Sustainable Application in Cultural Heritage Preservation: The Case of Mashhad El-Shams in Old Hilla

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Abstract:

Effective administrative organization and rational arrangement of the role and responsibility of groups associated with conservation and optimal use of heritage in a way that financially encourages stakeholders to support it led to the beneficial use of sustainable tools and methods to achieve an ideal degree of long-term preservation. Expanding heritage and the diversity of its values and parties involved in conservation decisions have led to further complexity. Iraq, after 2003 in particular, is in a state of marginalization and deterioration of its cultural heritage and distinct buildings, where political, financial and administrative corruption plays a major role in it. The paper explores the need to regulate the role of conservation bodies to develop a sustainable conservation policy, taking into account distorted socio-cultural aspects and deteriorating political and economic situation of post-war Iraq. Suggesting a dynamic and adaptive regulatory framework encompassing all concerned groups is capable of accommodating the maintenance phases in an organized and orderly manner that achieves a degree of sustainable development. Search in the re-development of Mashhad El Shams in Old Hilla provides a clear image of how conservation actors play a key role in conducting and achieving a sustainable maintenance or deteriorating heritage status.

Keywords: Intangible heritage; everyday practices; preservation policy; restoration; sustainable conservation

1. Introduction

Cultural heritage of post-war Iraq has witnessed a state of deterioration, including a huge number of traditional houses, *khanat*, markets and multi-activity buildings that represented, for centuries, the national wealth and urban façades of Iraq and contributed to shaping the cultural background we are proud of. This situation covers as well many sacred shrines that have been preserved and developed based on irrational ways, criteria and dimensions that affect their architecture and surrounding tissue. Wars, economic decline, political instability, financial and administrative corruption are some of the sources of the country's decline. This included the holy aspect of the Iraqi personality with all its religious and moral principles, which are supposed to control society, manage its affairs and organize its values, represented by a large proportion of religious representatives, who played a significant role in this deterioration. Moreover, specialized people in architecture and cultural heritage can't achieve their opinions when these views are off people representing the religious authority in terms of preserving heritage buildings or through more systematic procedures in maintenance operations. Corrupt governments since 2003 have contributed to the destruction of cultural heritage by manipulating the ownership of a large number of heritage buildings and transforming their nature to commercial purposes. Lack of clear planning policies controlling the country's facilities and institutions led to a total collapse in government departments. The absence of strict laws against any subversive actions led as a result to the deterioration of their structural condition with the apparent absence of any preservation policy. These aspects influenced individual's principles to the extent of losing the sense of belonging to this country (Al-Thahab, 2016, p. 232).

The paper examines the organisation of responsibilities of various sectors involved in conservation processes to achieve systematic and thus sustainable actions in relation to the preservation of cultural heritage. It investigates the development project of Mashhad el Shams in Old Hilla introducing negative/positive characteristics revealed by this case study and their role in preserving or deteriorating cultural heritage. The role of socio-cultural values of the Iraqi personality on the one hand, and religion and its representatives as a political agent on the other, will demonstrate the continuity or degradation of cultural heritage, given that these two criteria occupy the most influential part of society.

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Research tackles the concept of heritage through international conventions, UNESCO laws and legislations, heritage significance and community responsibility towards it, its relation to the urban environment and what can be done to preserve it as part of the national character. Conducting personal and field observation, open-ended interviews with thirty different persons during the period 2017-2019, community socio-cultural surveys, case study investigation and direct participation in its early redevelopment phases were undertaken to understand the role and effectiveness of the procedural implementation of conservation policy in approaching a sustainable preservation. They represent the many tools used in achieving research aims and objectives in the extent of the impact of political-religious and socio-cultural factors in heritage preservation. Questions asked are: "How do committee members and religious representatives, in particular, affect conservation processes of cultural heritage?" How can you describe decision-makers in the redevelopment processes of Mashhad el Shams?" and "Have people's opinions been taken in development processes?" Interviews were conducted in Mashhad el Shams, shared public spaces and workplaces.

