

## Prevention Begins in the Mind

Given the headlines in connection with the World Cultural Heritage and proceedings that have caused serious disputes in meetings of the World Heritage Committee – such as the Waldschlösschen Bridge in Dresden, plans for high-rise construction in Cologne, the planned vertical dominants in Vienna-Mitte, the policy of “adding height” in Vienna and now also in Graz<sup>1</sup> – we must ask ourselves: What is really being done in the field of prevention? Despite or perhaps even because of these conflict-ridden cases, however, the efforts being made to promote prevention are also evident: The most important instrument in the World Heritage field is the Management Plan, which is in fact intended to rule out negative developments such as the aforementioned cases and to ensure a positive framework for the preservation of World Heritage property. The goal for cases in which § 172 of the Operation Guidelines is applicable should therefore be a World Heritage Compatibility Check, a term that I brought into discussion during the disputes concerning Vienna-Mitte. It should be supplemented by a World Heritage Preventive Check, which would ensure that cases do not reach the stage of such barely resolvable conflicts in the first place. The World Heritage Compatibility Check and the World Heritage Preventive Check should be defined as essential parameters of the Management Plan.

“Prevention begins in the mind” – what is meant by this phrase? To begin with, we must note that preventive actions are a result of a cognitive process which is aimed at recognition and meaning, and which can become established in a particular cultural context as tradition, as self-conception and as ritualized pattern. Preventive action is thus based on understanding meaning and on the coherent traditions and implicit actions that result from this understanding.

A glance at cultural history shows that it is in fact almost a history of the development of preventive action. To explain: Man – by nature poor on instincts but receptive to outward influences – needs culture in order to live and to survive.<sup>2</sup> Culture serves to remedy shortcomings, meaning that culture is precaution brought into form, articulated as provisions for clothes, shelter, possessions, territory and social relations; it thus fulfills a protective function. It could be said that culture = prevention, or at least: prevention is an essential component of culture.<sup>3</sup> This is also applicable, incidentally, to high forms of culture such as religion, theater, literature and music, which guard against banality and reduction to the purely utilitarian.

How does the situation look today? We are living in a time of extraordinary differentiation of the preventive. The reasons for this are to be found in the increasing riskiness of our existence. Prevention and security are thus proportional to endangerment of the world and *Lebenswelt*. The catchword for this situation was coined by Ulrich Beck with the term “risk society”: “The power gains of technical-economic ‘progress’ are increasingly overshadowed by the production of risks [...] At the center are modernization risks and consequences that are reflected in

irreversible threats to the life of plants, animals and man.”<sup>4</sup> And, it must be added, also in threats to culture, which are erupting in the “clash of civilizations”<sup>5</sup> against the background of the acute problem of “peak oil”. In this sense “Heritage at Risk”, the “World Report on Monuments and Sites in Danger” is also a facet of this risk-prone present and its catastrophic dangers.<sup>6</sup> “The threat changes everything”, Ulrich Beck has aptly said.<sup>7</sup> Dangers trigger needs for security, and this development has been booming ever since Chernobyl – and indeed even more since September 11, 2001.<sup>8</sup> “But where there is danger, a rescuing element grows as well”,<sup>9</sup> wrote Hölderlin in his idealistic-romantic style – a hope that also carried the plea for a “repair society”.<sup>10</sup> But reality shows us that protection needs, prevention programs and prevention strategies are limited to certain areas despite all the awareness-raising. In the field of cultural property they are – at least from our point of view – insufficient or ineffective. Why this is the case can be elucidated by a brief look at the state of values in today’s society.

The catchphrase “value change in society” has shaped discussions ever since the 1970s, and it still has not lost any of its topicality. The following (very fragmentary) selection recalls some of the stages in this discussion:

- 1 Draufsetzen, 19 Dachausbauten realisiert, projiziert, Katalog zur Initiativausstellung der GB 16 im Auftrag der MA 25 in Kooperation mit der MA 19, Vienna 2004.
- 2 See Arnold GEHLEN, *Der Mensch – Seine Natur und seine Stellung in der Welt*, Berlin 1940; id., *Anthropologische Forschung*, Reinbek bei Hamburg 1961.
- 3 See Wilfried LIPP, *Der Mensch braucht Schutz – Geborgenheit und Differenz in der Globalisierung, Konservatorische Perspektiven einmal anders*, in: *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Kunst und Denkmalpflege*, vol. LIV, 2000, no. 2/3, pp. 183-188; Bálint BALLA, *Soziologie der Knappheit, Zum Verständnis individueller und gesellschaftlicher Mängelzustände*, Stuttgart 1978; id., *Kultur als Daseinssphäre von Knappheitsbewältigung*, in: Wolfgang LIPP [ed.], *Kulturtypen, Kulturcharaktere – Träger, Mittler und Stifter von Kultur*, Berlin 1987, pp. 241-256; id., *Kultur aus knappheitssoziologischer Sicht*, in: Tamás Meleghy [ed.], *Normen und soziologische Erklärung*, Innsbruck – Vienna 1987, pp. 11-38.
- 4 Ulrich BECK, *Risikogesellschaft, Auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne*, Frankfurt a. M. 1986, p. 17.
- 5 Samuel P. HUNTINGTON, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York 1996.
- 6 See Charles PERROW, *Normale Katastrophen, Die unvermeidbaren Risiken der Großtechnik*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Frankfurt a. M. – New York 1992.
- 7 Ulrich BECK, *Die Gefahr verändert alles, Über das Leben in einer Risikogesellschaft*, in: *Die Zeit*, no. 40, 26 September 1986.
- 8 Wilfried LIPP, *Feind – Bild – Denkmal im „Kampf der Kulturen“*, Perspektiven auf den 11. September 2001, in: *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Kunst und Denkmalpflege*, vol. LV, 2001, no. 4, pp. 404-415.
- 9 „Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst das Rettende auch.“ (Quotation from the hymn „Patmos“ (1802) by Friedrich Hölderlin.
- 10 Wilfried LIPP, *Rettung von Geschichte für die Reparaturgesellschaft im 21. Jahrhundert*, in: *Das Denkmal als Altlast? Auf dem Weg in die Reparaturgesellschaft*, Munich 1996, pp. 143-151.

