

RA

restauro archeologico

Conoscenza, conservazione e valorizzazione
del patrimonio architettonico
Rivista del Dipartimento di Architettura
dell'Università degli Studi di Firenze

Knowledge, preservation and enhancement
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1964-2024 La Carta di Venezia
Riflessioni teoriche e prassi
operative nel progetto di restauro

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CARTADI VENEZIA

*Riflessioni teoriche e prassi operative
nel progetto di restauro*

*Theoretical reflections and operating practices
in the restoration project*

*Réflexions théoriques et modes opératoire
dans le projet de restauration*

a cura di

Susanna Caccia Gherardini
Maurizio De Vita

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Water, sky and cultural territories as expanded heritage. New spatialities to rethink the Venice Charter - contributions from South America

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Abstract

Since the approval of the Venice Charter, we have witnessed the expansion of the concept of heritage and the consequent diversification of its objects of study and management, as well as the dimensions that define the valuation of cultural-natural expressions as references of identity for peoples and communities, thought of as interdependent. In this presentation, two sites that express these current events in Latin American territories will be presented: the region of the “Esteros del Iberá” or “I verá”, in the center of the province of Corrientes (Argentina) and the site of “Águas Emendadas”, which is part of the Federal District where the city of Brasília (Brazil) is located. Such display is of interest in rescuing current notions in this field in conjunction with the dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals included in the 2030 Agenda (UN 2015). They involve the categories that emerge in the field of environmental conservation and management, such as those referring to the protection of wetlands and natural sites.

Keywords

Cultural-environmental heritage, Integral heritage, Contemporary heritage conservation.

Introduction

The first approaches to heritage protection and preservation, together with restoration modalities, have exposed, since the 19th century¹, an “objectualist” vision focused on monumental spaces: buildings, complexes, and archaeological sites. These have been enriched over the years with the contribution of perspectives that have placed human beings at the axis of all heritage interventions, as makers, bearers, and recipients of their own heritage². These updates were expressed in the contributions by renowned architecture and heritage theorists, as well as in several international documents (letters, recommendations, and declarations). However, what we find in the Venice Charter is a starting point that gave rise to an increasing expansion of its understanding of preservation and intervention actions.

This document reflects at least two defining aspects in the future of the field of cultural heritage on a global scale. On the one hand, the need to incorporate heritage issues into an international agenda, thus recognizing that interest in the preservation of cultural and identity heritage is transversal and common to all people and communities. On the other hand, it establishes some criteria agreed upon by specialists and experts from different nations,

to guide the conservation and restoration actions of cultural assets, in those years still limited to architectural monuments, and artistic and archaeological assets, in isolation.

The Venice Charter, mainly dedicated to historical monuments, archaeological sites, and spaces, still offers some fundamental principles that need to be recovered and reinterpreted into the current approach to heritage assets in all their diversity: the central value of the human being and communities in the valuation and transmission of cultural heritage; the valorization of modest creations, exalting the cultural significance of heritage assets above their aesthetic and material qualities; the inseparable relationship of heritage assets with time and space, which leads us to always think in terms of a “situated” heritage, as a reflection of complex processes; and the interdisciplinary nature of cultural heritage conservation. These principles express the validity of the heritage sense on which the Charter was drafted, and are substantial in the reading and significance of heritage spaces.

Currently, the growing awareness in relation to the environment and the consequent systemic thinking, added to the concept of sustainability³, have placed man and his culture as part of the nature that precedes him. In this sense, the field of conservation and protection of cultural heritage should be approached, today, from categories that integrate these two dimensions, cultural and natural, in order to achieve the sustainability of heritage resources, hand in hand with local and regional development, with a focus on carrier communities. These are the challenges we notice in the conservation of the heritage of two Latin American territories: Esteros del Iberá, in Argentina, and Águas Emendadas, in Brazil. We believe it is appropriate, on this 60th Anniversary of the Charter, to be able to contribute to a renewed vision of the budgets of the 1964 Charter, based on the presentation of these two sites that have a heritage character.