2. Definition of Heritage

Heritage is a multifaceted concept that is difficult to accurately determine as it relates largely to society's values and interpretations characterized by its valuable provisions and thus benefit more from overarching policies than fixed rules of protection and change (Jokilehto, 1999, pp. 17-19). Heritage's interpretations are highly defined by societal values and demands, as standards of historical and architectural significance are, according to Datel and Dingemans (1988), shifting constantly. The difficulty of defining heritage lies in changing cultural meanings and the reality of their production and reproduction over the course of time (Snyder, 2008, p. 43). To conserve heritage assets is to reflect and embody society's cultural principles, based on peoples' relations to their history (Heathcott, 2006, p. 75). Heritage is a source of knowledge, a political resource and an economic or productive function of consumption. This plethora of roles, forms and uses makes heritage such a ubiquitous but simultaneously ambiguous form of knowledge in the city (Graham, 2002). The theme is managing and keeping the process, as representing a process of engagement and an act of communication and making meaning in and for the present (Smith, 2006, p. 3). Therefore, architectural heritage represents an honest expression of society's history, an embodiment of cultural values that reflect the civilizations of peoples with their religious, social, cultural and political characteristics, and the social and economic environment experienced by generations.

Attention to heritage is the continuity of civilization between the past, present and future as civilization grows and develops over time (AIUD, 1998). To possess some basic understanding of what has come before us is to conceive the significance of the past as a type of knowledge, to gain historical awareness, to understand our own culture, to situate the present, to find out 'what really happened,' and to help inform present decisions (Tsang, 2012, p. 21). This concept confirms our ancestors' words (*who left his ancient lost his future*) in describing heritage, social rituals, inherited traditions and everyday life routine. Human resources, including human existence and coexistence with one another and the surrounding environment, constitute an important part of the heritage that needs protection and continuity (AIUD, 1998). Over the past few decades, architectural and urban heritage preservation has gradually started to shift from being primarily the goal of protecting a specific historical building to a process of comprehensive recognition and appreciation of the built environment (Al-Allaf, 2014). Heritage, from this perspective, covers tangible and intangible aspects, represented by social values, cultural principles, traditions and rites of individuals, and more in preserving the property of a particular person who has an influential role in history and other fields. The October 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Heritage moves closer towards formally identifying what is specific about heritage by defining intangible heritage as, 'The practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage' (UNESCO, 1972).

Mutual people-environment relations, as achieved in traditional contexts, have been ceased with the successive changes in the nature of Iraqi society. This concern is mainly due to the removal of many traditional buildings and urban fabric over the past decades due to wars, urban renewal, implementing infrastructure projects, street construction and other intervention mechanisms. Changes revealed a major crack in social and cultural principles, as important criteria that enabled people to introduce themselves and express their personality (Cetin, 2010, pp. 30-33). Transmitting intangible cultural heritage is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity' (UNESCO, 2003). Therefore, the conservation process requires a set of criteria that take into account community participation in decision-making, the need for an intersection process between heritage, environment and society, and attention to sustainability principles for human and resource protection (Al-Allaf, 2014).

Preserving heritage and prolonging its life should take a great deal of importance that necessitates dealing with it through scientific and systematic methods to ensure safety and security (Tsang, 2012, p. 8).

3. Socio-Cultural Aspects and the Personality of the Place

Culture ranges from high implicit and abstract level to low explicit and concrete level, and reflects norms, ideologies and values. It can be perceived at various levels, and is reflected in every one of us (Malda, 2009, pp. 9-12). Donald L. Johnson (1977) asserts that the built environment is constructed by the culture of the population, and is the outcome of thousands of acts and practices conducted in (Soud, Mat, & Ali, 2010). It is a complicated approach where its role in performing and preserving a sustainable built environment cannot be ignored or marginalised. Memory, collective memory and culture are integrated in a way that enables them to take advantage of prior knowledge in the formation of new developments. These factors are important in producing an information base for grasping the cultural and social values of the built environment, which thus can be understood according a system of social and cultural settings including; human basic needs, family, the position of women, privacy and social intercourse (Rapoport, 1969, p. 61). Culture creates some kind of continuity of knowledge, values, activity systems and meanings in time and place maintaining hence the intellectual heritage of traditional built forms (Altman & Chemers, 1994, p. 3). Sinem Kultur (2012, pp. 262-267) states that culture is expressed dynamic illustrated by the society and the individual, conceived with every member, shared with groups and transferred from one generation to another. It performs the base that could be taken as a reference in drawing the morphology of the whole urban fabric (Rapoport, 1986). Irvin Altman (1994) emphasises the role of the environment as a powerful determinant of customs, lifestyles and behaviours in different cultures, revealing thus culture-environment relationship in which environmental phenomena are powerful in cultural development.

