

Conservation of cultural heritage: from participation to collaboration

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ABSTRACT

The concept of participatory conservation of cultural heritage involves the investigation of ways in which community members can be encouraged to become active actors and collaborators in the preservation/restoration process of cultural heritage assets and, beyond that, promoters of tourism policies and processes and the cultural, ethnographic and religious values that such assets embody. This paper aims to present some forms of participation in the conservation of the cultural heritage process as an important part of integrated scientific conservation management, starting from an important series of documents on international policy in the field.

Keywords:

Integrated
conservation

Cultural
volunteering

Conscious
degradation

Cultural policy

Introduction

In general, the conservation process aims to valorise cultural and natural heritage assets and to preserve their historical messages (Sandu, 2004). In this regard a series of specific actions, measures, norms, principles, systems, techniques and intervention methods are undertaken and elaborated, infrastructures that are necessary, respectively, in investigation/research, preservation and restoration, direct or indirect, from the discovery/acquisition/transfer of the assets to their display/recovery/hoarding (E.C.C.O., 2008; Perusini, 2004).

Conservation Science, as a new field, is interdisciplinary, complex, global in character, both scientific (theoretical) and technological (practical) and adopts the modern concept of integrated conservation (Moldovan, 2010). This concept aims to satisfy the dual purpose of preserving and disseminating knowledge about cultural heritage in an integrated way, in close connection with socio-economic and cultural development at micro and macro level. Out of this grew the concepts of collaborative conservation and participatory conservation which focus on stimulating all stakeholders involved in the process (cultural, social, economic and environmental) and the active involvement of the public and community members (Spiridon, 2013). In this regard, recently the importance has been highlighted of setting up a work team that, in addition to the conservator and the renowned specialists in the field (curator, restorer, etc.), should include representatives from the pure sciences

(Geology and Mineralogy, Chemistry, Biology, Applied Science, Environmental Science), from the fields of technology and art history and even the members (artists and local natives) of communities from regions with tangible heritage value (Jo-Fan, 2012; Stoner, 2005). This inter-multidisciplinary collaboration offers support to the conservator in their work, not only providing support to investigate treatment options, find the materials and identify the techniques used by the artists, establish the date of manufacture and investigate the optimal materials (including from the cultural and ethnographic perspectives), but also to provide contextualisation and justification of scientific data through visual inspection and through the results

of historical research (oriented to knowledge of the original cultural context) (Spiridon et al, 2013).

In general, the state of conservation of many very old cultural objects is impacted not just by the environment's aggressiveness, but also by domestic and industrial activities and the levels of cultural and environmental education of the people. For this reason the participatory approach investigates ways in which the community members from the regions with tangible heritage value can be motivated to redefine their individual roles and responsibilities consciously and voluntarily (Bass et al, 1995; Brown, 1999; Sandu, 2013).

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International documents and events in the field

The new policies on the approach to cultural heritage consider the safeguarding and inclusion of cultural heritage assets within a global system of values, the development of cultural tourism as a way of guaranteeing the right of access to culture and the integration of active participation of the population in cultural heritage conservation policy.

Even if the concept of integrated conservation is relatively modern, the attempts to attract members of the public/community to the activities aimed at preserving cultural heritage have a longer history. The role of community in the cultural heritage conservation process (preservation, restoration, recovery and hoarding), which imply the concepts of collaborative and participatory conservation, started in 1964

with the Venice Charter and continued over time through a series of international documents and events, as we can see in table 1.

These documents and events describe, at the same time, the educational, interactive and public-oriented role of the specialists operating in Conservation Science which can be accomplished by dissemination of information from historiographical research, technical-scientific and artistic investigation, preservation and restoration, by the design and development of educational platforms in the field and by providing advice and technical assistance on cultural heritage (ICOMOS, 1990; Spiridon et al, 2013).