Esteros del Iberá (Argentina) and Águas Emendadas (Brazil) as Latin American cases of conservation and management based on principles from the Venice Charter and the 2030 Agenda

The Esteros del Iberá makes up one of the largest wetlands in South America. It is located in northeastern Argentina, in the center of the province of Corrientes. This aquifer reserve occupies between 15,000 and 25,000 km² and extends to the Republic of Paraguay. This water system makes up the Guaraní Aquifer and, due to its natural geographical condition, it presents exceptional biodiversity, which is reflected both in the biological richness and in the landscapes and topographic conditions that distinguish this region for its unmatched ecological and environmental value. These qualities have determined that the Esteros del Iberá constitute a protected natural area at different jurisdictional levels - Law N° 3771/1983 of the Province of Corrientes, the Provincial Reserve was created. In 2009, the “Parque Provincial Iberá” was created inside the already delimited Reserve. In 2018, in terms of National Law N° 27.481 of the Honorable Congress of the Argentine Nation, the “Parque Nacional Iberá” was created, dependent on the Administración de Parques Nacionales (APN).

These measures have arisen in light of the necessary protection of the natural and environmental qualities of the aquifer, reflecting a fundamentally ecological assessment of the region. However, this territory not only bears an exceptional bioenvironmental quality but also condenses, integrates, and is articulated with the cultural diversity of those who lived and live in the region. This determines that assessing this space requires a systemic and

comprehensive approach. The human presence in this space over time, in interaction with the natural context, in a broad sense, configures the “ibereña” identity, which is expressed in its diverse and unique cultural heritage⁴. Material traces and intangible manifestations expressed in practices, customs, knowledge, and beliefs, combined in time and space, provide the region with extraordinary natural value and cultural significance. According to the Burra Charter⁵, it is a site with aesthetic, historical, scientific, social, and spiritual value, for past, present, and future generations. Regarding the material and built heritage, it combines evidence of different historical moments of settlement of the wetland. The Jesuit presence in the region, during the 17th and 18th centuries, their particular modes of urbanization and production have left their marks in the towns of La Cruz (1629) and Santo Tomé (1632) founded as Guaraní Jesuit Missions. Added to them are other settlements that developed in the 18th and 19th centuries, around rural activities, mainly livestock, and also the presence of religious institutions that ordered the layout of urban settlements. From the architectural perspective, traditional construction methods coexist in accordance with the conditions of the site, climate, and natural resources that have configured a unique urban landscape with gallery corridors towards the public space of the street, an appropriate solution to mitigate the effects of high temperatures, heavy rains, and provide shelter for forms of social life, in addition to offering technical protection of walls built on earth, of which few examples remain. Other typologies typical of 19th and 20th centuries architecture were added to these traditional or vernacular forms of construction.

Intangible heritage is perhaps the evidence with which the identity of the inhabitants of Iberá is most powerfully reflected. Ways of life that combine the Guaraní past, rural ways of life, and gradual urbanization, in a syncretism strongly marked by popular religiosity with a Christian base. The “Chamamé”, a musical expression of the region, was recognized as Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO in 2020, and resonates in every corner of Iberá, with the “ibereñas” lands being the cradle of many of the main exponents of this musical genre. Religious festivities occupy a prominent place in the calendars of each region, Marian devotions such as the patron saint festivals define the cultural and social agenda. Gastronomy is based on the preparation of dishes based on meat and dried meat (traditional way of consumption and preservation), rice, corn and its derivatives, and cassava, raw materials that are produced in a large part of the “ibereña” area. Traditional craft techniques also shape the regional identity: yarn and weaving of raw sheep’s wool, rural silversmithing, wire weaving, construction of *timbócanoes* for navigating the estuaries and making religious imagery in native woods. Added to them are oral traditions, legends, and myths. Last year, Iberá received international recognition as a “starlight reserve”⁶, mainly with a tourist focus, providing a new look at the “ibereño” starry sky as part of its cultural and scientific heritage wealth; this new category has been proposed taking as reference the Declaration of La Palma⁷, Canary Islands, 2007, and developed by the Institute of Astrophysics of the Canary Islands. This certification is granted by the Starlight Foundation, an international organization that has created a certification system, through which «those spaces that have excellent sky quality and that represent an example of protection and conservation are accredited. They are scenarios that incorporate the observation of the sky as part of their natural, landscape, cultural or scientific heritage and, in turn, promote “Star Tourism” (i.e. Astro tourism)».