Changing values and individuals' vision and distorted perception of the essence of ethical and religious principles have been largely revealed after 2003, due to the severe impact of past decades, including the three wars the community has faced and the economic blockade imposed on Iraq since the beginning of the nineties. These reasons have led to a significant change in the nature of Iraqi society to the extent that money has become the main catalyst of social relations. What is striking is that people are talking dramatically about social aspects, cultural values, sublime religious principles, but, in reality, practise them in an unacceptable manner, stressing Ali Alwardi's viewpoint (Al-Wardi, 2009, pp. 47-63) regarding the duality nature of the Iraqi personality. Through an accurate observation of peoples' daily practices, features such as robbery, bribery, the acquisition or rape of other's rights, the lack of social and cultural affiliation as well as the religious partisanship for a specific category at the expense of another are part of the attributes characterizing most society sectors. Freed religious practice under Article 41 of the Iraqi Constitution has been strengthened to the extent that it has become the main criterion for peoples' social life. Thus, individuals' life has become hostage to religious rituals, elegies and processions rather than latent social aspects, cultural values, traditions and religious principles and teachings that over the centuries managed to organize individuals within an integrated society (Al-Qassab, 2014, p. 9). Meanwhile, Iraqi society is complex, not only because of its social structure, but the effects of its religious and ethnic composition (Al-Jamil, 2007, p. 1).

Heritage provides a means of tracing cultures and engaging with their processes of development (Tsang, 2012, p. 10). The past, according to Nietzsche (Nietzsche, 1997, p. 77), had to be used for the purposes of life, and that it can be remembered, interpreted and taught (De Baets, 2009, pp. 26-27). Knowledge of the past can be represented, far from being limited to memories and narratives, in an infinite number of objects defined by the term cultural heritage (Tsang, 2012, p. 30). This can be clearly observed in traditional architectural forms and details, such as *Shanasheel, Iwans, Tarmas* and others, that represent a true expression of previous socio-cultural values, traditions and rituals.

4. Religious Representation, Heritage Management and Conservation Policy

Islam represents an integral part of the cognitive, social and cultural system that setting great emphasis on the collective life (Rabbat, 2012). It has proved, through its distinctive political, social and cultural system and the continuity of its principles, elements and rituals, a high degree of durability and endurance (El-Gowhary, 2005, p. 19). As an incubator of Islamic law, *Shari'a* embodies an important tool in safeguarding Islamic principles and thus ensuring cultural and religious unity, *'Unite de doctrine'*, as crucial to achieving Islamic cultural cohesion in a rapidly changing world. The main sources of these laws are the "Quran" (holy book of Islam) and sayings of the Prophet (Ahadith) and the prophetic strain of *Ahlulbait*[PBUT]. In the absence of a direct reference, comes the role of religious leaders (Ulama'a), who hold the degree of diligence (*Ijtihad*), in giving the right decision for all issues depending on former sources. They are responsible for building an Islamic constitution with all its laws and applications through their knowledge of Qur'anic laws and inherent societal principles. Islamic laws (*Shari'a*) represent religious and ideological recipes originated from society's social and cultural values as well as live experiences, showing a complete system of human life, behaviour and morality that is very ritualistic (Bianca, 2000, pp. 26-27).

