

20. Nørregade with the church-yard trees

At the present time conservation is being encouraged by the National Museum, which is preparing a register of AERøskøbing's building. It will consist of a detailed description of each house from the available documents, aiming at a complete record of historical development. The register will include a description of the town's trees. This constitutes a new element in the field of conservation, which traditionally is confined to buildings.

21. The quay path

By means of the law on nature conservation it is possible to protect specially valuable trees and other plants. So far this has only been done infrequently and only for architectural reasons. The possibility of co-ordinating building and nature conservation is under discussion at present. The aim of this is to find a better legal method of protecting the total environment with significant cultural values in the form of both buildings and natural elements.

22. The source of wisdom

Both the maintenance of an old town environment and the creation of new built-up areas require close co-operation between citizens, politicians and technicians. The combined development and conservation plan which is described here is merely a tool with which to carry out these tasks.

The last picture in this series shows AERøskøbing's former school - named "The Source of Wisdom". An understanding of our past and an ability to identify oneself with it are the best means of giving our heritage a chance to survive.

Jorge G a z a n e o (the Argentine)

EXAMPLES AND CASE STUDIES IN SOUTH AMERICA

First of all we feel it necessary to establish the general characteristics of the Latin-American territory; its structure, regions of influence and, within these, the areas of deep-rooted urban tradition belonging to a comprehensive organisation characteristic of the period of Spanish and Portuguese influence.

The West Indies (Antilles), being connected with the European Continent by marine currents which marked the route for ships plying between Spain and her colonies, were the natural gateway to the Empire and it is easy to understand why they were defended by a shield of fortified towns with an urban landscape of their own.

The central and south American territories, crossed from north to south by a geographical spine which brings them together as a whole, had already imposed on pre-hispanic cultures a pattern

of settlements and communications. The Spanish were wise enough to graft their culture into the earlier ones, and thus European settlements are to be found in places where strong Indian Cultures of sedentary origin were originally rooted; the main highway (Camino Real) was designed over the one built by the Mexicans and Incas. The exceptions to the rule were the great open spaces of the southern pampas and what is today California, then roamed and sparsely occupied by hunting tribes. In these areas groups attempted to settle along the principal roads leading to the outstanding southernmost geographic point of the Atlantic coast - the river Plate - and the northern frontier of the Sacramento valley.

Within these frontiers, the Spanish rulers planned their territory with a functional attitude that marked the future destiny of its settlements, dubbing them with cultural characteristics which we, today, are interested in rescuing since they show a pattern common to Latin-America as a whole. For the same reason as the austere mass of the Antillian fortifications show the strategic importance of what was to be called the "Spanish Main", the entrance to a continent, Panama and El Callac, on the Pacific coast, were an answer to the British challenge on that Ocean.

Within this strong girdle of fortifications, silver and gold helped to shape the architecture thanks to the investments possible to the rich mining areas, and thus created the visual wealth of Taxco and Potosi.

California and the River Plate, as we explained, were the last frontiers and livestock reserves which show, both in architecture and urban features, the condition of a vorder culture; far from the centres of decision-making and wealth, they had to rely on their modest resources both of money and materials, for their artistic expression.

Brazil, a real sub-continent in America, linked to the ventures instigated by Henry the Navigator, grew along its extended coastline, as was right-fully to be expected if one considers the commercial ambitions which led to the setting up of a chain of trading settlements. Penetration into the Brazilian hinterland therefore only takes place on any scale and importance in the mining towns of Minas Gerais. the Fazendas, as plantations were called, were the eminently rural architectural answers of a hinterland pouring its products towards the coastal points of embarkation.

The industrial revolution brought forth new economic and technical structures, and from then on machinery upset the whole set of values, I have referred to. The republican period found Latin America, roughly speaking, atomized into independent countries and thus brought about a radical change in the strategic and economic picture just described. The appearance of new nodes - ports of shipment of raw materials, production areas criss-crossed by railways - would be born out of nothing of would midify the original appearance of many of the old colonial centres, while others now meaningless in this new world,would vegetate or wither away.