Year	Document/event	Point of interest
1964	<i>The Venice Charter</i>	States that the monumental works of the peoples are considered common heritage and it is necessary to safeguard them for future generations in a responsible way so as to hand them on in the richness of their authenticity (ICOMOS, 1964).
1972	<i>The Heritage Convention</i>	Promotes a general policy whereby cultural and natural heritage aims to perform an important function in community life.
1990	<i>The Lausanne Charter</i>	Encourages local community involvement in cultural development (ICOMOS, 1990).
2002	<i>The Budapest Declaration</i>	Puts more emphasis on the active involvement of local communities at all levels in the conservation and management of World Heritage property (UNESCO, 2002).
2003	<i>The Intangible Heritage Convention</i>	Requests community participation in the process of conservation (UNESCO, 2003).
2003	<i>Code of Ethics, E.C.C.O.</i>	Mentions that the work of preservation/restoration is an activity of public interest and should be conducted in accordance with national and international law (E.C.C.O., 2003).
2005	<i>The Faro Convention</i>	Requests greater synergy between public heritage management representatives.
2005	<i>European Cultural Heritage Forum</i> organised by Europa Nostra, in collaboration with the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), Brussels, 2005	The central point of discussion focusses on the active involvement of institutions and individuals in the conservation of cultural heritage and even on the awareness of the personal benefits that may result from this attitude ¹ .
2011	<i>The European Year of Volunteering</i>	A call to action for local administration representatives responsible for cultural and educational policies, trainers from public and private structures, associations and NGOs providing cultural services, and educational professionals from cultural institutions, etc.
2012	<i>La magna Charta del volontariato per i beni culturali (Velani & Rosati, 2012)</i> <i>Guida all'uso del volontario informato</i>	Two documents developed by Cesvot – <i>Centro Servizi Volontariato Toscana</i> , Italia and <i>Fondazione Promo P.A.</i> which aim to create a framework for recognition, scheduling and organisation of volunteering in cultural heritage.
2014	Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the regions. Towards an integrated approach to cultural heritage for Europe.	“Cultural heritage is a shared resource, and a common good. (...) The sector offers important educational and volunteering opportunities for both young and older people and promotes dialogue between different cultures and generations. (...) Therefore a more <i>integrated approach</i> to heritage conservation, promotion and valorisation is needed in order to take into account its manifold contribution to societal and economic objectives, as well as its impact on other public policies” (European Commission, 2014).

TABLE 1. INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTS AND EVENTS

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Some participatory conservation principles

The fundamental principles that govern the rules applied in the cultural heritage conservation process are included in specialty literature and scientific practice based on rules, orders, codes of ethics or conduct/laws, decrees, orders and decisions in the field. Until very recently, authenticity, importance of maintenance, minimum intervention, truth and honesty, reversibility,

fitting the new to the old, legibility of interventions and monitoring the conservation status by making regular checks (E.C.C.O., 2008; Worthing & Bond, 2008) were the main principles respected in the general conservation process (preservation and restoration). Today the focus is on an *integrated process of scientific conservation* (participatory conservation and stakeholder engagement). This approach is proposed by a series of documents and studies in the field, which also suggest a specific set of interdependent principles

¹ For more information, see <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.press-releases.1570>

“THE ENGAGEMENT OF THE COMMUNITY MEMBERS IN THE PARTICIPATORY CONSERVATION PROCESS OF CULTURAL HERITAGE REPRESENTS AN INTERDISCIPLINARY AND BLENDED APPROACH OF SOCIAL SCIENCE, ART AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH WHICH”.

to supplement it (The Improvement Service/Scottish Community Development Centre, 2011; Bass et al, 1995; E.C.C.O., 2008; Laaksonen, 2010; Shah et al, 2002; Waterton & Watson, 2011). These additional principles must be brought to attention to co-ordinate and reconcile different and often conflicting interests and to facilitate open debate in different contexts (social, cultural, economic, educational, environmental) based on values, knowledge, skills and the beliefs of community members while at the same time respecting European and local rights (cultural, educational and social) and promoting a model (“a culture”) of community involvement. In brief, having in mind the passage from individual to structured engagement, these principles (essential to good practice and effective participation) should be:

- *Intrinsic motivation* and voluntary participation;
- *Extrinsic motivation* (people need a reason for participation);
- *Accessibility* – equal rights and opportunities for informed engagement (access and participation) in the cultural life of the community;
- *Mutual respect* for history and cultural diversity (between individuals and between professionals and community members);
- *Flexibility* – the community engagements must be adapted to the context;
- *Transparent dialogue* (suspend assumptions, listen and understand the expression of the community's traditions, etc.);
- *Empower local people and community members*.

