Conservation and Development: some considerations relative to the built environment and cultural landscapes in South Africa

I wish to offer what I think on this matter very simply; in 5 sequential yet overlapping points, as follows, so as to promote debate:1

1. South African ‘built environments’ and ‘cultural landscapes’ comprise the physical areas where heritage resources management and development planning collide more so than in any other domain where heritage or development considerations feature. This is because ‘built environments’, settlements, villages, towns, cities and ‘cultural landscapes’ comprise tangible and intangible resources that are ‘lived-in’ and ‘living’, as we speak. They are not heritage resources in a ‘collection’ or in a museum. They do not comprise items of material culture that are ‘fossilized’ or cocooned out of context: they have a trajectory of use, of economic value and of social and cultural meanings that encompass the past as well as the present, and they constitute the dynamic and changing ‘stage’ wherein, and within which, the life of many South Africans will be played out in the future. To the extent that they undoubtedly comprise resources of material culture inherited from the past, these ‘built environments’ and ‘cultural landscapes’ also manifest the developmental tendencies within a context of time and inhabited territory characterized by significant demographic growth, marked inequalities and much poverty. Consequently, the tensions between conservation and development in our built environments, cultural landscapes, settlements, towns and cities are inescapable, palpable and sometimes overwhelming. They will become increasingly so, as poverty grows and there are further job losses in the formal sector due to the current ‘international economic meltdown’ occasioned by the profligate USA sub-prime mortgage lending saga. It is notable that economic survival for the growing South African urban poor sector of the population will be shaped increasingly by their ability to engage in informal economic activity, including the provision of shelter through ‘spontaneous’ shack settlements in urban or peri-urban areas, because the formal sector will not be able to cope with the numbers involved. This is an inescapable reality that organs of government seem to not wish to grasp. What does this mean for heritage in the heritage / development continuum? There are several significant implications, only the most important of which may be explored here. Because heritage resources embodied in built environments and cultural landscapes are formative presences in living environments, logic demands that heritage resources must be seen as ‘setting the rules of the game’ for development.

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4. The focus is on the matter to the national government. The aim is to provide advice on draft heritage policy and practice, the paper has not been published in South Africa and is offered for publication in Russia.

5. This is a condensed and restructured version of a much longer paper prepared for a conference held during April 2009 in South Africa at the International Conference Centre of the South African Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, Pretoria, aimed at providing advice on the matter to the national government. The focus is on urban areas and cultural landscapes in their immediate vicinity, not on rural environments. Probably because of the critical content relating to current government policy and practice, the paper has not been published in South Africa and is offered for publication in Russia.

Сохранение и развитие: некоторые размышления на тему преобразованной среды и культурного ландшафта в Южной Африке / Conservation and Development: some considerations relative to the built environment and cultural landscapes in South Africa

В целях поддержания дискуссии по этому вопросу хотел бы представить свою точку зрения в пяти последовательных, но частично перекрывающих друг друга пунктах, приведенных ниже:1

1. Южноафриканская «преобразованная среда» и «культурные ландшафты» составляют физическую арену борьбы, где управление объектами наследия и планирование развития сталкиваются с большей силой, чем в какой-либо другой области, затрагивающей вопросы наследия или застройки. Это происходит потому, что «преобразованная среда», поселки, деревни, города и культурные ландшафты составляют материальные и нематериальные ресурсы, которые живут или в которых живут в данный момент. Это не объекты наследия в коллекции или музее. Это не предметы материальной культуры, превратившиеся в окаменелость или изолированные от контекста: у них есть свой путь использования, экономическая ценность, социальная и культурная значимость, которые охватывают как прошлое, так и настоящее. Они составляют динамичную и изменяющуюся «сцену», на которой будет идти жизнь многих южноафриканцев. В случаях, когда они, несомненно, являются объектами материальной культуры, упомянутой из прошлого, «преобразованная среда» и «культурные ландшафты» также демонстрируют направления развития в контексте времени и населенной территории, которым также характерны значительный демографический рост, явное неравенство и большая нищета. Следовательно,
2. Сейчас доминирует городское население Южной Африки, составляя около 65% от всей численности; меньшая часть населения (35%) классифицируется как сельское. В контексте современных демографических тенденций эти данные указывают на растущую со временем необходимость городского развития. Обратите внимание, что автор не ставит под сомнение необходимость сбора предметов наследия с целью их хранения и содержания, а также потребность в музеях. / South Africa’s population is now predominantly urban, comprising some 65% of the total, the minority of about 35% being classified as rural. In the context of current demographic trends, this reality points to significant urban developmental needs as we move forward. Note that the author neither questions the need for collections of heritage items to exist and to be maintained, nor questions the need for museums.

