

In order to address the question of how the need for conserving the authenticity and the significance of a site can be balanced with other potentially conflicting values, I first would like to develop a theoretical framework of the meaning, goals and objectives of authenticity and then analyse its relationship to cultural significance and values of a site. In the second part, I describe the Ancient Maya site of El Pilar in Central America that I have selected as an example in order to analyse potentially conflicting values of a site and to show how the conservation of authenticity is minimally being put at risk. Not only the setting in the Americas and in the tropical rain forest environment, but also the detachment of any living cultures with the site have to be taken into account when putting the site in its cultural context. I want to prove that the site's authenticity and significance are being very well preserved and that the method used for conservation contributes to the well-being of not only the cultural but also the natural heritage, despite the number of threats the site is facing.

First, one has to think about why authenticity has become so important to us and what it means for a site to be authentic. McBride argues that while in the past "the meaning of 'authentic' was fairly straightforward, in the present this is not the case anymore" (Dessaix, quoted in McBryde 1997, 93). One is searching "for security in reassurances of authenticity" which itself has become uneasy (McBryde 1997, 93). The need for security is getting stronger, which has to do with the increasing individualism within society. Taylor finds that society is becoming more and more fragmented and its "members have increasing difficulty in identifying themselves as a community" (Taylor, quoted in Jokilehto 1995, 30).

The conservation of authenticity contributes essentially to the clarification and illumination of the collective memory of humanity (The Nara Document on Authenticity, Article 4). As Lowenthal puts it, "artefacts [...] substitute for a lived memory. And material objects - relics and records - become icons of cultural identity that *must* be authentic" (Lowenthal 1998, 188).

About the material object, Lowenthal states, "our culture is addicted to preserving substance" (Lowenthal 1998, 186). The substance of a place or an object - be it cultural remains or the natural landscape surrounding it - provides a tangible means not only for understanding and identifying it by present generations, but

(Morris, quoted in Jokilehto 1985, 7). Since we have become more and more aware of the obligation to preserve cultural heritage for future generations to learn about and to identify themselves with, our overall goal is to hand cultural heritage down as authentically as possible, as recommended in the Preamble of the Venice Charter:

"People are becoming more and more conscious of the unity of human values and regard ancient monuments as a common heritage. The common responsibility to safeguard them for future generations is recognised. It is our duty to hand them on in the full richness of their authenticity" (The Venice Charter, Preamble).

Lowenthal says, that authenticity is "usually attached to one of three conflicting goals". These goals he defines as the "faithfulness to original objects and material, to original contexts or to original aims". However, most importantly, he says that they are "ultimately unattainable". This means that due to the natural decay and alteration of original objects or material, "no work of art ever remains as it was created" (Lowenthal 1998, 186). The original contexts and aims cannot be fully understood or claimed to be authentic. Original contexts, aims and intentions of the creators of buildings, objects or pieces of art can only be assumed and interpreted by archaeologists and conservators. Conservation and restoration are based on interpretations which can never be authentic in the sense of reflecting the past as it was. Ucko finds out "that there is no such thing as the 'truth' about the past; only our subjective interpretation, now, about what happened in the past" (Pearson/Sullivan, quoted in Ucko 2000, 72). Therefore, authenticity to us is a relative value, rather than an absolute one (McBride 1997, 93).

The most authentic part of archaeological remains is its fabric which is naturally decaying and which we seek to preserve because it is 'original' and 'real' and different from its context and aim, which are negotiable. However, it has been argued that authenticity in terms of authentic fabric is negotiable (Cohen, quoted in Ucko 2000: 71), more so when it comes to practical approaches as in the reconstruction of archaeological sites according to the archaeological record. This again shows that the authenticity of fabric is relative. Consequently, even if the fabric's authenticity is of a relative value - and this is what we are uneasy about - it is still being conserved because its value is most essential. The Nara Document on Authenticity stresses that "authenticity [...] appears as the essential qualifying

Jokilehto points out that for a monument, group of buildings and sites, "a fundamental criterion for selection to the [World Cultural Heritage] List is authenticity" (Jokilehto 1985, 5). Authenticity is made a "fundamental criterion" for the preservation of a site. By conserving archaeological sites we "should aim at maintaining the authenticity and the potential unity of this whole" (Jokilehto 1985, 9).

As the Burra Charter suggests, "places of cultural significance must be conserved for present and future generations" (The Burra Charter, Preamble). To define the cultural significance of a site it is crucial to assess its values. In other words, by assigning values to a site we are providing significance to a place. That means that given the authentic value there are other values playing a role when defining the cultural significance of a site. These values are reflected in the statement of significance that is an essential part of the planning process as part of the management of archaeological sites.