The main concern is to promote and strengthen the perfect form of human behaviour individually and collectively, and to avoid economic and social conflicts. They are used as essential tools in clarifying, justifying and promoting unity between religious and secular issues. Socio-cultural aspects are the result of many intellectual rules and customs where religious principles play a major role in organising and controlling them (Malda, 2009, p. 12). These factors are for centuries embodied in a specific spatial arrangement, spontaneous urban morphology and distinct architectural details that formed the entire built environment, documented the history and civilization of preceded societies thus became effective criteria in shaping the identity of the entire society. In this context, religious and cultural order affects human habits, customs and corresponding social values (Diamantides, 2011, pp. 51-57). This system strengthens the role of *Ulama'a* as impressive authorities in rolling the everyday life of the community and simplifying its various affairs. They have achieved and maintained a self-regulating internal balance through a set of implicit rules and conventions known and accepted by everyone. The point is that in Iraqi culture the *Ulama'a* occupies a position that must be obeyed unconditionally or just so that humans can cope with life's uncertainties and their mortality (Schroeder, 2008, p. 42).

Religion occupies a central place in Iraqi society as a legitimate, moral and cognitive standard, and psychological and spiritual stability. But the concept of religion is very influenced by society values and the psyche of the individual with relative independence from the concept of ideological and intellectual religion. Religion concept is an individual rather than a social, instinctive - not spiritual, utilitarian - not human, otherworldly - not worldly, formal - not essential and partial - not holistic (Mahal, 2014). Iraqi people in turn tend to obey clerics despite the knowledge that many follow certain political blocs especially after 2003. In essence, clerics are part of Iraqi society, which, in terms of daily transactions, does not find itself a religious society, despite the large number of its members committed to religious traditions that are consistent with other community customs (Ibrahim, 2016). Clerics, according to Ali Al Wardi, live in a double personality, where they speak Aristotle's logic in seeking prestige, whatever its form, while society members live in a bitter reality. He stressed that 'every city, where there are many clergymen, has a high degree of personal duplicity, because the human being in this society is religiously on the one hand and secularly on the other' (Al-Wardi, 2009). As a result, religion has become an invitation to carry a heavy burden on individuals rather than as a means of enhancing one's confidence and optimism. In such a society, the individual has two faces, one cleric in preaching and another from the general public with all his/her contradictions and irrational desires (Al-Wardi, 2009).

The result, reached by the study of the nature of Iraqi society according to scholarly studies of sociologists and interviews with many historians, lecturers and specialists in Iraqi society as well as an actual observation and analysis of Iraqi's social, intellectual and behavioural actions, affirmed that religion, as ideologies, practices and rituals, is not always the main factor that determines community organisation as far as determined by the force of law and its strict applications. The first can largely be '**abused**' by Iraqis, even by religious representatives for their interests and the extent to which they benefit from it, in addition to the current pace of the central government or the general political atmosphere of the country (Al-Thahab, 2016, p. 266). In preserving the holy sites in many parts of the country, these authorities play a negative role by relying heavily on unqualified persons lacking scientific expertise, or through individuality in decision-making with no clear scientific reference, as evidenced by the redevelopment of Mashhad El Shams in Old Hilla.

5. Historical and Architectural Development of Mashhad El Shams

The scene, Return of the Sun, Mashhad or Radd el Shams are multiple labels of one place in the city of Hilla combining paganism and unification, and still retains the flavour of religion, history and holiness. Narrators differed in some details about this place, but never questioned its sanctity. Its story, as quoted by historical sources, is that Imam Ali bin Abi Talib [PBUH], and upon his return from the Battle of Safin in 37 AH, passed through the city of Babylon where his son Imran bin Ali [PBUT] was buried in a location not far from the historical city of Babylon, which, as narrated, is a muddled land in which the prayer of a guardian or (Weli) is not accepted. Therefore, the Imam walked until he reached this place, and the sun was about to descend, and he did not pray yet. He called on God to fulfil His hope and return the sun to heaven's liver to pray. After Imam's prayer, the sun went towards sunset again, and in honour of this anniversary, this scene was built (Nahi, 2013). According to historical sources, including Sheikh Mufid, who died in 413 AH, when Imam Ali [AS] wanted to cross the Euphrates, many of his companions were preoccupied crossing their livestock, and thus he prayed with a group of them. Others, who did not eventually reach across the river until sunset, began talking about it and grumbled. When Imam Ali [PBUH] heard their words, he asked God to return the sun to gather all his companions for the *Asr* prayer, and had what he asked about (Nahi, 2013) (Fig. 1).