ment excepting where reason and the absence of heritage resources of significance suggest that development of our time should be formative of new landscapes (of course, there are in-between situations). There is a substantial body of theory and case material, variously emanating from architecture, heritage studies, urban design, anthropology and the like, that points precisely to the morphologies of settled landscapes (built environments and cultural landscapes) as having order based on heritage spanning nature and culture. Development denies this order at the peril of doing great damage to cultural authenticity, as well as to good sense in furthering necessary development.¹

2. For a variety of reasons, and regretfully, it is quite obvious that development planning, as it relates to built environments, cultural landscapes, settlements, towns and cities across South Africa, is largely out of control and tends to be developer-rather than public authority-led in the public interest.² (The very poor somehow make their own ‘settlement niche’ informally as best they can, practically dis-engaged from the formal system). As a consequence, public planning authorities increasingly tend to react to an escalating plethora of private development proposals rather than to lead development planning through the formulation and implementation of some well-resolved indicative development framework that engages with many basic needs yet sets sustainable constraints vis-a-vis scarce resources and hazards (such as embodied in the concept of defining and protecting the three domains: wilderness, rural and urban).³ Such a framework should in each instance be developed so as ‘to provide clear signals and create a ‘predictive vision or model’ for urban development. In this way public investment and development controls in the given urban area would provide a clear ‘map’ for investment by the private sector. Such an indicative development framework must facilitate housing and livelihoods for the poor, rather than provide them, and promote the harnessing of the energies of the informal economy, so that development is not just measured in terms of bricks and mortar (or numbers of dwellings produced), but in the self- and assist-education of people and in their improvement in life-skills. The ‘modernist’ urban planning paradigm (both in substantive and in procedural terms) has failed internationally with few exceptions outside of Europe and North America. Yet the South African State continues to pursue it, for example in its land use, housing and transportation departmental ‘silos’ and urban policies, with devastating results for most

4. This despite the generally very positive conceptualisation of the Integrated Development Planning process; this is because this remains largely a prioritisation of budgetary provisions without sufficient connection to spatial development plans. Also, it is clear that there is “a lack of synergy” between planning undertaken by the three spheres of government at the current time, as noted by the Deputy Director General: Urban and Rural Development, Department of Provincial and Local Government, earlier on the 2nd April 2009 at the meeting where this paper was presented.

5. See Benton McKay, for example.

6. It is not an accident that the October 2008 State of the Cities Report from the United Nations, the first such report comparing cities worldwide in a study based on detailed disaggregated data, could state that South African cities are the most inequitable in the world. It is not an accident that the October 2008 State of the Cities Report from the United Nations, the first such report comparing cities worldwide in a study based on detailed disaggregated data, could state that South African cities are the most inequitable in the world. It is not an accident that the October 2008 State of the Cities Report from the United Nations, the first such report comparing cities worldwide in a study based on detailed disaggregated data, could state that South African cities are the most inequitable in the world. It is not an accident that the October 2008 State of the Cities Report from the United Nations, the first such report comparing cities worldwide in a study based on detailed disaggregated data, could state that South African cities are the most inequitable in the world.


