Chapter 10 /
From Preservation to Managing Change / Using spatial development as a heritage revival tool / Felix van Veldhoven

"Let us by all means cleanse, then mend,
then adapt frankly to our own modern uses;
and though in this process a shock may be
given to the merely romantic spirit, a better
and truer artistic result is reached, at any
rate when with time and use the new ele-
ments again harmonise into the old."[1]

Recapitulating history

The idea of integrating cultural heritage in spatial planning was already envisaged by pioneering town planner Patrick Geddes in 1905, as the above quotation illustrates. During urban development projects in Edinburgh, Dublin, and colonial India, he pleaded for preservation of the built heritage by adapting it to "the requirement of the present."[2] He put his ideas into practice in, for example, the re-construction of Crosby Hall, the medieval mansion of a London wool merchant, in 1908. When a local bank decided to demolish this fifteenth century structure, Geddes carefully numbered each stone and incorporated the historic building in a block of buildings belonging to the University of London. According to Geddes, the only way a city can achieve proper new growth is for it to develop a form of design which keeps history in mind and which starts from the existing urban fabric: future-oriented urban design is impossible without looking back. The participation of the inhabitants is essential, because it is they who will recapitulate the history of their city.

Old buildings were reused in new spatial projects long before Geddes's time. Design with history in mind can already be found in ancient Rome, where Augustus, in all probability, incorporated the alleged remains of Romulus' and Remus' birthplace (the so-called Lupercal) into his palace on the Palatine Hill.[3] These examples show that the use, and even re-use, of heritage in spatial development has been occurring for centuries. The Roman philosopher and statesman Marcus

Tullius Cicero once described the connection between a place and a memory as the scratching of a stylus on a wax tablet: mental images and place (or, for that matter, spatial heritage) together create memory, just like the scribble and the wax tablet together form a message.

Place and memory are yoked to each other: a memory or story will last if it is connected to a place. This phenomenon can actually be demonstrated, as has been pointed out by historians Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan.[4] A group of students who took a test achieved better results when it was held in the same place where they had learned the subject matter. Apparently, a place can call up memories of events that occurred at the same location. One can scarcely underestimate the consequences of this process for spatial heritage: it may function to evoke strong, personal stories and memories, or it can yield a lasting historical experience. In this regard, one may turn to the work of the historian Pierre Nora, whose notion of *lieux de mémoire* has had a major influence on our understanding of how familiar places act as carriers of stories and memories.[5]

There is as yet no overview of the different ways in which heritage can be approached in spatial transformations. There are, however, many extensively described examples of successful and less successful strategies. In this chapter, I try to offer some insight into the developing perspectives on spatial heritage and their consequences for the integration of heritage in spatial design. With the help of several examples, I will show the ways in which (re)development of spatial heritage can strengthen the ties between a place, its people, and their past. I begin with the situation in the Netherlands, where the strategy known as 'preservation through development,' which was elaborated in the late 1990s by an interdisciplinary team of specialists, proved to be innovative and relevant, and has placed Dutch thinking about heritage policy in the European vanguard.

From a culture of loss towards a culture of gain

After the Second World War, spatial heritage received little recognition in the Netherlands.[6] The Germans had fostered an interest in local customs and folklore during the years of occupation, and thus after the war concern for heritage became a questionable topic. This trend went even further in the heyday of the reconstruction period, when urban planners regarded traces of the past as obstacles,[7] but the publication in 1972 of the study Limits to Growth, commissioned by the Club of Rome, had a positive effect on thinking about landscape and monuments, and in time these subjects appeared on the policy agenda of national governments. A modern discourse emerged, dominated by a rational perspective on heritage. Most importantly, historic buildings were now considered 'irreplaceable'; an old building merited attention because of its rarity and because of the soundness of its building material. Heritage was regarded as 'stock', a collection of relics telling us about the past. It was something in 'limited supply' that was being threatened, and henceforth it was conceived of primarily in terms of its scarcity.[8]

