

ANDORRA – HERITAGE @ RISK!

Situated on the central Pyrenees crossroads between Spain and France, Andorra has a surface area of 468 km² and its average altitude is about 2,000m. About 9/10 of the land is public property, the rest consisting of private property. This latter extends over the most fertile land located either at the bottom of the valleys or on the lower slopes.

If it was the Middle Ages that conceived this unusual Co-Principality, it was the 20th century that corresponded with its extraordinary transformation. Indeed there has clearly been a profound change to the land, since the building of the first roads and the establishment of the electricity network in the 1930s, but especially since the tourist boom which began in the 1960s, causing the opening up of a country which led to a radical transformation of its population structure and complex economy. In not quite 3 decades, the enclosed community that survived by way of limited agriculture and animal husbandry, became a modern tourist economy turned to service industries.

These changes are illustrated by striking statistics: with 5,000 inhabitants in 1940, this population went to 35,000 in 1980, to reach more than 66,000 in the year 2000. This growth required a labour force and the successive waves of immigration which followed modified the demographic pattern. The majority Andorran population in the 1930s, is these days no more than 22% of inhabitants, which is the equivalent of half of the Hispanic community and only represents double that of the Portuguese.

For its part, the country has been compelled to bear great changes, and not without damage, caused by this economic and demographic explosion. For want of a solid legislative framework (in particular the lack of management plans and town planning, a land law, and effective legislation to protect heri-

tage), this boom which includes a growing number of development operations do not take place without leaving troubling traces.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Andorra had an unusual uniformity of exceptional heritage. It currently experiences serious problems in order to manage simultaneously to administer a strong growth rate – annual construction on an area of land of an average 2,000m² since 1981, the registration of almost 4,500 cars a year and the entry of 9,000,000 visitors in 1999 – and to mobilise the necessary effort and resources for the identification, the protection, and the management of its heritage, for even if the national budget has doubled in 10 years, only \$6,100,000 of a total of \$218M (less than 3%) were allocated to the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, of which \$1.7M were dedicated to the research, conservation and the publicising of cultural heritage.

Limited in human and economic resources, and lacking a firm legislative framework and too often subjected to an uncertainty about its areas of concern, the Cultural Heritage Service created in the 1960s, has not often had the opportunity to implement world policies that in the long term might have had an effect that was integrated, planned and supportive of Andorra's cultural heritage.

Although in recent years, the local governments have participated more in managing cultural heritage, a big job is still to be done in this sphere to identify and understand their heritage, to make the people aware of it, but also to urge institutions to invest and commit themselves in this area.

In light of the size of the country and the situation outlined in the introduction, three generic cases are presented that serve as an example of the three threats that menace heritage:



Madriu Valley

The pressure of economic activity

A major alarm signal is the disproportion between the built-up area of land – an average of 200,000m² over the last 20 years, (it reached 411,000m² for the single year of 1989) – and the decrease in the area potentially able to be used, reduced to only 45km² of private property, which is for the most part unable to be built on. If one takes into account the importance of this growth and the fact that the transformation of the landscape which ensues, is dependant on exaggerated consumption and unauthorised settlement of the country, the first threat is clearly defined.

In the framework of a free economy which takes little account of the common interest and which is regulated according to immediate interests and profits, this economic activity puts cultural heritage in its various forms at permanent risk. We still must take into account the proportionate element, as this threat becomes relatively more serious in a country potentially as small as that of Andorra, where the risk of producing irreversible damage is clearly much higher.

Cultural landscapes of Andorra – the case of the Madriu Valley

In Andorra, one of the valleys that best illustrates the concept of a cultural landscape (an evolving landscape) is without doubt the Madriu Valley. Located in the parish of Escaldes, it is one of the longest valleys in the country. The Madriu River flows down 1,800 m in height and the valley opens up to the south west, and is the last great Andorran valley that is not ruined by road access. The only path runs right up the valley, allowing the discovery of its great wealth of flora, fauna and the beauty of its views. The visitor that takes this path discovers very quickly numerous traces that reveal the presence of human activity, and

which bear by contrast witness to the system of exploitation in the region and bygone ways of life: small fields and hedges, verges, networks of drystone walls, and pastoral huts. Pastoral and forest exploitation impelled the peasants to lay out this space by function according to its seasonal rhythms.

The informed walker will also find there remains of Andorra's iron industry. Mineral prospecting, charcoal kilns and forges as well as various activities are linked to its production. In the valleys between the 18th and 19th centuries. The first electrification in the country have also similarly left their imprint, channels and water points dating from the 1930s are their evidence.