The values of a site can be "aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual for past, present or future generations" (Australia ICOMOS Guidelines to the Burra Charter 1988, Article 1.2 on cultural significance). When assigning values to an archaeological site, we have to be aware of the fact that archaeology is only the means that reveal the scientific (informational or research) value as one of many "broader cultural values" of a site. In addition, there are also the "social value as a source of pride to the peoples of the region", the "value as an educational tool for them and for other visitors", the "value as historical markers" and the "important symbolic significance" a site can have (Sullivan 1997, 20). She also points out potentially conflicting values, such as the research value that can

"be in conflict with the site's social or public value. Opening a site to public visitation indiscriminately or carrying out 'restoration' for this purpose without archaeological investigation can certainly compromise the important scientific potential of the site. Conversely, archaeological investigation for 'scientific' reasons can expose fragile, beautiful, and historically important remains that are then subject to rapid deterioration" (Sullivan 1997, 20).

The site of El Pilar, not being on the UNESCO World Heritage List, is a major centre of the ancient Maya constructed from about 500 BC to 1000 AD. El Pilar, located in the Maya Lowlands, is the link between the well-known site of Tikal in Guatemala and important Mayan sites on Belizean territory. When archaeological

World
Monuments

taken over the site with its temples, plazas, palaces and residential areas for many centuries. Now, due to the site's management this picture has not changed much up until today. The visitor is presented with an overgrown site of plazas and mounds covered with collapse, humus and vegetation which, while being set back in time of the first explorers, challenges his imagination of how the site might have looked like.

When assigning values to the cultural heritage site of El Pilar, according to The Nara Conference on Authenticity, it is "not possible to base judgements of values and authenticity within fixed criteria". It must be "considered and judged within the cultural contexts to which they belong" (The Nara Conference on Authenticity, Article 11). That means, that no formula can be applied to judge the site's authentic value. It is necessary to look at El Pilar's cultural context. Considering the large spectrum of attributes belonging to the site, to learn about the cultural context is a very complex task where values and authenticity are dynamic entities (McBryde 1997, 96). This becomes even more evident considering the location of the site within the Americas. The Declaration of San Antonio gives us suggestions about what other aspects to bear in mind when assigning an authentic value to a site within an American cultural context. However, first it is necessary to find out the major values of the El Pilar site. A number of those that are based on the site having an authentic value, become evident in the project's Vision Statement:

"Vision Statement:

El Pilar Archaeological Reserve represents an innovative example of cultural resource conservation in relationship to the natural environment and to contemporary peoples. As the largest Maya archaeological site in the Belize River area, El Pilar is unique in its presentation of ancient daily life through household structures and forest gardens, located in the shadows of monumental Maya architecture. This shared resource serves as a symbol of co-operation between Belize and Guatemala, and as a model of collaboration between the reserve and local communities and between the cultural and natural resource researchers and conservators. Involvement in reserve planning and management links the communities to their cultural heritage, encourages their social and economic development. Documentation and evaluation of this holistic approach to resource conservation will allow El Pilar to serve as a model for other important sites of world heritage." (Website of the El Pilar Program)

According to the Vision Statement the major values of the El Pilar site are the

creators of the site, who made it a unique work of art, the site has a great *aesthetic value*. Very clear, the *scientific* (informational or research) *value* is assigned because of the large number of research themes the site is holding covering fields like archaeology, architecture, ecology and many more. Because of the economic and educational benefits for the local community and the importance of El Pilar for two nations, Guatemala and Belize, the site is also of high *social* (if not political and symbolic) *value*. Also, although the original inhabitants are not present anymore, today's community is linked to the site's past "through customs and traditions such as settlement patterns and land use practices, [...] manifesting a spiritual meaning [...] beyond the material evidence", altogether expressing a social value (The Declaration of San Antonio, Article 4).

Now, the assigned values can have a conflicting nature, which is a potential threat for the conservation of its authenticity and significance. As Lowenthal concludes, "restoration, tourism, and commodification make what is authentic ever more scarce" (Lowenthal 1995, 124). This is also true for the El Pilar site. I shall now look at tourism and restoration in particular that represent the conflicting scientific, public and aesthetic values and how these potentially threaten the authenticity of the site. In addition, the archaeological excavation as well as looting has an impact on authenticity that cannot be underestimated and will be looked at briefly.