This thinking in terms of scarcity has led people to speak nowadays of a 'culture of loss'. Attention to heritage arose from a fear of losing the archaeological soil archive, cultural landscapes, and valuable buildings. Traces of the past were at risk because of urban modernisation, the rationalisation of agriculture, and the urbanisation of the countryside. Remnants were, so speak, placed outside of time and thereby isolated from their surroundings. This approach to heritage can be found in international heritage treaties such as the *Charter of Venice* (1964), the *European Charter of the Architectural Heritage* (1975), and the selection criteria for the World Heritage List. The pursuit of an objectifying, quantitative approach to heritage by governments is not difficult to understand: it simplifies their task. By unambiguously defining what should be protected and what should not, long discussions about conflicting histories are avoided.[9]

In the 1990's, the situation started to change. The meaning of heritage broadened; the term began to refer not only to integral landscapes and structures, but also to personal stories and memories. From that time on, heritage not only denoted the value of a physical object as estimated by experts; in what can be seen as the result of a gradual process of democratisation, it could also describe an integrated environment as uniquely experienced by an individual. This conceptual expansion would lead to new ways of considering space, observable in the reuse of historic buildings and landscapes. The Netherlands was among the first countries to transform these ideas into a national spatial policy.[10] This policy, described in the so-called Belvedere Memorandum (1999) under the paradoxical motto 'preservation through development', states that the past should be used as much as possible as a source of inspiration by architects, urban planners, and landscape designers, among others.[11]

"If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change", to quote Tancredi, a pivotal character in the 1958 literary classic *Il Gattopardo* (The Leopard) by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa. In my view, it is impossible to foster landscape preservation using only the techniques of preservation and conservation, because the essence of landscape is change. The new strategy of 'preservation through development' has taken fully into account the inevitable transformation of heritage and incorporated it into the dynamics of spatial change. For the first time, we have adopted a national approach regarding reuse and redevelopment, in which, for example, factories or former industrial landscapes that have fallen into disuse are fitted into plans for spatial development. A gradual transformation has taken place from the aforementioned 'culture of loss', in which limiting damage was the primary goal, towards a 'culture of gain' that creates designs for the future from a historically aware and self-conscious perspective. Heritage care is no longer the exclusive domain of a small group of experts. Heritage consultant Ned Kaufman describes this change as follows: "while preservationists debate problems of authentic-

The Big Pit in
Bleanavon, Wales
(Felix van Veldhoven,
2011).

ity, integrity, architectural quality, stylistic purity, and signifi-
cance, citizens seem to worry more about the loss of character,
pleasure, or usefulness in the place they inhabit and love, of
the ability to recall the past in them, of being forced to leave
them. Many worry about the loss of cultural identity associated
with them."[12]

The policy set forth in the Belvedere Memorandum displays
an optimistic outlook in its approach to heritage, which is no
longer regarded as a constraint on spatial transformations but
viewed instead as a driving force and source of inspiration for
development. Successful large-scale, international redevelop-
ment projects have inspired policy makers, researchers and
designers, as well as the public, to take a greater interest in, for
example, the industrial past. An informative example is provid-
ed by the South Wales mining town of Blaenavon. From a run-
down, post-industrial mining landscape, it was transformed
into an integrally preserved heritage site, and was declared a
World Heritage site by UNESCO in 2000. Local residents and
former miners were involved in the development of the plans,
and nowadays they tell visitors stories about their life in a
mining community.[13]

Rhondda Heritage Park in Trehafod, Wales (Felix van Veldhoven, 2011).