The forms of engagement

The engagement of the community members in the participatory conservation process of cultural heritage represents an interdisciplinary and blended approach of social science, art and scientific research which contributes to respecting European cultural rights to access and participation in cultural life (Laaksonen, 2010). The challenge in this context is to identify the form of participation best suited to a particular circumstance because the participatory process is dynamic, strongly influenced

by differences in social, cultural and political contexts and because the level and form of participation by all actors can change over time (CDC/ATSDR, 1997; Brown, 1999; Waterton & Watson, 2011). At the same time, the voluntary participation of community members must be based on capacity to change, motivation to change and access to knowledge, with public information being a very important element in the integrated conservation process of cultural heritage (Brown, 1999; ICOMOS, 1990). In our vision the main aspects of the participatory conservation process could easily be represented as in figure 1, where we highlight the role of dialogue both between the political, social, cultural and environmental representatives and those who belong to the scientific world (professionals, researchers, scientists, artists and even local traditionalists with their techniques and methods) and between individuals (members of public and community) and stakeholders.

Participatory conservation includes a series of activities such as informing, listening, understanding, consulting, involving, collaborating and empowering which help to: facilitate dialogue between all actors; mobilise and validate popular knowledge and skills; apply and adapt the science; and support communities and their institutions to manage and control resource use. As well as this it seeks to achieve sustainability, economic equity, social typology, justice and the preservation of cultural integrity (CDC/ATSDR, 1997; Bass et al, 1995; Brown, 1999; Negri, 2009). In this context the new participatory conservation approaches act at three levels:

- *Documentation and prevention* through communication and information sessions, for example: interactive seminars and workshops, interviews, phone-ins, email networks and *voluntary agreements*;
- *Investigation and research* through inclusion of community members in interdisciplinary scientific research teams and through innovative, integrative and participatory methods for cultural and environmental education, analysis and sharing like: Participatory Learning and Action, Living Labs² and ICT platforms, e-learning

² See <http://livinglabs.csp.it/metodologia>

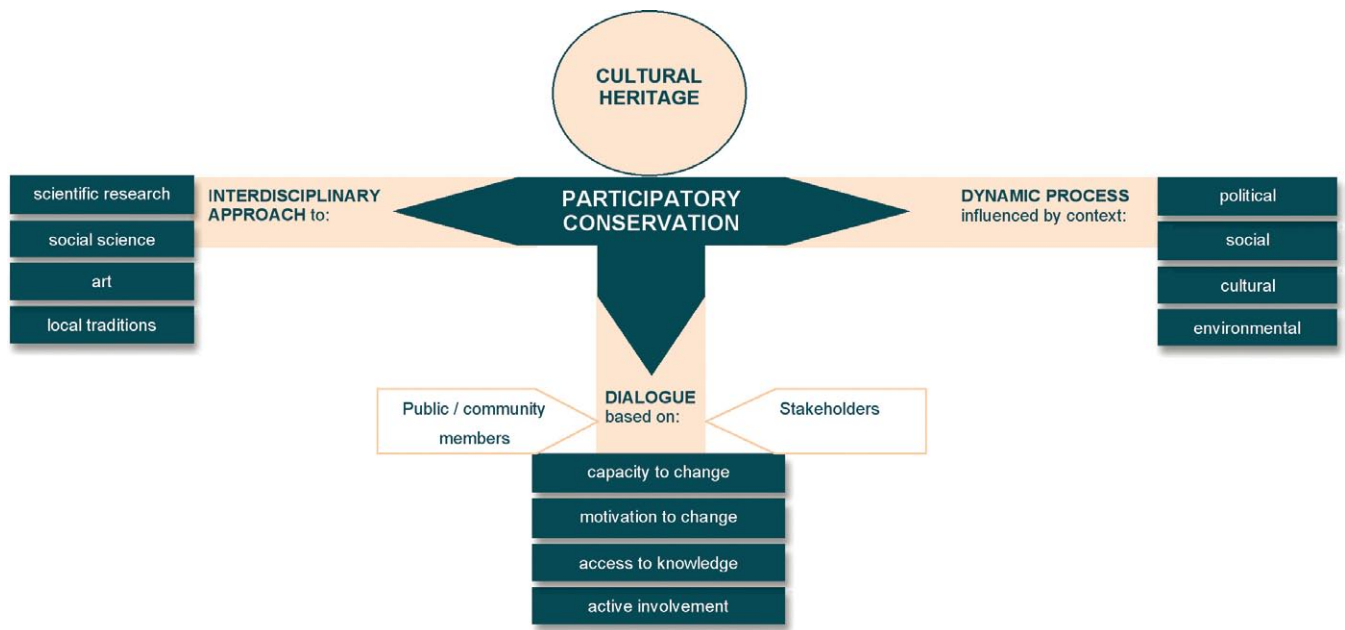


FIGURE 1. ASPECTS OF THE PARTICIPATORY CONSERVATION PROCESS

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

technologies and online apps (for survey, analysis and monitoring);

- *Storage and display*: exhibitions using traditional and modern infographics, digital methods, augmented reality, project mapping, etc.