El Pilar as an archaeological site is "no longer used by the descendants of [its] builders" and therefore has become a static site and monumental structure (The Declaration of San Antonio, Article 5). The material evidence of the site provides the most direct link to the past which makes it possible for the present inhabitants to "perceive and interpret the site's meaning and value" (The Declaration of San Antonio, Article 5). Therefore, the "physical fabric requires the highest level of conservation" in order to preserve authenticity that is "non-renewable" at archaeological sites (The Declaration of San Antonio, Article 5).

Tourism

The Declaration of San Antonio suggests, that "tourists constitute one of those groups that values the site and has an interest in its meaning and conservation"

acceptable [as] a substantial source of revenue for local and national economies" (The Declaration of San Antonio, Article 7), its annually increase threatens the important scientific but also aesthetic value of the El Pilar site.

However, at El Pilar the authenticity of fabric has not "been compromised through reconstructions" as it is very common in the Americas (The Declaration of San Antonio, Article 7). In contrast, tourism is being promoted without reducing authenticity "by involving new hands, new materials and new criteria, and by altering the appearance of the site". Three most important aspects help to prevent the site from getting damaged by tourists and at the same time keep the tourist 'happy'. First, since getting access to the site is not an easy business the flow of tourists can be channelled by local travel agents. Second, once the tourists are at the site, natural trails are giving the visitor a guidance and prevent him from climbing up and otherwise physically damage the ruins. Third, the tourist is provided with an excavated, conserved and partly reconstructed residential area (Tzunu'un) that represents a typical Maya middle class household and serves as a tangible example of 'visible ruins' within its natural setting. However, the fact that most of the ruins have been left uncovered causes discussions about the perception of 'the tourist' and his expectations when visiting the site. The conservation practice at El Pilar serves the need for conserving authenticity but does it meet the tourist's need for the 'exhibition of authenticity'? What it seems to come down to is the tourist's imagination at sites like El Pilar that want to challenge him. The tourist's expectation might be different from what he is presented with. However, as Ucko states, that

"archaeologist and archaeological heritage manager need to come to terms with the complexities of what 'tourists' do, and do not, perceive. They do not all share the same 'degree of interest' with which they 'seek authenticity', and they 'conceive 'authenticity' in different 'degrees of strictness'" (Cohen and Ucko, in Ucko 2000, 72).

At El Pilar, the tourist has to be prepared for a different approach when visiting the site by which he helps to balance the impact of tourism and the conservation of its authenticity and significance.

Restoration

At El Pilar, restoration is being done on a small scale where the resource is very

of perishable material are reconstructed. When undertaking restorations on a site, the "aim is to preserve and reveal the aesthetic and historic value of the monument and is based on respect for original material and authentic documents" (The Venice Charter, Article 9). Other structures, such as walls, stairs and floors are being consolidated using original material and only to the extent that they leave room for imagination. This is done to avoid over-restoration, that can "result in confusing what is original with what is new; it may in fact cause loss of faith in the authentic, and be counter-productive by discouraging visitors from using their imaginations" (Jokilehto 1985, 8). By consolidating, the visitor is not provided with a complete picture of the site's past appearance, which it is believed, would be subjective and based on insufficient information. *Consolidation ends where imagination begins!* - The visitor is challenged, which is not an uncontroversial issue the project has to face. However, as mentioned above, the imagination is stimulated by one excavated and partly reconstructed residential area that serves as an example of every-day Maya life and the rich and diverse flora and fauna of the reserve which was in the past an essential component of the Maya society. This is now being revived in order to not just re-create the past and the natural setting of the abandoned Maya centre but also to re-establish the natural value of a sustainable rainforest environment for the future. The aim is to conserve the site's "potential unity, which forms its existing reality and defines it materially" (Brandi, quoted by Jokilehto 1995, 27). "New elements", however, "must be harmonious with the character of the whole" (The Declaration of San Antonio, Article 5).

If one decided to restore the site in order to re-create the Maya centre as it was, two major problems would appear. First, one would have to make a choice about what time period is going to be represented. Since El Pilar was occupied for a long period of time and therefore altered, re-built and extended, who would be able to decide which period is most suitable to restore and how close would it be to the 'truth'? Wouldn't we force the visitors to believe what we think is right? Second, how authentic would the place be after having restored it? By restoring as we imagine it might have been, would we not create a completely different character of the site? This kind of restoration would only be "treatments designed for ancient monuments, tending to make them part of a spectacle for mass culture, rather than actually preserving their authenticity in its various dimensions"

restoration is always based on interpretation (The Declaration of San Antonio, Article 5).

Archaeological excavation and looting

Two more threats to the authenticity of the site's fabric are archaeological excavations and looting.