History of the future

During the decade dominated by the policy outlined in the Belvedere Memorandum (1999–2009), views about heritage changed considerably, and the idea of heritage as a contemporary creation gained momentum. According to this view, heritage can be said to truly exist only if it is regarded as such by the people who use it or live within it. The idea that heritage value lies in the intrinsic qualities of an object, that the value of a building can be defined by its bricks, has thus been rejected. In the 21st century, it is memories and stories that are considered to determine the character of a place or building. Heritage has thereby become a construction of reality which is born out of the interaction between people. Heritage can never be a completed process: it is constantly evolving through the actions of man.[14] The application of the term 'landscape' has broadened greatly. It encompasses us all. We dwell within it, inhabit it, and travel across it – leading geographer David Lowenthal to see it as our most basic form of heritage.[15] Landscapes are now

A former miner functions as a tour guide underground, Rhondda Heritage Park, Trehafod, Wales (Wiecher Mandemaker, 2012).

viewed not just as ecosystems, but also as living spaces that become transformed through time and which link stories, identities, and memories. With this awareness came recognition of the need to involve local communities in heritage practices. Politicians, planners, and designers are more and more developing and deepening their dialogue with inhabitants and users, who thereby act as co-producers of spatial transformation. Beyond this, self-organisation by citizens has become more important as a way to compensate for diminishing government involvement. In addition to the participation of the inhabitants, who are 'invited' to voice their opinions about spatial developments, we observe a growing number of local initiatives, in which the (organised) citizens take action and force governments to reconsider their role.

Our present concept of heritage not only recognises that stories, people, or objects are being remembered, but also that some elements are consciously forgotten or ignored.[16] A painful, traumatic experience, or period in someone's life, can be both forgotten and remembered. The Dutch philoso-

pher Frank Ankersmit describes forgetting as a paradox: "by relegating the traumatic experience to the domain of the unconscious, we can, indeed, forget it. But precisely by storing it there, we will also retain it as an unconscious memory. As an unconscious memory it is a constant reminder that there is something that we should or wish to forget." To be able to terminate a traumatic period, to forget,[17] one first needs to remember. This is a notion that has been employed internationally in the domain of mining heritage and the difficult problems associated with the closing down of coal mines. In the heyday of the coal industry, many mining regions were blessed with economic growth, employment, and prosperity. With the transition to the post-industrial period, however, those same regions faced merciless unemployment, social deprivation, and poverty. Coping with such a loss, and leaving behind the traumatic mine closures, requires a period of "hyper-remembering".[18] It requires admitting into one's own identity that which has been forgotten. In German there is a word for coming to terms with (or mastering) the past: *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. In her book *The New Berlin, Memory, Politics, Place* (2005), geographer Karen Till speaks of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* in an analysis of the confrontation with and overcoming of the National Socialist past in Germany.[19] Landscape can be seen as the objectified result of the daily struggle about what is to be remembered and what forgotten. This functioning of landscape as a mnemonic device means that erasure, for example the complete destruction of a mining landscape, will more readily block a successful forgetting than promote it. It is because of this that some heritage experts plead for a culture of slowness: material remnants should not be quickly demolished or put into new use, but should be allowed a period of repose.[20]

Our approach to heritage should be in accord with the developing 'will' to preserve it. This can clearly be demonstrated with some specific examples, such as Blaenavon, or the design for the Munich Documentation and Education Centre for the

History of National Socialism described later on in this chapter. While previously the basic concern was the 'future of history', i.e. the traditional, protection-oriented approach, there has been a shift towards the notion of the 'history of the future'. This approach allows for co-production of policy and more self-organisation by citizens, and it works best when supplemented with the immaterial dimension of oral history, myths, legends, and historical events. In this way, spatial heritage gains in both physical-spatial and socio-cultural meaning.