I have tried, briefly, in an over-simplified way, to portray the origins, meaning, and present state of our urban heritage. We can also get some idea of the responsibility which Latin American technicians shoulder, and of the difficulties they face, due to the wide variety of different situations they have to deal with. The vast scale of the enterprise requires them to work together with a common will - at the political, technical and popular levels - and to make a rational use of capital, both national and international. And we can speak of international as well as of national capital because this patrimony of ours gives evidence not only of the heritage handed down by the native Indian Americans, and of the influence of the Portuguese and the Spanish - who introduced their culture bodily into America, but also of the other turn of the century European influx, through the waves of immigration which gave the final touch to our present urban landscape.

Covering the subject as I believe it should be covered, not only from a regional point of view but as an important chapter in the study of Euro-American culture, we find an excellent instance of cultural integration.

Trying to safeguard this evidence by the preservation of historic towns, we encounter serious problems which, in the Latin-American theatre, are difficult to overcome owing to; the indifference of most of the population, the authorities' lack of understanding, or wrong information; no coordination between national and continental organizations, which have no overall policies for the area; a lack of strong and permanent national technical organizations, run by top experts; and finally the absence of adequate funding policies to support such technical activities with pre-established goals at local, national, regional and continental levels.

The implementation of common plans for whole regions as for the whole continent would strengthen the position of the few Latin American technicians now working in isolated fields of activity, and the priorities established by such plans would allow a more rational use of international support in the form of expert assistance, as well as of funds for equipment and research. Our biggest problem is to get to the point of take-off; once this is achieved, national funds will begin to trickle in, and the end will be reached - with time and despite the major or minor difficulties common to all such experiences.

I stress the need for working together, and this inevitably brings us to the question of common working structures, principles and working methods appropriate to identified areas. Up to the present, our countries have been unable to consider this question, in view of the overriding need for immediate action to protect our heritage. There are, however, some problems we feel need immediate study, such as the problem of listing, or inventories, and also that of the legislative requirements which up to this moment, and in most cases, lack definition. Decisions here must bear in mind the particular features of the Latin American patrimonial heritage and must be born out of the policies referred

to previously. This is why we must underline the importance of the Quite rules for all future policies in the area.

Thus in Latin America we must not be surprised at the absence of stylistic preoccupations of the sort found in classic European Historical studies. For this reason, it is often difficult for us to use words like Mannerism, Baroque, Classical in classifying an important part of our heritage.

Chronological classifications are, in a way, also difficult. First because amongst us the architecture frame - a basic box-shape - had a high degree of permanence and under went changes of what we could describe as "make-up" in its decoration, which endeavoured to bring urban and architectural creations up to date with fashion. In the process, the replacements of elements such as windows, ironwork, doors, balconies was not at all unusual; therefore it is difficult even dangerous in most cases, to take these elements as sure evidence for documentation purposes. That is why we feel it necessary to reach a quick and proper decision on the subject, for the area as a whole, before proceeding to any classification on a continental scale.

So far as the lack of definition of the legal aspects is concerned we can say, by way of example, that a vagueness in defining the limits of conservation zones is pretty common. Terms such as "the urban perimeter" of a place - followed by "rich in architectural examples of the 18th century" - all too often taken to mean - and it has happened - that whatever is not of the 18th century must be eradicated. Or again, commonly enough in the Caribbean area, one finds the following: "The old part ... (description)..." ending in the inevitable expression "walled in perimeter". What I am trying to show is that to many people, the "old sector" and the "walled-in perimeter" have become synonymous. An a priori assumption which makes us wonder what will happen to the skyline in the future, and will there be the inevitable super highways, and the no less inevitable parking lots located on the edge of the area, which, simply because of the inadequacy of the definition could, as has happened in most of our examples, seriously damage what we are interested in preserving, because of the lack of design control in its surroundings.

If we refuse to accept in our philosophy that our rescue policies should be directed exclusively to the native and/or Spanish/portuguese aspects; if we also insist on saving the achievements of the 19th century and on the need for 20th century design for the infill; if we stress the importance of the inherited urban setting as of psychological and cultural value, if finally we believe it is necessary to integrate our work in the area to be preserved into the overall urban and rural planning programme, then we will have to admit that up to the present, the lack of proper legislation makes such aims difficult to obtain in our countries.