Figure 1 (Left) The site plan of Mashhad el Shams in Old Hilla, (Right) an image of Mashhad el Shams ziggurat

This place, according to Hadi S. H. Kamal al-Din (Kamal al-Din, 1962, p. 68), was sanctified before and after Islam, as Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar set up this place in honour of the Sun God (Shamsh), and to practice religious rites. There are also those who have spoken of historical implications, at the base of this place, undoubtedly back to the time of Boukhtsnar (father of Nebuchadnezzar). Al-Hassani quoted the book 'Signs to identify Visits' by Abi Al-Hasan A. Al-Harawi, who died in Aleppo in 611 AH, while talking about the sun's scene that 'it was said that the sun was returned to the Prophet Ezekiel or to the Prophet Joshua bin Nun or to Ali Ibn Abi Talib and God knows.' There is also information on people's tongues and some of what has been circulated as a fact, including that Jesus' Apostles were buried in this place or that the Prophet Moses landed and prayed in this place too (Al-Ibrahimi, 2012).

The ziggurat is late in construction and has nothing to do with the place, but this distinguished architectural landmark dates back about 950 years. It was built in the Seljuk style with a magnificent 25-meter-tall ziggurat, similar to that of the Messenger of Allah, *Thi el kifl*, in Kifl, on the road leading to the city of Najaf, or the ziggurat of the shrine of Mrs. Zubaydah on the Karkh side of Baghdad. When entering the scene, there is a large hall recently roofed where there was once a circular garden where Imam Ali [PBUH] prayed. This hall is surrounded by six *Iwans*, one of which leads from the left side to the door leading to the main hall measuring 49 m², narrowing as rising with the ziggurat. Here you can see the distinctive architecture, where the ziggurat was built of a special brick, with the niche where the Imam prayed, and decorated with windows for lighting and ventilation. To the left, in a somewhat opposite place to the main door, there was a well that the novels say was drilled by the imam for ablution. This well is similar to the one in the tomb of Imran bin Ali [PBUT], in the ruins of Babylon, or the one located at the Buratha mosque in Baghdad, which was created by Imam Ali [PBUH] and washed with his companions to pray in a well-known story as one of the virtues of Imam Ali [PBUH]. However, this did not leave any traces of its features, as was sealed during the era of the former regime, and the ruins of the stone blocks, which were restored by the ziggurat when part of it collapsed in 1972 as a result of time consequences, were laid down. It was restored at the time, but reconstruction failed to heal the great rift evident in one of ziggurat's walls from inside, in addition to renewal touches visible on the ground and the walls, which were covered with ceramics after henna colouring, as evidence of women's vows (Nahi, 2013) (Fig. 2).

Figure 2 Images of the ziggurat showing the negative impact of new treatments, historically and architecturally

The engineer, poet and calligrapher Shawqi Jaber faced the most difficult task in dealing with the attempts to demolish the ziggurat and the shrine during the previous regime on the pretext that it was about to collapse and endanger citizens' lives. He convinced the officials at the time that this place was a Seljuk Turkey, not a Persian, as was rumoured about it, which had a great influence not only to preserve but to restore it. The Department of revival and modernization of cultural heritage provided a project for the maintenance and construction of this landmark, including halls, parks and pavilions as well as the outer fence. This project was submitted to the Council of Ministers and approved, but the routine prevented the subject from being followed up and the opportunity to return this place to the satisfaction of its holy spirit was lost.