The biographical approach

In daily heritage practices, one can discern a conflict between the earlier, preservation-minded approach and the new notion of the 'history of the future'. In the course of the frequent attempts made to overcome this dichotomy, a type of academic writing called cultural biography has gained considerable attention. The biographical approach connects landscape and heritage research with the practical aspects of spatial design. The point of departure here is the story, in other words, a communicative instrument. Landscape is viewed as the historically evolving, living environment of people and not simply as an ecosystem or functional space. Particular attention is paid to authorship – to the individuals who have left their mark on the landscape, even if their names have been forgotten, even if it concerns 'nobody in particular'. Shared stories can bind people together; anonymous processes cannot. Biography can act as a powerful instrument in linking memories, stories, and events to a particular place, thereby providing readier access to historical experiences. The Dutch use of biography can be characterized by the following five key features:[21]

- The approach is 'historicising', meaning that attention is focused on the continuously changing patterns in the use and meaning of landscape.
- It assumes that the development of landscape cannot be

explained in terms of the separate phases of a chronological history, but rather by a succession of transformations, some of them gradual and some sudden.
- It is a multi- and interdisciplinary approach, combining and interweaving different disciplinary sources and methods.
- Primary consideration is given to the living environment, the habitat of local communities, with a focus on long-term developments of their landscape use.
- Historical research is undertaken with an eye to current heritage issues.

The living environment calls out for an overlapping of design, historical research, policy initiatives, and social interaction. Within a given spatial concept, biography can act as a kind of cultural-historical cement. Its binding force lies in its capacity to overcome the fixed boundaries of the idea-world and the tangible landscape. Biography can provide the seedbed of new, totally unexpected ideas for development, since its flexible, multiform character makes it especially suited to deal with issues at the interface of spatial design and heritage.

Biography in practice

How does biography, as a spatial tool, work in practice?
    My first example is the project called Boerenverstand (Horse Sense, 2009), a Dutch expression that refers to the inventiveness of farmers. Designers Krijn Christiaansen and Cathelijne Montens[22] were asked to produce a design informed by research that they would, in the first stage, conduct on the wooden field gates to be found in the region around the river Vecht: a peat meadow area where such gates used to be characteristic elements of the landscape in the central part of the Netherlands. During the past decades the gates have increasingly been replaced by standardised, generic metal ones, thereby impoverishing the character of the landscape.
    The designer duo employed a biographical approach,

which gave them elbow-room to merge creative design with spatial interventions and personal interpretation. How did they manage to achieve this? Christiaansen and Montens immersed themselves in the history of the Vecht region and asked local farmers to tell them their own stories about and memories of field gates on their land. They also collected wood from different farms in the area and carefully photographed and documented the planks. In the end, they had assembled a large number of personal anecdotes, stories, and memories about the farmers' way of living. The 'biographies' of gates and planks became visible, and the most 'story-rich' wooden remains were reused in building a series of new gates, constructed in the old manner. As a result, thanks to the biographical approach, the region's specific landscape was treated in a way that acknowledged the daily work of the farmers.

A second example of this approach can be found in a design that was submitted as an entry in an international competition for a historical documentation center in Munich.[23] The context was emotionally charged, since the task was the design of a place that would embed the memories of the Nazi era topographically in the city, in the form of a documentation centre for the history of National Socialism, to be built on the site of the former Nazi party headquarters. Because of the unusually heavy burden of history carried by this example, it clearly shows the powerful convergence of spatial design, history, and heritage that can result from the biographical approach. The description of the competition ran to as many as 164 pages, the entry only 8. The location where the building was to be erected was marked by a somewhat unedifying past. In the nineteenth century, King Ludwig I of Bavaria (r. 1825–1848) ordered his court architect Leo von Klenze to design an urban extension for the city of Munich, of which the area around the Königsplatz would be the highlight. Museums in the neo-classical style flank the monumental square, which represents the ideal of a German Athens. After 1933, Hitler chose Munich as the administrative centre of his National Socialist Party and declared the Bavarian city *Kunststadt des Deutschen Reiches*.

Former location of the *Braunes Haus* that remained fallow until 2011 (Chris Helmkamp, 2011).