Mexico, one of the few exceptions to what has been said, after getting a Preservation Law through Congress - which was three years ago - still has no detailed provisions for its implementation; and it is proving difficult to get it ratified in most of the States and Municipalities, which is a necessary step under the Mexican constitution.

On the other hand with us experience has shown, that however perfect the legislation may be, action is ineffective as long as the funds and experts available are insufficient. Also, the security of tenure of experts in office is a clue to efficient implementation of plans which, in view of the time required for carrying out rescue and preservation work must be put above all political change-overs, which are noticeable in our Latin American countries, for their frequency.

So long as these organizations are not self-sufficient and autonomous - and as I said before, removed from the changing local political conditions - it will be very difficult to carry out an effective programme, specially one dealing with urban areas.

Examples we are able to show today from all over Latin America are linked by a sort of brotherhood of misfortune as I have described. We must give our urgent attention to the question of communications today - and here I am really referring to the official authorities - by spreading the ideas on our subject more extensively, but also correcting our prejudices on what is, even for enlightened groups of officials, the object to be preserved. At present, you can bet that they will think exclusively of great monuments with artistic and historical value for our countries, and for one destination and one alone: a museum.

For this reason our urban and neighbourhood areas are not understood; vernacular architecture in an urban setting is lacking in protection and any defensive action is difficult to accomplish.

It is urgent therefore to have done with the restrictive notion of historical interest and also to insist on the importance of the manifestations of living cultures. I believe this is the way to change policies persisting only in the defense on buildings belonging to a "cultured" architecture, blind to the loss incurred by the disappearance of a harmonious ensemble created by society and circumstance, and in which we are involved: a palpable explanation of why and how we have come to be as we are.

This "notion of urban environment" which combines physical form with an "atmosphere of urban existence" - the main idea for the group working in Cartagena - allows us to assume today the defense of urban centres lacking in important buildings - that is architecturally speaking - but with pleasing urban spaces. If we add to this the positive use made of these spaces by their inhabitants we come to the conclusion that we are really dealing with an environmental problem. This basic idea is of importance to the philosophy for the preservation of our more modest urban centres or areas within important settlements.

Rescue work cannot be focused exclusively, as already stated, on the value of style, but must be extended to serve the people of the community. People alone are capable of giving life - urban personality - to a local physical phenomenon like a town or a city.

In our work, we find the Spanish or Portuguese urban heritage poses great problems to anyone wishing to rehabilitate it. This difficulty springs from a formal unity which left no margin for later evolution. Thus all additions of the XIXth and XXth centuries are in fact replacements which have nothing in common with those buildings inherited from the respective mother countries.

While architects and builders worked according to conventional patterns - "tratadistas" or purely academic - towns maintained a uniform appearance. Traditions imposed by climate, materials, forms and habits remained unchanged. The First unbalanced situations appear with the machine area, although there are examples which have earned a sort of kinship with their surroundings into which they are integrated today. Unfortunately, I cannot say the same for 20th Century architecture.

(Slides will be shown of: Taxco, Ouro Preto, Cartagena, Old Panama, Leiva, Cuzco, Colonia, Cachi, New Liverpool)

Finally, we are convinced that the heritage formed by the urban settlements of Latin-America with special thought for our small towns is not merely of sentimental or theoretical value, but a potential capital from which undoubtedly short-term benefits will be obtained through the application of adequate policies.

As I state this, I am not only thinking of the known benefits of touristic growth - provided it is controlled - but also, and it is high time to insist on this in Latin America, of the fact that if we can rehabilitate this urban heritage, we have the possibility of creating a more complete, balanced and human way of life.

It is a well-known fact that contemporary cities are de-personalized and that the unbalance of modern housing projects is a consequence of their purely profitable motivation.

The uprooting of the town-dweller and the loss of individuality is the result of this. Our old towns are still centres of psychological balance and can therefore make a strong contribution to better town planning policies for today.

It is a fact that these ideas have very few followers in official circles or among the people. It is up to us all to imbue them with the stamina they need to bring about a change in this situation. And that is what we expect ICOMOS to stand for.