This place, according to the Secretary-General of Mashhad el Shams, is a sacred place visited by people from all over the world, especially from India, Pakistan and Iran, to be close to God, and has a special visit on the last Wednesday of Safar, which marks the end of grief over the martyrdom of Imam Hussein [PBUH], his brother Abbas [PBUH] and companions. The visit is part of inherited tradition, with thousands of women coming to replace their black clothes, worn during the forbidden months, with other coloured clothes, and to glorify the owner (Imam Ali [PBUH]) and ask for vows (Fig. 3). This day is not without women who distribute sweets and food to the rest of visitors to be a proof of their aspirations. These vows may go beyond material gifts, such as watches, fans and carpets, to be part of the furniture. It also witnesses the arrival of more visitors at *Eid al-Ghadeer*, especially for those who cannot join the regiments celebrating *al-Ghadeer* in Najaf province.

Figure 3 Showing the visit of the last Wednesday of the month of Safar and the number of visitors from all Islamic countries

6. Reconstructing Conservation Roles

Mashhad el Shams has been subjected to physical and architectural deterioration in which several parties participated under various pretexts according to their nature and the political, intellectual and religious position. On the other hand, there is no problem in financing the renovation of the place, which relies heavily on the contributions of individuals inside and outside Iraq due to the religious and ideological importance of the place that is associated with the status of Imam Ali [PBUH]. Financial and administrative corruption, intellectual and personal pluralism, as well as the distorted ideology of the individual prevented the restoration of the place except for some individual attempts by some wealthy families lacking scientific or architectural basis and maintenance tools. These attempts were limited to some minor treatments that did not relate to the cultural and historical reality of the place, such as using ceramics and dyes, or adding some spaces that led to the gradual loss of its architectural and historical values.

Recently, the place received a new administrative authority represented by the religious representative, who relied on a specific committee of three persons, who had many individual contributions to preserve the place, for initiating in its redevelopment. The latter committee incorporates an accountant, a civil engineer with high individuality, and an electrician. Based on the mandate given to this committee, it has embarked on the scene development project and has played a major role in funds' inventory for its maintenance. However, its decisions in terms of implementation were individual, rapid with no precise architectural knowledge or background on the architectural importance of the place and conservation methods.

This committee initially tried to rely on an architect specializing in Islamic architecture, but it is often unique in its rapid decisions through the demolition of parts or building others, without taking into account the architect's vision of these changes.

In addition, the architect pointed to the intervention of the religious representative in architectural details and design proposals, despite the lack of any scientific background in this area. Moreover, extensive investigations and interviews with people with close knowledge of Iraqi families and tribes, including Hadi Al-Hattab, Hadi Al-Kadhimi and others, have shown that it is indisputable that the religious representative, Rasoul al-Musawi as he claims, did not belong to the Prophet's dynasty, despite repeated allegations of belonging to Al-Hattab masters. As a cleric, he knows with certainty that 'God cursed those entering or leaving this dynasty', and therefore should not be given this status. Lying, especially in such critical matters related to the sacred aspects of individuals, refers to secular intentions and personal desires that are not commensurate with the man of religion and thus does not grant him the right to represent society or elevate that status. Moreover, this characteristic generates the fear of anyone with knowledge of ethnicity, and thus produces a smug personality. These immoral aspects stand against the main goal of heritage preservation, which has been presented as a moral imperative (De la Torre, 2013, p. 155).

Previous circumstances forced the architect, after submitting a design proposal, leaving the work, especially when observing the deterioration of the place significantly by opening doors or closing others, and expansions have no historical or intellectual justifications. Moreover, the researcher pointed to the insistence of the religious representative on his point of view in many architectural treatments, and full compliance of committee members with all his decisions. Architect believes that the place will gradually lose its historical and urban impact, or the possibility of its inclusion in the World Heritage List, especially with the large fracture in its conical dome, which needs to act quickly in calling a specialized company to deal with. The committee then resorted to an unqualified architectural office to develop a design that would reflect and justify the committee's views and wishes within a legal framework. The result was a proposal with no real architectural considerations and standards, according to 78% of people interviewed, but ill-conceived manipulation and additions that had no relevance to the original construction. It notes the use of multiple architectural objects that clash with each other and all share the abandonment of the formal and historical significance of the basic ziggurat (Fig. 4).