напряженные отношения между сохранением и развитием в нашей застроенном среде, культурных ландшафтах, поселках и городах являются нежизненными, ощутимыми и иногда подавляющими. Напряжение будет еще больше возрастать с увеличением бедности и потеря рабочих мест в формальном секторе по причине сегодняшнего кризиса международной экономики, вызванного бесконечной историей с расточительным американским субстандартным ипотечным кредитованием. Интересно отметить, что экономическое выживание для растущего беднейшего населения как-то не желают принять. Какое значение нынешние данные могут иметь лишь от этого числа. См. илл. 2. Рост Кейптауна 1904–2000. Как следствие резкого снижения плотности населения функционирующие общественные транспортные рамки Кейптауна стало неэффективным и неустойчивым. Note that whereas in 1900 the gross density of Cape Town's inhabitants was over 100/ka, currently it is about a third of that. See, Figure 2: Growth of Cape Town 1904–2000, (Gasson, 2000, unpublished), appearing in Dewar, D and F Todeschini (2004) Rethinking Urban Transport After Modernism – lessons from South Africa, Ashgate Publishers, London. Note that, as a consequence of this drastic decrease in density, public transport in Cape Town is very inefficient and unsustainable.

2. К сожалению, по ряду причин планирование развития среды, культурных ландшафтов, поселков и городов по всей Южной Африке явно выходит из-под контроля и существует тенденция к тому, что ее управление находится скорее в руках девелоперов, нежели органов местной власти, действующих в интересах общества.

3. Беднейшие слои населения как-то пытаются неформально создать свою собственную "поселенную нишу" (практически отсоединенную от формальной системы). Как следствие, руководство государственного планирования все больше склонно реагировать на перебои предложений по частным застройкам, нежели осуществлять планирование развития через формулировку и исполнение четких рамок развития, которые бы соответствовали основным требованиям, и в то же время устанавливать твердые ограничения по отношению к ряду и находящимся в опасности объектам (например, как в концепции обозначения и защиты трех зон: дикой природы, деревни и города). Какие рамки в каждом случае должны служить для подачи четких сигналов и создания прогноза или модели для городского развития. Таким образом, контроль государственного капилловационного и архитектурно-планировочного надзора застройкой данной территорией могут создать ясную "карту" для инвестиций из частного сектора. Такие ориентировочные рамки развития не обеспечат бедных жильем и средствами к существованию, а скорее, облегчат решение их жилищных и материальных проблем, а также будут способствовать использованию сил сектора нерформальной экономики. Так что развитие будет измеряться не только количеством кирпичей и раствора (или количеством построенного жилья), но и образованием и самообразованием людей, их совершенствованием своих жизненных навыков. "Модернистская" парадигма городского планирования (как в предметно-материальном, так и в процедурном смысле) потеряла убедительность во всем мире, за исключением нескольких примеров в Европе и Северной Америке. Однако Южная Африка продолжает быть паллиативом, например в отделах по землепользованию, жилищному строительству и транспорту, считающих себя самодостаточными, и получает ужасающие результаты в разных сферах общества (за исключением богатых слоев), а также в том, что касается культурных ландшафтов, поселков и городов.

9. Отметим, что если в 1900 году плотность населения Кейптауна была более 100 человек/га, то сегодня данные составляют лишь треть от этого числа. См. илл. 2. Рост Кейптауна 1904–2000. Как следствие резкого снижения плотности населения функционирующие общественные транспортные рамки Кейптауна стали неэффективными и неустойчивыми. Note that whereas in 1900 the gross density of Cape Town's inhabitants was over 100/ha, currently it is about a third of that. See, Figure 2: Growth of Cape Town 1904–2000, (Gasson, 2000, unpublished), appearing in Dewar, D and F Todeschini (2004) Rethinking Urban Transport After Modernism – lessons from South Africa, Ashgate Publishers, London. Note that, as a consequence of this drastic decrease in density, public transport in Cape Town is very inefficient and unsustainable.

назад в вопросах землеустройства.

9. Во всех секторах, будь то планирование развития, охрана окружающей среды или управление наследием (или в подгрупах всех этих трех сфер), предоставление услуг стало таким ограниченным, бесхозяйственным и бедным, что является предметом легендарных и неимоверных насмешек и негодований, несмотря на нечеловеческие усилия со стороны некоторых из них. Система не работает. «Наследие или развитие» – призыв, который мы часто слышим от застройщиков, нужно рассматривать в контексте дисфункциональности, которую застройщики пытаются использовать в своих интересах перед лицом слабой и запутанной парадоксальной администривации. Управление наследием – самое слабое звено в этой цепи, которое губительным образом воздействует на нашу коллективную память и демонстрирует свою садистическую проявляя. и притязания в том, что касается состояния наших развивающихся поселков, городов, «троениной среды» и культурных ландшафтов».

