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ABSTRACT

This research has been devised as a critical analysis of the aspects of conservation in the urban environment for any study of conservation. It is necessary to thoroughly investigate the changing socio-cultural dynamics of the society, which seeks to reveal the changing social and cultural meanings and ideologies in the production of the physical environment. In that sense, any conservation process needs to be a conceptual exercise concerned with both spatial and social processes. In other words, a conservation process is made up of a complex dynamic system in which spatial form and social processes are in continuous interaction with each other. To neglect one of these two processes would change the progressive angle of conservation, which aims to emphasize the conveying of significant messages from past to present.

Lefebvre defines the complex and contradictory nature of space in terms of social relations: space is not only supported by social relations but it is also producing and produced by social relations, every society in history shapes its distinctive social space and spatial environment (Lefebvre, 1993). Since the urban landscape is a social construct, it follows that understanding the man-landscape interaction is also a cultural bond. This meaning also helps as a constituent element in changing the cultural practice in the urbanization of cities. Therefore, for an accurate a proper conceptualization of space, we must look back at human practice with respect to it. In this way, spatial forms are seen not as inanimate objects within which social processes unfold, but as things which “contain” social processes in the same manner that social processes are spatial (Harvey, 1973: 10-11).

To understand the spatial form of any place or site to be conserved it is necessary to define the architectural quality of that space the social processes with reference to some social activity as well as the symbolic qualities of that form. Any successful strategy must appreciate that spatial form and social process are different ways of thinking about the same thing (Harvey, 1973: 26). Architecture, with a specific function, defines and arranges spatial units in terms of actual spatial relationships interwoven with the social identity and culture of the people. In addition, there is an aesthetic quality of that spatial form: something creative, conceptual, imaginary and artistic carrying various symbolic meanings. According to Harvey, the shaping of space which goes on in architecture and, therefore in the city, is symbolic of our culture, symbolic of the existing social order, symbolic of our aspirations, our needs, and our fears. Therefore, if we are to evaluate the spatial form of any urban landscape we must understand its creative meaning as well as its mere physical dimensions (Harvey, 1973: 31). This creative-symbolic meaning and its complex impact upon behaviour, as it is mediated by a cognitive process, helps construct a "public memory".

The urban landscape has a specific power to enhance the social meaning of public places, to develop new public relations / processes and nurture citizens' public memory. Identity is intimately linked to memory: both our personal memories and collective or social memories are interconnected with the histories of our families, neighbours and communities. Urban landscapes are storehouses for these social memories (Hayden, 1997: 9). It follows that the urban landscape is a social and spatial arena that stimulates visual memory to enhance urban consciousness and public history, like a museum of public culture.

In that sense, the meaning of conservation should cover not only the preservation of the material substance of the ground (that is, the material substance of the physical environment) but also the social and symbolic meaning of it. This paper will attempt to explore some of the ways that

social history is embedded in urban landscape and within this conceptual framework, the conservation of a specific urban landscape also re-constructs public history and re-builds an urban consciousness.