Another Latin American case that also expresses the transformations occurring worldwide in the increasingly

expanding field of conservation is found in the Federal District of Brazil, close to the country's federal capital, Brasília; this is the case of Águas Emendadas, an environmental complex that has been gaining attention decades after the international recognition of the modernist city as a world heritage site, which occurred in 1987. Certainly, acknowledging the importance of Brasília today goes beyond considering the cultural assets that shape it⁸. And to which values of indisputable exceptionality are attributed, whether due to their aesthetic, architectural, or historical dimensions. Examining Brasília today is considering not only the limits of its Pilot Plan but also its insertion in the Federal District of which it is part, its condition as a city, like any other, is linked to a much broader territorial context than its more immediate contours, thus allowing more substantial analyses and understandings of its characteristics, potential and shortcomings. After all, recognizing the values in the field of heritage and conservation that are today assimilated based on their systemic correlations, in the case of this specific territory in Brazil where Brasília is located, known as the Federal District, we need to regard what preceded Brasília and the developments that occurred after its construction and inauguration, which express themes that are not by chance valued and present in many of the most recent conservation actions today. Specifically, we need to examine the archaeological remains that indicate human presence in the region long before the proposals for its "occupation", and whether the Geographical Letter commissioned by Marquês de Pombal was interested in the occupation of the central area of Brazil in the 18th century, or the "March to the West" in the 20th century that resulted in the planning of the city of Goiânia and, in a way, in the competition for the capital Brasília; we need to consider the resistant groups originating from specific ethnicities that inhabited and still inhabit small areas of this territory; we need to think of the "cerratense" people who already lived their daily lives in the Cerrado biome in this area of the Central Plateau on a rural basis when the rapid federal capital construction reconfigured it greatly.

Above all, regard Brasília today, and the territory where it is located, and the socio-environmental issues that shaped it and allowed local life. In this sense, with the attempt to make the much-celebrated "Brasília sky" official as a heritage, which took place decades ago, more objective actions aimed at preserving and accessing Lake Paranoá and its shores are growing, not only for social but also environmental reasons, as it is possible to perceive these new values present in the recent global recognition received by the Águas Emendadas Ecological Station (Estação Ecológica de Águas Emendadas - ESEC-AE), located in a region between Planaltina (DF) and Planaltina (GO), a satellite city of Brasília, and which also makes up, like Brasília, one of the 35 Administrative Regions that are part of the Federal District. Having been identified and described in 1892 in the Report of the Exploratory Commission of the Central Plateau coordinated by the Belgian astronomer and geodesist Luis Cruls, it was made official as a reserve in 1968 after Brasília hosted the XVII Congress of the Brazilian Botanical Society. Initially consisting of a reserve of around 5 thousand hectares, Águas Emendadas soon doubled in size due to the inclusion of other areas, becoming a station with today 10 thousand 540 hectares. In addition to being a source of water collection for supply, it is the only natural phenomenon that spills water from the same path to the birth of two large continental river basins (Tocantins basin and Paraná-Prata basin). Today, an environmental protection conservation unit, ESEC-AE helps preserve species from the Cerrado biome, having an Environmental Infor-

mation Center created in 1981 that permeates research and educational activities - the Agência Reguladora de Águas, Energia e Saneamento Básico do DF (Adasa), and the Instituto do MeioAmbiente e dos RecursosHídricos (Ibram) have had an Acordo de Cooperação Técnica (ACT) since 2014 for the development of activities related to ESEC-AE and your surroundings⁹.