Architect Paul Troost redesigned the Königsplatz with his neo-classical architecture, in keeping with the Nazi's employment of classical architecture as their architectural style of choice. A nineteenth-century villa, east of the Köningsplatz, was designated as the seat of the NSDAP. When the Allies bombed the area in 1943, they completely destroyed the villa, which had been called *Braunes Haus*. Those of Troost's buildings which survived the bombs and fires were demolished in 1946 on order of the Allied troops, leaving only the plinths as elevations above the ground level. The plinths were planted with greenery and left to deteriorate, symbolising the collective will to forget the Nazi period.

Competition entry for the Munich Documentation and Education Centre for the History of National Socialism, Germany, not executed (courtesy of Abbink De Haas Architects).

The empty surface where the *Braunes Haus* once stood, and where the new documentation centre is to rise, is complex and burdened by history. In recognition of this, one of the entrants of the competition put together a multidisciplinary team that took the stratified city as a starting point. The team included two architects, a landscape architect and two historians. Designer and historian worked together, approaching the idea of place in different ways but sharing a common sensitivity to space, image, and texture.[24] The specific, biographical method emerges from the interdisciplinary approach and the recognition of the National Socialist taint as being only one of the many layers involved. The surroundings of the *Braunes Haus* cannot simply be reduced to just a 'place of the perpetrator', but must also be seen as living space of the people of Munich. This understanding of the layered past, of evolving memory, was translated into design in the form of a building from which a slice appears to have been cut out, suggesting a longitudinal section, so that visitors and passers-by would sense the 'layeredness', the continuously changing meaning and use of the place – in short, its evolving heritage. The collaboration of designers and historians resulted in a biography of the area around the Braunes Haus, and its translation into a captivating spatial design.

The democratisation of heritage

It has not become any easier for the heritage sector to secure a fixed position for itself within the spatial planning system. Yet, it is precisely such a position, as an established link within the chain of spatial plan preparation, decision, and adoption, which can clear the way for the inconceivable, for unexpected quality, and for meaning. Its relevance lies not only in the improvements it can make to spatial quality, but also in its contribution to better social interaction.[25]

    With the broadening of the concept of heritage and the acknowledgement that heritage is never 'completed', increasing attention is being paid to the stratification or 'layeredness' of places, in other words, to the continuously changing way people identify with places and the values they thereby ascribe to heritage. It is this 'layeredness' and its recognition in spatial plans that lead to the production of cultural value. As a result of this recognition, the traditional hierarchy of experts and non-experts has faded away: attractive and strong plans now emerge pre-eminently from the stories and memories of local inhabitants in combination with the knowledge of experts. Successful contemporary heritage practices can no longer be characterised solely as public or private; they are plural, containing a mix of several approaches. Inhabitants and users now have a bigger role in spatial questions, which have become smaller in scale, are more specific, and of shorter duration. The 'overall approach', used in projects commissioned by a single client or authority, no longer fits our current idea of heritage. Again, the early twentieth century Patrick Geddes was ahead of us: "[T]he planner who is anything of a geographer and anthropologist …. sees the peoples of different climates and environments as adapted through past ages to these. Thus he comes to their ways, their habits, their customs, their institutions, their laws, their morals, their manners, with the ordinary naturalistic attitude of observant and interpretive interest, and not that of superiority."[26]

    The challenge that lies before us is how to achieve a much

stronger integration of design and historical research. To what extent and in what manner does an innovative design add to the dynamic historical process? More than ever before, there is a need for an approach that transcends the premises and perspectives of the different heritage disciplines and is conducive to a search for common ground. If this could be created, it could lead to a permanent union of cultural preservation and renewal, thereby increasing the ability of cultural-historical arguments to resist the pressures exerted by commerce and politics. Although it would seem that the distinction between original and copy is steadily fading away, there will always be a material origin and a primordial story.[27] To end with the words of Patrick Geddes: "The existing roads and lanes are the past product of practical life, its movement and experience; and observation and common sense alike show them to be in the right directions, and therefore needing only improvements."[28]