The scientific value can become conflicting with the authentic value by the "exposure of fragile, beautiful, and historically important remains that are then subject to rapid deterioration" (Sullivan 1997, 20). As opposed to other major Maya centres, of which the majority was investigated earlier in the 20th century and where rather undeveloped ideas about conservation were predominant, the El Pilar site is presenting the visitor with a different appearance. Here, only little has been excavated which contributes to the conservation of the site's authenticity and cultural significance, because

"authenticity can be destroyed when the context of the site is not properly documented, when layers are eliminated to reach deeper ones, when total excavation is undertaken and when the findings are not rigorously and broadly disseminated" (The Declaration of San Antonio, Article 5).

The exposure of fragile fabric - limestone, which deteriorates fast under the impact of sun and rain water - is avoided by not excavating, re-burying or consolidating archaeological features. The archaeological evidence is thoroughly recorded and leaves future generations to "analyse [it] with more sophisticated techniques than those in existence today" (The Declaration of San Antonio, Article 5). Similarly, the Venice Charter recommends that after an excavation "ruins must be maintained and measures necessary for the permanent conservation and protection of architectural features and of objects discovered must be taken" (The Venice Charter, Article 15). The implementation of both guidelines contributes to the long-term protection of ancient monuments for future generations.

Looting as being the oldest and most persistent threat to authenticity is done for purely economic reasons. A social value, in a way, that is conflicting with the scientific, the aesthetic as well as the authentic value of the site. To prevent looting at El Pilar there is a caretaker looking after the site, which, however, would not hold anyone back from successfully stealing antiquities. Therefore, this

Conclusions

The cultural significance of a site is defined by a set of values that can conflict with each other. Authenticity is an essential but relative value for the significance of an archaeological site. As shown above, we have to consider that the notion of authenticity has changed through time and that authenticity has different meanings in different contexts.

I have identified four major threats to the site of El Pilar that are tourism, restoration, archaeological excavation and looting. They represent the potentially conflicting scientific, aesthetic and social values that threaten the authentic value of the site. Thus, they also threaten the significance of El Pilar. For El Pilar as a static, monumental site the physical material and its conservation are crucial for preserving the site's authenticity. In order to balance the need for conservation of authenticity with potentially conflicting values, different approaches have to be found for the presentation of tourist attractions to maintain the sustainability of a site. Restoration work should contribute to the potential unity of a site. Archaeological excavations should be minimised and if carried out then well documented in a way that future generations can benefit from archaeological information of a site. Looting, since it is related to the economic situation of the people who loot, is difficult to prevent at archaeological sites.

In summary, it is most important to minimise the damage that is being done to the physical material and to conserve the fabric of the site, but also to provide access to groups that are assigning values and have an interest in the site to allow criteria for authenticity to change.

References

Jokilehto, J, 1985. *Authenticity in restoration principles and practices*. Bulletin, Association for Preservation Technology 17, 3 and 4, 5-11.

Jokilehto, J, 1995. *Authenticity: a General Framework for the Concept*. In: Larsen, K.E. (ed.); Nara Conference on Authenticity. Japan 1994. Proceedings. Published by UNESCO, ICCROM, ICOMOS. Tapir Publishers, Trondheim, 17-34.

Lowenthal, D, 1998. *Authenticity? The dogma of self-delusion*. in: *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 184-192.

Lowenthal, D, 1995. *Changing Criteria of Authenticity*. in: Larsen, K.E. (ed.), *Nara Conference on Authenticity*. Japan 1994. Proceedings. Published by UNESCO, ICCROM, ICOMOS. Tapir Publishers, Trondheim, 121-135.

McBride, I, 1997. *Ambiguities of authenticity: rock of faith or shifting sands?* Conservation and management of archaeological sites, Volume 2, 93-100.

Sullivan, S, 1995. *A planning model for the management of archaeological sites*. In: De la Torre, M (ed.). *The conservation of archaeological sites in the Mediterranean region*. An international conference organised by the Getty Conservation Institute and the J. Paul Getty Museum, 6-12 May 1995. Getty Conservation Institute, Los Angeles 1997, 15-26.

Ucko, P, 2000. *Enlivening a 'dead' past*. In: Conservation and management of archaeological sites, Volume 4, 67-92.

Australia ICOMOS Guidelines to the Burra Charter. (1988).
<http://www.icomos.org/australia/burrasig.html>

ICOMOS Declaration of San Antonio on Authenticity. (1996)
http://www.icomos.org/docs/san_antonio.html

The Nara Document on Authenticity. (1994)
http://www.international.icomos.org/naradoc_eng.htm

The Venice Charter. (1964)
http://www.international.icomos.org/e_venice.htm

Website of the El Pilar Program (1999)
<http://www.lsweb.sscf.ucsb.edu/projects/pilarweb>