BUILDING SHARED PERSPECTIVES IN HERITAGE MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

This paper explores the potential of new approaches which create and support commitment among different stakeholders, through building shared perspectives on heritage development. The hypothesis is that for a successful heritage management procedural issues are as important as that of which exact measures that should be implemented.

The complexity of urban and territorial transformation processes, where heritage management addresses a multiplicity of actors, interests and issues, calls for a more integrated and goal-oriented approach. In Sweden heritage is considered an environmental factor and included in general resource-management policies. The case studies presented in this paper deal with how cultural values are understood and managed in processes where the focus is not primarily on heritage. They show that the identification and acceptance of significant values is a learning process where competing values have to be made visible and constructively dealt with. There are lessons to be learnt from the natural and communicative policy approaches.

Key words: integrated heritage management, cultural and natural heritage, environmental communication

1.0 Introduction

In current practice conservation legislation still deals with safeguarding and is seldom integrated in overall environmental planning and decision-making processes. This is especially the case in issues concerning conservation on the urban and territorial scale. Furthermore heritage values are not taken into consideration by decision-makers, regulatory authorities and developers, partly because they are not easily identifiable, quantifiable and measurable (Becker and Vanclay, 2003). This is also due to the fact that the responsibility of cultural heritage belongs to several political sectors.

Today’s decision making culture, based on negotiation between conflicting interests, does not respond to the objectives of sustainable development. The complexity of urban and territorial transformation processes, where heritage management addresses a multiplicity of actors, interests and issues, calls for a more integrated and goal-oriented approach.

These complex processes can generally be characterized by containing many independent variables, both social, technical, biological and economical being dynamic, where both positive (strengthening) and negative (obstructive) actions influence the system.
being non-linear, that is they lack in causality
(Forster, 1987)

This is certainly the case with cultural heritage management. For a better understanding
of the changing focus of cultural heritage in project management I have used the simple
chart adapted from the field of communicative planning:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expert Perspective</th>
<th>Negotiation Perspective</th>
<th>Collaborative Perspective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject Knowledge Focus</td>
<td>Conflict Management Focus</td>
<td>Process Management Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The knowledge is out there”</td>
<td>“The knowledge is negotiable”</td>
<td>“The meaning is localized”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The knowledge is relative”</td>
<td>“Depends on the context”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(M. Ljung in Kofoed et al., 2002)

It is not possible to manage cultural heritage without dealing with value-judgments and
individuals’ notion of historic continuity. As the cultural heritage is seen in a wider
concept new actors and stakeholders are involved, each with their own perceptions and
knowledge. Consequently it can be argued that policies need to be characterized by
flexibility and plasticity in order to cater for rapidly evolving knowledge. In my work the
focus has been on the process and how the stakeholders have perceived their roles and
responsibilities. The question is how the shared benefits of a dialogue could be included
in a heritage management process.

2.0 Linking cultural and environmental policy approaches

In Sweden cultural heritage is considered as an environmental factor and as part of
environmental policies, why the integration of both cultural and natural conservation is
possible to study. We have found that there are lessons to be learned in how other
environmental values are integrated in planning and decision making processes.

While communicative and social innovations are often relevant over cultural and sectorial
borders and we can learn from each other it is important to remember that each sector has
its own unique questions which must be developed in its own context as well.

The empirical findings referred to in this paper are based on case studies, which are part
of a current Swedish research project. The case studies deal with how cultural and natural
values are understood and managed in processes where the focus is not primarily in
heritage. These include infrastructure development projects and the use of environmental
impact assessments in different projects.

Case study: Cultural heritage in environmental impact assessments

The outcome of the presented Swedish case study with stakeholder interviews is related
to results of two other surveys of current practice in European Union (EU) member states
(Bond et al., 2004). These include an information processing model (questionnaire survey
and literature review) and a criteria-based review of EISs.

The questionnaire and literature survey was carried through among a selection of EIA
practitioners and ‘experts’ representing EU member states. The first part of the
questionnaire was sent to a selection of 131 EIA experts and focussed on how cultural
heritage considerations were served by the current legislation in each country. A second
questionnaire sought to identify relevant issues in actual practice was sent to twenty six
The Environment Assessment Directive of the European Union (EU) requires that the potential impacts on cultural heritage of proposed developments are examined. According to the Swedish environmental legislation impacts on the cultural environment should be taken into account in an environmental impact assessment (EIA).

The Swedish case studies are included in a recent study which considers how well cultural heritage is considered in EIAs within EU by analyzing the results of three studies that encompass an examination of an ‘information processing’ and ‘institutionalized model for EIA’. In combination, the studies provided evidence for inadequate consideration of cultural heritage (Bond et al., 2004).