All of these aspects lead to a typology of participation forms which can be identified easily in the complex process of the integrated conservation of cultural heritage. As we can see in table 2, these forms highlight the passage from individual, involuntary engagement to actions that are very well thought out by the functional groups lately integrated into the NGOs.

Where cultural heritage assets are part of the everyday life of community members, the participation by them in the conservation process is practically *involuntary by use*. A very intuitive example in this sense may be found just by observing the doorknob of the main entrance to the Győr Basilica in Hungary (see photo 1).

Passing from involuntary participation to passive-interactive participation, a very good example is found in Karlskirche in Vienna, where, in 2004, a temporary internal lift was constructed in order to restore the cupola (see photo 2). The lift ascends 32 metres and the scaffolding continues for another 25. The amazing part of this is the fact that the restoration process was conducted without restricting visitor access, and what is more, the visitors were stimulated in this way to sustain and

finance the conservation work. Here we have a situation in which the public is involved in a *passive-interactive* way in participatory conservation.



PHOTO 1. INVOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION “BY USE”: MAIN ENTRANCE OF THE GYŐR BASILICA, HUNGARY, 1000-1009 (DETAIL)

Source: Petronela Spiridon, 2014.

No.	Typology	Characteristics	Method
1	Involuntary participation "by use"	This level is most often found in communities where the members only "use" the heritage and they are just receivers of the general information regarding cultural heritage assets in an informal way and participation is simply a pretence (photo 1).	Living "history" in the present
2	Passive and passive-interactive participation	The community members are invited to participate by being told what has been decided or has already happened or will happen. Information is made formally through local communications, media tools or by using project mapping and augmented reality and offers the opportunity to people themselves to ask and reflect about the history of buildings, sites and other cultural elements of the area in which they live. This is actually the beginning of the passage from local/regional/national history to personal history through those cultural elements of the residential area. At this level we can also find community members involved in the process of preservation and restoration of the cultural heritage assets. Having access to the assets creates the possibility that community members may finance the conservation work (photo 2).	"Manipulation"
3	Interactive participation	At the next level of participation the community members are involved in professional teams' work (finding materials and identifying the techniques used by the artists, establishing the date of manufacture and investigating the optimal materials, identifying the role and significance of some cultural heritage assets in and for local community, etc.), in joint analysis and the development of action plans regarding the community heritage. At this level participation can be seen as a right.	Promotion of cultural rights
4	Participation for material or non-material incentives	At this level the people accept involvement only if they receive some reward: e.g. farmers may provide fields and labour and for them rewards such as food, cash or other material incentives are important. Young people can be stimulated by e-learning technologies and online apps to participate in integrated learning processes (using innovative methodologies like Living Labs and ICT platforms). At this level, access to information and education become part of the right of access to culture.	Access to information and education
5	Volunteer/spontaneous participation	The community members participate by taking initiatives – spontaneous or organised – independently of external institutions in order to change systems and retain control over how resources are used. As groups take control of local decisions and determine how available resources are used, so they have a stake in maintaining structures or practices. Self-mobilisation and volunteering is in fact an active way to reflect different approaches and traditions based on free choice, desire and motivation. At this level the people do not request reward as they are conscious of their contribution to the general interests of the community or society.	Self-mobilisation, self-determination and association
6	Professional NGO participation	NGOs are like an inventory of different kinds of participation. Among the more important NGOs in the field we may mention: IUCN, Europa Nostra, ICOMOS, ICOM, ENCATC, ECOVAST, IUCN (state level, national level).	Empowerment
7	Functional participation	At this level participatory conservation (public/community participation) is seen as an intrinsic part of collaborative conservation (stakeholder engagement); community members participate by being consulted or by answering questions. Practically they are involved in social and cultural enquiries and surveys, in working groups and meetings to discuss problems and policy regarding local heritage; at this level creativity, self-expression, self-confidence, freedom of opinion and expression are promoted.	Consultation and negotiation

TABLE 2. TYPOLOGY OF PARTICIPATION IN THE INTEGRATED CONSERVATION PROCESS

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Of participants (public/community members) not contributing financially but asking for material or non-material incentives we have the examples of

Living Labs and ICT platforms. In general the living lab methodology builds a cooperative table setup between public administrations, research, final users



PHOTO 2. *PASSIVE-INTERACTIVE PARTICIPATION*: KARLSKIRCHE IN VIENNA, AUSTRIA, 1716-1737 (INTERNAL TEMPORARY LIFT AND VISITORS' PLATFORM).