Figure 4 Images of the development project expected to be done in Mashhad el Shams in Old Hilla (Source: Official site of Mashhad el Shams media)

Following are some of architects' responses when design's images revealed in social media:

"Any modernization, taking place, must be taken into consideration to preserve its historical elements and old style. This is our intention and expectations for development in such a situation, where Mashhad el Shams represents an important historical and Islamic place that should be given a lot of attention," (Jubawi, 2019).

"This place deserves a better design than the one presented for the greatness of the place for Muslims, as being considered sacred," (Balasim, 2019).

"The new project, no matter who stands behind it, has abolished the old building and architectural and historical influence of its Seljuk ziggurat," (Hussein, 2019).

In this case, a religious representative and his committee play the role of political, administrative and executive bodies in addition to representing them as stakeholders, and thus losing embodying any scientific methodology in the process of cultural heritage management. Although individuals responsible for protecting sites have a strong influence on the values to be given priority, this cannot be achieved with the absence of the societal role and its impact in drawing attention to these serious mistakes, where, according to a thought of Mahatma Gandhi, 'a nation's heritage resides in the hearts and the soul of its people.' Although heritage professionals, if any, can be open to others' opinions, they are not neutral and still bear responsibility for favouring certain values (Al-Ibrahimi, 2012).

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

(1) Each society has its own characteristics, personality, socio-cultural aspects, traditions, norms and rituals that need to be preserved as the legacy of subsequent generations. Our moral duty is to preserve them without distortion or destruction, to leave them as rich heritage as our predecessors did. A sustainable application of heritage conservation can be achieved through an optimal and effective distribution of roles, responsibilities and functions among actors involved in heritage conservation. Successful coordination efforts require non-exclusivity in decisions, or exceeding the role and responsibility of other groups under the pretext of political influence or religious authority enjoyed by its members. Effective regulation, informed management, and real awareness of actors' capacities and potentials will lead to a sustainable preservation of cultural heritage (Fig. 5).
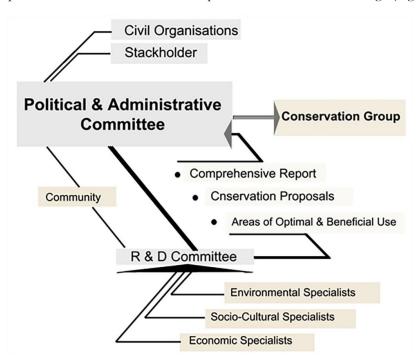

Figure 5 Demonstrate systematic conservation procedures, flow of information and distribution of roles and responsibilities among different groups

(2) Therefore, it is necessary to deal with all official and non-official levels that have the authority or involved in heritage operations through a dual action that includes the reliability, credibility, scientific and ethical background of those concerned on the one hand, and the conservation and protection of heritage stocks and utilization of this inventory as an effective tool in architectural development, urbanization and creativity on the other. This action encompasses positive external influences, which confer and reinforce heritage values, and negative ones that cause damages. This requires a core set of legal strategies, administrative, financial and advertising policies covering all segments of society. Failure to regulate these levels will harm heritage and destroy its historical, aesthetic, cultural, social and economic values.

(3)   Activating the societal role as an effective criterion and reference in achieving sustainable conservation through its continuous supervisory and monitoring role in assessing conservation efforts at all stages.

(4)   The complete separation between religion and its representatives from any maintenance due to their ideological and spiritual influence on society members and their full commitment to the views of the first without trying assessing their effects, negatively or positively, on the architectural landmark socially, culturally and historically.

(5)   Preserving such treatments depends not only on implementing agencies, such as architects and planners, but on systematic procedures and orderly distribution of roles and responsibilities among protection authorities.

(6)   Develop procedures to control the processes of upgrading so that the contemporary environment is compatible with the environment of the landmark in terms of its traditional architectural vocabulary. This can be achieved by defining a concrete scientific methodology and an environmental constitution to deal with, preserve and promote cultural heritage.

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