The Madriu Valley is therefore a marker of cultural identity because it shows an assemblage of industries that are no longer essential to Andorran society. A balance still reigns at this site that demonstrates the skilled management of the landscape by humans, but which is threatened by certain owners' incessant pressure to build a road. A lack of legal means cannot delay this in the long-term. Opening an access to cars without doubt means a sudden disruption to the ecological balance, in the first place because it will let contemporary Andorrans practice their favourite sport: unauthorised building and the pursuit of immediate profit. This assertion perhaps reveals a lack of confidence about the genuine capacity of this contemporary community to renew a relationship with its environment whilst maintaining the quality and the biodiversity of this Valley.

Ways to a Solution / Recommendations

- Acquire an adequate and effective legislative framework
- Define the rhythms and thresholds of annual and multi-annual growth
- Diversify economic activity and stimulate the rehabilitation / re-use sector
- Establish management plans

View of the valley of Santa Coloma and Andorra from the site of St Vincens d'Enclar





La Maison Duró, Les Escaldes

The “objectified” vision of heritage

What has so far been said could equally largely explain the movement towards this limited and economic view of heritage.

It is there that the second and largest threat is to be found. In effect, a “de-contextualisation” leads on one hand to the isolation of the heritage item, to its “monumentalisation”, and on the other hand, to the destruction of its context, rich in traces and relationships, which alone can round out its meaning and widen an understanding of a place in its integrity.

This objectified attitude suits the dominant economic interest groups because it frees the land and minimises constraints on them; it is an attitude that at the same time is favoured by the flagrant absence of any elementary legislative framework. It is both a convenient solution and easy for the Administration which thus avoids any confrontation with the real estate lobby group.

This insulation and reduction of heritage to its minimal expression reinforces and cultivates a strong and dangerous uncertainty about the meaning and values of heritage and contributes to a certain “deculturalisation” of the population towards its heritage.

Framework for a historic item – the Santa Coloma site: gateway to the central valley

During the last 50 years, the Principality of Andorra has experienced a spectacular degree of urbanisation of its rural space, but this transformation cannot be considered as final. At the very least, all the bottoms of the valleys have been subjected to a change that has transformed them into a transitional landscape between town and country. During this period, various urban centres have appeared which in being established, have profited from either the ancient network of country roads and the cadastral survey or from a change in government framework. A very small number of these settlements are based on any land planning program. Among the great number of existing cases, the central valley of Andorra is the one which has been subjected to the greatest transformation. Today, the old population centres of

Santa Coloma, Encorcés, Fener, Puy, Old Andorra, Vilars, Engordany, Coloma, Escaldes and of Engolaster, form an urban cluster that contains almost 36,500 inhabitants. This transformation is an example of the anarchical occupation of the land and a shameful desire to abuse the country.

Among the various zones making up this urbanised complex, the district of Santa Coloma, which totals 3,000 inhabitants, is of particular interest. Despite the fact that it might have been affected by the development of the neighbouring city of Old Andorra, it has kept, to a great extent, its farming-pastoral character. Also, pre-feudal and feudal heritage places that are the most iconic for the history of the Principality are to be found in this district. Historic research conducted between 1979 and 1996 on the subject of the Rock of Enclar has partially clarified this past. The results obtained enable a re-evaluation of the Santa Coloma Church, that of Sant Vicenç and the Château d’Enclar. The intrinsic value of these cultural heritage places is not enough in order to discern the evolving sequence that embraces a period that extends from the Roman epoch to the feudal period (1st to 18th centuries), only consideration of the area as a whole permits that.

In the network of narrow valleys that form the country of Andorra, the central valley is simultaneously the most favourable region for agriculture and the obligatory passageway to the secondary valleys. Well before the railway, this valley was one of the natural corridors that connected the north and the south of the eastern Pyrenees. For a long time, the district of Santa Coloma, located at the extreme south of the central valley, was both a gateway to this thoroughfare, and one of its control points. From the beginning of the Christian Era until the 3rd century, the Roman military settlement, established in order to control the route, was set up on the *puig* which hangs over the village. In the second half of the 4th and 5th centuries, it was used to make the Pyrenaean mountain chain impenetrable to the advances of the Germanic peoples. Later, this ancient Roman presence influenced the Church authorities at the time on their choice of the siting of the Churches of Santa Coloma and of Sant Vicenç which were the first to be established in the Valleys at the end of the 8th century. Finally, between the 9th century and 1288, the Count’s powers in the region used the Chateau of Enclar to seize a territorial entity based on the one hand on the need for a large territory on the mountain spine, and on that of deducting the surplus produced by the Andorran communities. Besides these particular heritage places, the Santa Coloma district also contains other elements, of less importance, which make an integral part of an Andorra undone by European realities. At the southern limit of this area, is to be found the village of Aixovall (Ipsò Vallo) which allows us to suppose the existence, at least in the 11th century, of a forced crossing place, as evidenced by a palisade and a gate. To the north of Aixovall, towards Santa Coloma, there is a bridge over the Margineda which is rare evidence of Roman civilian heritage still present in Andorra. At this place, and at the others of the district, there are also remains of principal and secondary roads.

