not collaborate sufficiently to achieve a unison approach on a wider front. As described before, the conservation process within the urban environment seems stuck in a catch 22 position. Conservation as a tool for safeguarding heritage requires two mutually dependant aspects: the public awareness that is raised to assert and

reinforce the demand for the safeguarding of heritage in a wider sense; and the necessity for a broader based view by professional practitioners and policy planners as to the values that assign significance to built heritage.

In most of the western societies the process of conservation begins with the assessment of a historic building or area where heritage values are attributed. Usually this will result in a listing or scheduling of the building as of holding culturally significant heritage value. However, a change within current policy and practice to include cultural heritage values as equal partners, non-related to age, has to prevail. The statutory framework is there, although favouring age as an easily established value, it is not per se prescribed that only the aged heritage can be of value. It is a question of interpretation of these codes that has an influence on the daily practice.

Layers of time count in individual buildings as well as in the urban context and more complexity is required to establish a method to increase the awareness towards heritage in the public, in practitioners working in the field and in policy planners that provide the statutory framework for heritage as part of urban planning. One of the key elements of education has to be the use of common terminology.

We have to break the cycle to be able to make a constructive step forward. There is no right or wrong answer as to whom of the three key groups should take the first step. For the sake of a more liveable and integrated urban environment the breaking of the chain is more important than the right protocol. As an end result it is required that the attitude towards the development, implementation and interpretation of these statutes changes within all three key groups. Why not letting the conservation practitioners taking the lead and put a halt to a situation that is undesirable for all involved?

In practice the guidelines prepared by the NZHPT are most frequently used for conservation plans prepared in this country, a tool that includes an assessment of significance, as well as policies and recommendations to ensure the appropriate conservation of a particular place of significance small and large.[20] The NZHPT guidelines origin in Kerr's guidelines for conservation plans prepared for the use in England and later Australia [21] ICOMOS charter as a quasi-legal framework is used by Territorial Local Authorities and other significant stakeholders (NZHPT/DOC) concerning all cultural heritage from the smallest artefact, to a building in its context, or a larger area that has heritage significance for our urban environment. Practitioners that apply these guidelines in combination with the ICOMOS New Zealand charter are more likely to draw a comprehensive picture of our heritage and respecting the layers that have accumulated over time on small and large scales alike. This will improve the readability of heritage and therefore the presence in our everyday environment and make it heritage more a constant part of our life rather than a luxury.

Understanding the complexity of urban design including the layers of history and not being afraid to include practitioners on a multi-disciplinary level that can ensure that all the implications of urban design are looked at and that equal values will have equal rights improves the heritage within our urban context.

Conservation practitioners have to understand the implications of conservation, and reinforcement of the need for change, and the retention of significant elements only is essential. The respect for the layers of time has to be enhanced to allow for a complete rather than pretty story to unfold. This approach offers the opportunity to conserve rather than restore heritage and thus enable opportunities for continuity of engagement and enhancement of these values. Increased awareness of the capacity of historic buildings to co-exist with modern technology and

contemporary living in professionals will result in a greater awareness in their clients and herewith the building owners to keep and adapt rather than demolish and built anew. Heritage then has a chance to tell our (hi)story and form an ongoing valuable part of our modern life.

CONCLUSIONS

History is a dynamic accumulation of layers over time. With respect to tangible physical evidence of our heritage in the urban environment, these layers determine the nature of buildings and landscape and, on a larger scale, our urban growth and identities. Retaining the layers of history, and thereby the richness of urban growth and development, enables us to be able to read and experience the stories that a city and its people have to tell. Buildings cannot speak to us, but we can still experience them and their stories. Only through recognising the layers (of time, growth, and change, for example) are we able to engage the city and represent it's/our history in our everyday lives. We come to three conclusions: firstly that there is a functional importance of using the appropriate language in safeguarding the built environment. Secondly, inadequate conservation in New Zealand is compounded by the narrow focus of current professional practice and interpretation, and the well-meaning but ineffective institutional and statutory frameworks promoting conservation and public consciousness. Finally, we believe that the capacity to better promote opportunities for conservation best practice – in other words, to recognise, enhance, and add to our cultural heritage values – lies in the ability of professionals and governmental agencies to coordinate meaningful frameworks and their interpretation. Arguably, this reflects the critical lack of specific training and education in building conservation in New Zealand. Ultimately, we need to more wholly-experience the histories and stories of our cultural heritage in New Zealand, and allow for further layers through future growth. To accomplish this, we need to simultaneously include exciting new architecture and the conservation of historic buildings within their situated context and condition. In telling the story of our history, it is important that we conserve in its fullest sense: conservation should prevail over restoration in safeguarding our built heritage.

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