The three main findings were:

- Cultural heritage is mainly interpreted as monuments and archaeological heritage;
- There is a lack of methods for impact assessments for cultural heritage;
- Cultural heritage should be included in the early stages of the EIA process with a greater emphasis on public participation.

A limited multiple case study was carried out to identify the need for increased knowledge of cultural heritage amongst the stakeholders in the Swedish EIA process. The main aim was to gain a greater understanding of the stakeholders’ competence and the role of cultural heritage in EIA. The study was part of the basis for an educational program carried out by the Swedish National Heritage Board aiming to increase the competence of cultural heritage in the EIA process (Kofoed et al., 2004).

Three criteria were used: was the cultural environment (the term cultural landscape was used in the interviews) mentioned and described and to what extent; were the projects’ impacts on the cultural environment included in the EIA; and whether there was any attempt to predict the consequences of these effects. The extent to which the project had been changed in order to minimize the negative effects on the cultural landscape was also taken into account. The study included the impact assessment document itself and related baseline documents used in the decision-making process.

The baseline material concerning cultural heritage mainly presented archeological sites and protected areas. The case studies show that even if the author of the EIA would have had the ambitions to include a broader view of the cultural values in the area, there was a lack of special cultural heritage competence. It proved to be difficult to find available professionals both in the public and private sector. In the case studies the author or user of the EIA gets no guidance at all in identifying the cultural values at a larger scale. The cultural values considered were mainly archaeological sites and high-value protected areas with strong legal protection measures. The cultural landscape or cultural aspects as a general concept and environmental asset was hardly mentioned at all in any of the documents.
Although there were differences in administrative and professional organization and competence in the different parts of the country it was clear that cultural heritage and heritage experts were seldom directly involved. Even where they took part in the EIA process they felt that their view was not considered important. All interviewed agreed that generally cultural heritage was poorly assessed in EIAs.

The EIA process itself was a further reason for the lacking consideration of cultural heritage, in addition to the incomplete baseline material. The screening and scoping phases were explained in the interviews as being the most important time for integrating cultural values into EIA. Unless they are taken into account then, they have in reality no opportunity to affect the process to any significant degree. The cultural heritage professionals were involved late, if at all, in the EIA process and they had trouble making themselves heard. On the other hand the interviews also show that there can be a problem in assessing the consequences of cultural heritage at a very early stage, since the designs of the planned project are too vague. This means that there must be an active presence of representatives of cultural heritage throughout the whole EIA process.

**Case study: Integrating cultural and natural heritage goals in infrastructure and transport planning projects**

The environmental policy adopted by the Swedish National Road Administration lays the goals for developing the road transport system towards a situation where the infrastructure is adapted to the natural and cultural environment. This work is in line with the national environmental policies with an overall orientation for goal orientation, quality assurance and monitoring. Since 2000 The Swedish National Road Administration has been developing a new method called ‘Goals and measures for natural and cultural values’. Its aim is to establish a process which has the national environmental aims as a starting point and to follow them up with specific measures for quality assurance. The method includes eight steps in the process from identification to the final decision of the measures to be taken. The steps are:

- Identification of landscape categories (four main categories)
- Accomplishment of focused value assessments
- Gaining support by the stakeholders
- Decision about goals and criteria related to the landscape categories
- Framing project goals
- Decision about project goals in consultation with authorities concerned
- Analyzing measures in relation to project goals
- Decision about measures to implement

The final project will then be evaluated in relation to the national environmental goals.

In the study eight pilot projects from the period 2001-2003 has been studied. The analysis encompassed both new exploitation projects and maintenance projects. The survey was done through personal interviews with professionals involved in the pilot projects and studies about documents and results, planning and decision-making documentation. The professionals concerned were managers and administrations at the road administration and representatives from the cultural and natural departments at the county administrations (who are responsible of infrastructure projects in the region). The conclusions are mainly drawn through interviews as the main focus of the analysis has been the process and not the final implementation of the project. The issues dealt with the
external and internal conditions, the road-planning and decision-making process and the experienced result.

The overarching questions were as following:

What are the expected advantages: are quality goals and criteria supporting the concretization of natural and cultural values?

Does the process support the regional and local involvement?

Does the method create more focused decision-making tools for natural and cultural values?

Does the method promote a more transparent planning process; that is, right question in the right place?