This case, as it permeates both the appreciation of local culture, present in Planaltina as a pioneering village in the Federal District (officialized in 1859), and the appreciation of environmental elements inherent to the spatiality where culture is practiced by man. In fact, due to its characteristics and excellent state of conservation of the ecosystems that comprise it, in 1992 ESEC-AE was declared by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), an arm of the United Nations (UN), as one of the areas that make up the nuclear area of the Cerrado Biosphere Reserve. On October 20, 2018, the Águas Emendadas Ecological Station became the sixth place in the world (after Magere Brug, Stille Sluis, BPTH, Port of Antwerp, and Shimen Dam.) and the first place in Latin America to receive the “Water and Heritage Shield” of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), a body linked to UNESCO-UN. Having been initiated in 2015, by ICOMOS-Netherlands, this program, publicized by the granting of such a “shield”, consists of recognition of various proposals and attempts to preserve natural resources, water, and cultural values of a given location. In the specific case of Águas Emendadas, the implementation of methods to expand water capture and treatment, as well as for its use in agriculture, were considered as auxiliary strategies for this recognition by bodies focused on the field of conservation¹⁰.

Conclusions

The approach to these important geographical areas, “Esteros del Iberá” in Argentina, and “Águas Emendadas” in Brazil, offers a field of analysis that reflects the need to redefine some concepts in current international regulations, and particularly those dedicated to monuments, heritage sites and places, within the framework of new paradigms. We find on this 60th anniversary of the Venice Charter, the possibility of thinking about built heritage (monuments or ruins), artistic heritage, monumental places in relation to their natural and social environment and the immaterial dimensions that give them meaning. These comprehensive approaches contribute to a better valorization and the subsequent management of heritage sites and guarantee their sustainability. Likewise, we believe it is appropriate to highlight the contribution that these cases make to the fulfillment of the 17 SDGs of the 2030 Agenda, and the need to enhance these contributions. Finally, we would like to share the definition of territory, offered by the UN (2019), which we believe is appropriate to adopt when proposing a heritage analysis of this site: «territory is understood as a human community with a symbolic and objective sense of belonging, in a determined physical space with the capacity to build a common future.” In this presentation we, thus, rescue the contemporary notions of the current extended field of heritage, supported by the framework of the Venice Charter and the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda.

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- ² SALVADOR MUÑOZ VIÑAS, *As Teoria contemporânea da Restauração*, Belo Horizonte, UFMG, 2021.
- ³ GRO HARLEM BRUNTLAND, *Our Common Future*, by World Commission on Environment and Development, Oxford University Press, 1987.
- ⁴ LUCIANA SUDAR KLAPPENBACH, LAURA ANDREA ARRUAZABALA, *Procesos participativos en el reconocimiento y revitalización del Patrimonio Cultural Inmaterial (PCI) en poblados del Iberá en la provincia de Corrientes*, Argentina, «Revista Estudios Rurales», Centro de Estudios de la Argentina Rural - Universidad Nacional de Quilmes (CEAR-UNQ), vol. 11, 24, 2021.
- ⁵ The Burra Charter, The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance, 1979.
- ⁶ Fundación Starlight. Available at: <https://fundacionstarlight.org/contenido/42-what-they-are.html>, 2023
- ⁷ Declaration on the Defense of the Night Sky and the Right to Starlight. La Palma, Canary Islands, Spain, 2007.
- ⁸ FRANCISCO LEITÃO (ed.), *Brasília 1960-2010, passado, presente e futuro*, Brasília, Secretaria de Estado de Desenvolvimento Urbano e Meio Ambiente, 2009.
- ⁹ Estação Ecológica de Águas Emendadas (SEC-AE), Histórico. Available at: http://www.recursoshidricos.df.gov.br/aguas_emendadas/historico.asp, 2023.
- ¹⁰ YARA MACIEL CAMELO, PAULO FERNANDES LISBÔA DE VASCONCELOS, SÁVIO TADEU GUIMARÃES, *Nossodireito a cidades sustentáveis, a preservação, o acesso e o consumo da água em Brasília*, Proceedings of the XVIII ENANPUR – Encontro Nacional da Associação Nacional de Planejamento Urbano, Natal, 2019.