Source: http://www.peri.com/en/projects/projects/building-refurbishment-project/karlskirche_church_vienna.cfm

and local businesses in which each actor is receiving and delivering immaterial and material resources³. Another category of participation based on self-mobilisation, self-determination and association includes members who only participate when the topic is of their special interest, when they have something specific to contribute, or when they are involved in a project related to the domain of the community. As groups take control over local/national decisions and determine how available resources are used they

have a stake in maintaining structures or practices. The case of Rosia Montana from Romania is a highly instructive example in this sense:

[On the] 3rd of June 2014 the peasant's struggle, based in the village of Rosia Montana obtained a stunning victory in the Romanian Parliament. This was final rejection of a mining law proposal, initiated by the government, which would

³ See, for example, <http://www.openlivinglabs.eu/livinglab/living-piemonte>



PHOTO 3. VOLUNTEER/SPONTANEOUS PARTICIPATION –
PUBLIC MOBILISATION IN THE CASE OF ROSIA MONTANA,
ROMANIA

Source: <http://www.arc2020.eu/2014/06/romanian-peasants-win-legislative-challenge-against-gold-mining-corporation/>

have given permit to the largest gold mining operation in Europe. The rejection has come as a result of tremendous public mobilization [photo 3], in support of peasant rights who fight to protect their land in Romania (Szocs, 2014).

A participatory model based on public access to cultural heritage assets explores ways to design participatory platforms so that the local traditions, historical and cultural values regarding heritage assets, and even the content that amateurs create and share is communicated, displayed and valorised attractively (Bass et al, 1995; Simon, 2010).

Finally, *functional participation* is that in which the community members participate by being consulted or by answering questions. Practically they are involved in social and cultural enquiries and surveys, in working groups and meetings to discuss problems and policy regarding local heritage. At this level, creativity, self-expression, self-confidence, freedom of opinion and expression are promoted. A

very good example of this kind of public participation is the case of the Kamehameha I monument in North Kohala, Hawai'i. The monument is a cultural hybrid in that it has deeply embedded features of both Hawaiian and Western cultures. Originally gold-leafed and chemically painted, the monument was repainted and celebrated by its local community each year on Kamehameha Day. Public dialogue about how to conserve the monument was used as a vehicle for community engagement in critical thinking about representations of Hawai'i's past. Opening the conservation process on conflicting interests in the community required a reflexive approach in which traditional conservation analysis was only one of many ways by which to assess the significance of the monument (Wharton, 2003; Korza, 2002). By analysing this example in depth we can highlight the *stakeholder engagement* which refers to a framework of policies, principles and techniques which ensure that citizens and communities, individuals, groups and organisations have the opportunity to be engaged in a meaningful way in the process of decision-making

that will affect them, or in which they have an interest. Thus, *public participation* can be recognised as a practice of *stakeholder engagement*. In this way the *stakeholder engagement* (collaborative conservation) and *public participation* (participatory conservation) are a means of achieving (Yee, 2010):

- Participatory democracy (community empowerment and providing the opportunity to develop knowledge for making informed choices);
- Transparency in decision-making process;
- Community empowerment and support;
- Reduced conflict over decisions between decision-makers and public groups, and between the groups.

Conclusion

The concepts of community engagement and participatory involvement are not new, though, generally, they have been used more in the social fields of healthcare and services than in cultural heritage conservation science. But participatory conservation is more than a concept, in fact it gives us a powerful means to respect the cultural rights to access and participate in cultural life blended with other individual rights such as access to information and education, freedom of opinion and expression, self-mobilisation and association. Respecting and applying these rights determines the accountability of community members and causes increasing involvement of the community in heritage conservation. The involvement in integrated platforms for cultural and environmental education and information, inclusion in professional teams' work, in joint analysis, development of action and promotion plans, make community heritage accessible to everyone.

In this context, we consider that future studies regarding the active involvement/participatory engagement of the community members in the broader process of conservation of cultural heritage assets must involve studies of the incidence of conscious deterioration/degradation of the cultural heritage assets (causes of vandalism, ignorance, negligence, carelessness or inattention) reported in the current integrated platforms for cultural and environmental education and information. At the same time, an analysis of the relationship between the level of education and enculturation of the community members and the level of the voluntary and active involvement in conservation and promotion of community heritage could be relevant.

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