Architectural Preservation

Degrees of Intervention

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The minimum degree of intervention necessary and the techniques used depend upon the conditions of climate to which cultural properly is likely to be subjected. Atmospheric pollution and traffic vibration must be considered, and earthquake and flood hazards should be assessed.
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Interventions practically always involve some loss of a ‘value’ in cultural property, but are justified in order to preserve the objects for the future. Conservation involves making interventions at various scales and levels of intensity which are determined by the physical condition, causes of deterioration and anticipated future environment of the cultural property under treatment. Each case must be considered as a whole, and individually, taking all factors into account.
Degrees of Intervention

Always bearing in mind the final aim and the principles and rules of conservation, particularly that the minimum effective intervention is always the best, seven ascending degrees of intervention can be identified. In any major conservation project, several of these degrees may take place simultaneously in various parts of the ‘whole’. The seven degrees are:
Seven degrees!

1. Prevention of deterioration (or indirect conservation)
2. Preservation of the existing state
3. Consolidation of the fabric (or direct conservation)
4. Restoration
5. Rehabilitation
6. Reproduction
7. Reconstruction
1- Prevention of deterioration (or indirect conservation)

Prevention entails protecting cultural property by controlling its environment, thus preventing agents of decay and damage from becoming active. Neglect must also be prevented by sound maintenance procedures based on regular inspections.

In summary, regular inspections of cultural property are the basis of prevention of deterioration. Maintenance, cleaning schedules, good housekeeping and proper management also aid prevention. Such inspections are the first step in preventive maintenance and repair.
2- Preservation of the existing state

Preservation deals directly with cultural property. Its object is to keep it in its existing state. Repairs must be carried out when necessary to prevent further decay. Damage and destruction caused by water in all its forms, by chemical agents and by all types of pests and micro-organisms must be stopped in order to preserve the structure.
3- Consolidation of the fabric (or direct conservation)

Consolidation is the physical addition or application of adhesive or supportive materials into the actual fabric of cultural property, in order to ensure its continued durability or structural integrity. In the case of immovable cultural property, consolidation may for example entail the injection of adhesives to secure a detached mural painting to the wall and likewise grouting of the structure.
4- Restoration

The object of restoration is to revive the original concept or legibility of the object. Restoration and re-integration of details and features occurs frequently and is based upon respect for original material, archaeological evidence, original design and authentic documents. Replacement of missing or decayed parts must integrate harmoniously with the whole, but must be distinguishable on close inspection from the original so that the restoration does not falsify archaeological or historical evidence. In a sense, the cleaning of buildings is also a form of restoration, and the replacement of missing decorative elements is another.
5- Rehabilitation

The best way of preserving buildings as opposed to objects is to keep them in use—a practice which may involve what the French call ‘mise en valeur’, or modernization with or without adaptive alteration. The original use is generally the best for conservation of the fabric, as it means fewer changes.

Adaptive use of buildings, such as utilizing a mediaeval convent in Venice to house a school and laboratory for stone conservation, or turning an eighteenth-century barn into a domestic dwelling, is often the only way that historic and aesthetic values can be saved economically and historic buildings brought up to contemporary standards.
Reproduction entails copying an extant artefact, often in order to replace some missing or decayed parts, generally decorative, to maintain its aesthetic harmony. If valuable cultural property is being damaged irretrievably or is threatened by its environment, it may have to be moved to a more suitable environment and a reproduction substituted in order to maintain the unity of a site or building. For example, Michelangelo’s ‘David’ was removed from the Piazza della Signoria, Florence, into a museum to protect it from the weather, and a good reproduction took its place. Similar substitutions have been undertaken for the sculpture of the cathedrals of Strasbourg and Wells.
7- Reconstruction

Reconstruction of historic buildings and historic centres using new materials may he necessitated by disasters such as fire, earthquake or war. Reconstruction cannot have the patina of age. As in restoration, reconstruction must be based upon accurate documentation and evidence, never upon conjecture.

The moving of entire buildings to new sites is another form of reconstruction justified only by over-riding national interest. Nevertheless, it entails the loss of essential cultural values and the generation of new environmental risks. The classic example is the temple complex of Abu Simbel (XIX Dynasty), Egypt, which was moved to prevent its inundation following the construction of the Aswan High Dam, but is now exposed to wind erosion.