Since the 1960s, an important program of historical research and restoration has taken place for heritage in Andorra, which enables the admiration of a representative part of the Roman and feudal heritage places to be found in the valleys. The district of Santa Coloma could not be separated from this cultural program, but as with that the other zones of the Principality that are of historic interest, the almost non-existence of any legal body

dealing with cultural heritage as that which exists at the European level, reduces these operations to individual monuments. The context and the surroundings of the heritage places stay dependent on imponderables and essentials.

In May 1996, a town plan was presented for the parish of Old Andorra that included the Santa Coloma district. The general plan proposed the definite integration of the district into the large urban cluster of the central valley. In the general context in which land is an economically reduced resource, this project will not consider this district other than as a reserve subordinated to the neighbouring village's need for space. Even if we take into account the conservation of the various heritage places and the rationalisation of certain natural areas, the planned urban landscapes tend to a uniformity and a standardisation at the bottom of the valley without taking into account the wealth and variety of these places.

Faced with this possibility, the loss of particular character in the area surrounding the urban zone of Santa Coloma is to be expected. That is why we propose a project based on the diverse elements and the inherited structures of the successive cultural models that characterise this country. This project, conceived in a more general manner than in strict conservation or protection, implies the identification and consideration of the old models in order to reuse them as a support in future town planning.

Ways to a Solution / Recommendations

- Implementation of a contextualised inventory of heritage
- Commitment to an appropriate and effective legislative framework
- Implementation of a program of corrections
- Implementation of a program of actions for the wider public

Heritage "Without Papers"

There is a heritage that does not exist for the legal and administrative instruments, nor for the community nor the media. It is a heritage that is almost unknown, ignored and definitely threatened continuously with impunity.

A great threat menacing it is that it does not have the label of "monument". This high risk situation that could produce important and irreversible cuts in our cultural and historic wealth is the consequence of a number of important gambles and circumstances that we have already evoked. We can however try to identify other particular factors.

We argue most of all that there is a certain focus on all that is Roman or medieval. In ignoring all that meets that condition, one tends to demand a strong dose of age in cultural features in order for them to be considered as heritage.

Moreover, there is no leaning to research, identification, discovery, or analysis which is being undertaken for the discovery and the understanding which would enable the retrieval of an important number of facts in which our heritage is concealed.

This sanctioning of heritage as individual slices, this partial and decontextualised recognition contributes without a doubt to the illiteracy of the community and favours the diffusion of the image of a "standard monument" besides having a very limited and undesirable educational value.

The Architectural heritage of the 20th century

The 20th century has seen the dying out and the disappearance of the figure of the traditional mason and has seen the birth of the first building firms.

At the beginning of the century, the last old masons lived side by side with the first entrepreneurs. They alternated the building of local types with more urban buildings that involved the appearance of new types and the birth of visible concern for composition and decoration. The simplest achievements were the work of the masons, others are evidence to the first projects by architects.

In the context in which there was no pressure, over several years, an urban architecture was produced along the new road thoroughfares, supported by an burgeoning urbanism that generated new roads and which led to the rapid explosion at the outskirts of the shape of the traditional hamlet as sketched in the future agglomeration of Old Andorra and Escaldes.

There we find an architecture that uses the possibilities and the wealth of techniques of rough-hewn walls, of stucco and *sgraffito* but also a special architecture which uses cut granite as the only material to cover the façades, especially the main façade.

In these two cases we see the importation of tastes, techniques, and very often, of agents (stone workers or designers). This period corresponds to the first waves of immigration particularly of Galicians that had a major tradition of cutting stone, and Andalucians, who sometimes came from the area of the Andalusian quarries. The main cheaper work at this time combined the abundance and quality of the local granite with the profusion of workshops in the adjacent French and Spanish regions have supported a fashion that has left several, and outstanding, examples.

The heritage built in the first half of the 20th century was both an architectonic expression and a rich witness to an exceptional period of Andorra's recent history. It was an essential link, incontestable for a correct reading of the transition from a traditional society to the Andorra of today.

The rehabilitation of some of these buildings does not excuse the great risk that threatens them. Until now, no system of protection has been put in place at the very time when some demolitions have taken place without anyone reacting. Some examples of designed architecture (by renowned neighbouring architects such as C Martinell, Puig I Cadafalch or J M Sostres) are to be found in the same situation. It is during the second half of the century that significant works of the first order were built by local architects.

The principal threat that menaces this heritage is precisely in it not being "heritage" in the eyes of its contemporaries, of not "having papers", and as a consequence, of the possibility of its being excluded at any moment. It is therefore urgent to discover this heritage, to identify it, to list it, and to stimulate its analysis and study because these are the obvious conditions for its survival.

Ways to a Solution / Recommendations

- Raising awareness amongst the community
- Detailed inventory of the ignored heritage
- The promotion of research studies
- Implementation of protection systems