5. Что нужно делать? Я настоятельно- но заявляю, что не следует выбирать легкий или даже «политически корректный» путь и сдаваться безпринципному развитию и плохому управлению. Напротив, я рекомендую: – Принять во внимание и осуществить на практике положения Закона о национальном наследии (NAHRA), которые относятся к идентификации объектов наследия и их значимости, считать их главными источниками информации и ограничительными условиями для техногенной нагрузки на преображанную среду и культур-
the level of grading within a three tiered (or ‘sphered’) system of management (Grade1=National, Grade2=Provincial, Grade3=Local Authority=municipality). By not having given effect to these intended relationships between any specific level of significance and organ of government responsibility, bottlenecks and inefficiencies have been perpetuated and grass-roots democracy in heritage resources management and development planning matters has been undermined. The principle should be to delegate authority to the lowest relevant level or sphere, as long as competence either exists or is promoted as part of the responsibility of government in the public interest.16

– Build capacity within municipalities and delegate powers envisaged in the NAHRA to that sphere of government, giving it real teeth to inform appropriate developments and to constrain developers;

– Assist and develop capacity at the provincial sphere of government, particularly at developing integrative protocols and methods across the development planning, environmental conservation and heritage resource management divides;

– In those regions of our country where tourism and the tertiary and quaternary sectors of our economy will increasingly have to become the ‘engine’ for the bulk of the economic development and the majority of livelihoods in the foreseeable future, it is reckless and certainly not in the longer term public interest to allow the erosion of our built environments and cultural landscapes; for this would be like ‘killing the goose that laid the golden egg’. Economic survival and the broader South African public interest depend on proper integration of heritage resources management with development planning. Abrogation of the State’s responsibility in this regard would be indefensible and unacceptable. The status of heritage must be raised in this relationship, not diminished.17

– Integrated Development Frameworks should be moved forward from budgetary prioritization of public expenditure to spatialization and integration of such expenditure with urban place-making and heritage resources location and management.18

In conclusion, I have to draw attention to what I believe to be the most serious deficiency in our heritage management system at present as it relates to built environments and cultural landscapes: there are simply far too few people with the requisite professional knowledge and skills about the management of built environments and cultural landscapes in South Africa.
It pains me to point out that most heritage practitioners involved in this arena, particularly in government departments and agencies, have virtually no foot-hold or understanding of what is involved. Indeed, most can not ‘read’ a landscape or a plan, let alone derive implications from that for any debate across the divide of heritage and development. The inescapable implication is that, as a matter of urgency, government and civil society should promote and support appropriate education and training so that capacity may be generated as soon as possible. We need to develop a local body of knowledge and to record precedent that can help to give direction to the inevitable debates about what to conserve and what may be destroyed that we have inherited.

Appendix
Resolution flowing from the International Heritage Symposium, held on the 6th March 2009 at the Kasteel de Goede Hoop in Cape Town.

“it is common cause that the provisions in the National Heritage Resources Act in regard to the heritage resources management of the built environment and cultural landscapes have not, and are not, being effectively implemented in a context characterised by very limited capacity: one the one hand, neither the national (SAHRA) nor the provincial heritage authorities (PHRAs) are carrying out their respective mandates appropriately, strategically or effectively; nor, on the other hand, are most local authorities (Municipalities) doing so with regard to balancing heritage resources management and development planning in the public interest as required by law and common sense. Moreover, since any debate about balancing the broad and longer-term public and societal interest across the spectrum of heritage resources management and development planning is bedevilled by an unwieldy and over-complicated legislative framework which deals separately with natural resources, heritage resources, and development planning, most such debates in practice lean towards developer-led rather than public-interest resolutions, most often to the detriment of significant built environments, cultural landscapes and germane collective memory of our inheritance in South Africa. There appears to be a lack of political will with respect to the management of heritage resources in South Africa, with poorly resourced and ineffective national and provincial institutions in place. These matters need to be made the subject of urgent civic debate and should receive attention at the highest levels of government accordingly.”

Fabio Todeschini