The Swedish National Road Administration invited us at the Department of Landscape Planning to make a survey on how natural and cultural values were managed in nine pilot projects. In these pilot projects a new goal-oriented working method was implemented. The projects ranged from conservation measures for rural historic roads to urban infrastructure developments and large scale highway projects in high-value natural and cultural environment. (Lisitzin and Ljung, 2003)

The methodology included a process where goals for the project were formulated based on the Swedish National Environmental Objectives. Consequently measures were created for effective monitoring. This means that when goals for natural and cultural values are described (often qualitatively), they must be set in a relation with both the uniqueness of the project and to the national environmental objectives. The approach represents a general trend within decision-making - increasing goal-orientation, quality control and requirements of process-oriented work procedures. Therefore all participants/stakeholders must make a commitment early regarding central questions. It must be taken into account that this can also bring about certain risks in a decision-making perspective, that is, closed positions and perspectives too early in the process.

Moreover the results showed that dealing with natural and cultural values not only had the expected differences (e.g. the use of quantifiability and different traditional inventory mechanisms) but that cultural values opened up for a more creative process - partly because this way of working was new for the participants. The nature conservation was feeling more comfortable in established methods and inventory results. Working goal-oriented also meant that the focus was more on results than the usual way of negotiation between competing interests. The necessity to make the issues tangible also enforced new knowledge and information to be produced. In this process the heritage professionals were forced to be concrete about their values, in comparison with the general way of arguing where “everything is valuable”.

The overall conclusion from the nine pilot projects was that the longer process was worth the time and involvement; at the end the projects did not take more time as usual. Most participants from different disciplines appreciated the joint dialogue, and even those more reluctant could see its advantages in the implementation phase. “I never saw those things before” was an often heard comment in the interviews (Lisitzin and Ljung, 2003).

3.0 How to create a process and support a dialogue among different stakeholders?

In the case studies we aimed at looking how communicative approaches would identify obstacles and opportunities and facilitate a successful heritage management process. As the first case study showed, the heritage professionals did not find that the cultural
heritage aspect was included nor respected in the EIA process. Only strong legal restrictions were taken into account and they were not asked to take part as experts in the evaluation phase. In the second case study the process was new and unusual. Its set-up forced the stakeholders to actively participate, even if they were reluctant about its relevance. Naturally the nature of a pilot project raised the expectations and, to a certain degree, the engagement. However, the result was that the awareness about cultural heritage among all stakeholders increased. For a better management of cultural heritage values it is therefore urgent to allow time and create a structure for a dialogue in order to make better use of the accumulated competence in the process.

The justification is that processes which focus on shared learning give the society a possibility to take into account all the knowledge about the local environment and its use that the local actors possess (Daniels and Walker, 2001). A more empirically grounded knowledge increases the possibilities for better and well grounded decisions.

Principally it is a question of how to organize these complex and often controversial processes. (Ljung, 2001). The question of “how” people are engaged and involved becomes in this perspective as central as the question of which measures we intend to undertake. Both the cultural and natural as well as the physical planning sector have during the past decennium struggled with the “how” question. Different ideal models have been created and tested describing which factors and criteria should be fulfilled for a successful process in the work with environmental related problems. However, the reality is seldom unambiguous. Experiences show that the models can at their best function as guiding principles, and most often the high ambitions fail due to the fact that the communication is not functioning. We seem to know what is needed, but not how to achieve it. Without careful attention to this disconnect, concepts like biodiversity or cultural diversity risk to remain an abstraction (Ljung, 2001).

Concepts as conservation and heritage are problematic from a communicative perspective. These concepts are often used in a normative and ambiguous way, especially in environmental conservation. (Callicott et al., 1999). Consequently this leads to disagreement and communicative conflicts, so called “conceptual ambiguity”. Environmental and cultural politics are saturated with concepts of this kind. This bears consequences for joint actions and collaboration while the rhetoric can function either excluding or including (Bergeå and Ljung, 2003). Therefore the development of concepts and language is of relevance. Recent research has been able to prove strong relations but involvement does not come by itself. It requires the careful designing of a process where the goal is to include the different perspectives and allow a shared learning and a creative confrontation of experts and users. This process must result in tangible measures where the participants can contribute.
The ‘ideal’ decision making process (based on the soft systems methodology). (Ljung, 2001)

4.0 Conclusions

The case studies show that the recognition and identification of significant values is a learning process where competing values have to be made visible and constructively dealt with. But when the process is consciously designed and facilitated, based on the principles of dialogue and focusing on shared learning, the negotiation of values and interests develop into an iterative learning process instead of an often destructive discursive struggle. In such a process relevant values are identified and accepted. The success of such a new interface depends on how the process is managed, which learning is achieved, more than what has been said and on what grounds.

Bibliography