- in 1974 in “The Fall of Public Man” Richard Sennett notes the decline of the public sphere and its replacement by the intimacy of nearness, of the local and of the personally constructed *Lebenswelt*;<sup>11</sup>
- in 1975 Helmut Klages describes the transition from accepted values to self-realization values in „Die unruhige Gesellschaft“ (The Unsettled Society);<sup>12</sup>
- Ronald Inglehart emphasizes this transformation in 1989 in “Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society” with his description of the transfer from “materialistic” to “post-materialistic” values;<sup>13</sup>
- in 1992 Gerhard Schulze focuses this development on the characterization of an „Erlebnisgesellschaft“ (experience-oriented society);<sup>14</sup>
- this experience orientation is subsequently associated with the term *Spassgesellschaft* (fun society), and Ronald Hitzler labels its exponents *Bastelexistenzen* (self-rigged or do-it-yourself individuals).<sup>15</sup>

It becomes clear that, as different as these approaches may be, they intersect in the central motivational figure of the “self”, the “subject”, the *grosso modo* of the individual life, of life as such. In these “self-rigged” blueprints for life – for “life as last opportunity”<sup>16</sup> – security and protection of one’s life take on a crucial position as a replacement for lost certainties. Culture, on the other hand – detached from the basis of its preventive character, which originally pervaded all aspects of life – is essentially perceived only as a possibility for relief from the pressure of existence, as fun and event culture, as an opportunity for entertainment, or even as a realm for self-fulfillment of all kinds.<sup>17</sup>

In the prevailing competitive system of self-assertion, defined by the market economy – take the example of the “Ich-AG” (one-man start-up business) – relief is, so to speak, the added value of the stress inherent in the system. In other words: One indulges in culture – as one relief segment among many – or one does not. Culture is an individually chosen decision within a broad spectrum of possibilities; it is – in legal diction – a hobby or something done for fun. This is the counterpoint to public interest, and it is under the vague legal concept of public interest that the strategies of preservation – conservation and maintenance of the architectural heritage – are legitimized. The present situation is characterized by a complex transfer of formerly public interests to group-specific or individual interests, at the other end of which is simply the personal “hobby”. Fields involving the “culture of preservation” – from the museums that look after the visual arts to the places that cultivate music, literature, theater, the architectural heritage, etc. – are particularly exposed in this process.<sup>18</sup>

The loss of common sense – the dwindling of collective orientations therein – is ultimately also a sign of the crisis of the state; this “slimmed down” state has let its citizens come of age in a period of self-determined cultural orientations or disorientations. Collective public interests are reduced to areas that serve self-interest or insure our lives: retirement benefits and old age welfare, health, social security, education and training, infrastructure, etc. etc.

In reference to our topic, however, can something that increasingly lies outside the range of individual needs and self-interests and that is drifting from the sphere of public interests to the segmented periphery of the private be reintegrated into the general self-conception of prevailing lifestyles? To answer this question we must refer back to the previously explained motiva-

tion for preventive action as a result of a cognitive process on the one hand and of an understanding of traditions this process has laid down on the other hand. Using the example of World Cultural Heritage we must ask: Where are there still elements of a tradition of prevention, and where is there still need for cognitive mobility, awareness and recognition in order to bring about institutional changes that will call for prevention in certain areas, will integrate these changes into the legal system, and will thus create the conditions necessary for preventive action. As a whole, reintegration and re-stabilization processes always also involve transfer efforts, and this transfer represents cognitive mobility. Where traditions seem fragile through loss of self-conception or institutions appear weakened by loss of purpose, there is a need for cognitive impulses in order to move, for instance, from a view of the cultural heritage as uneconomical, useless and merely a hobby to the awareness of its sustainable social yield. Such cognitively justified transfer efforts would ultimately change the system itself and become apparent in an institutional restabilization. As has been said before: prevention begins in the mind.

### Focus on Practice

Moving from the mind to the hand – into action – is often a tortuous path. In the field of preventive practices,<sup>19</sup> we can differentiate on a broad scale between the spheres of the sacred and the profane. There are further divergences in the variables of urban and rural areas, as well as in the specific characteristics of different regions and topographies. An important differentiating feature is the owner factor with its issues of continuity and change in ownership and, in this context, problems regarding continuity and change of use. How dramatic the effects of disruptions in ownership succession and in use can be is (still) demonstrated by the consequences of the world wars and other warlike events, political upheavals, system changes, etc. which have led to the ruination of entire categories of monuments.

The upshot is: Consciousness regarding prevention – internalized and made independent as tradition – exists most distinctly where there is continuity of ownership and (intact) continuity of use in a tradition-conscious (value conservative) framework. Concretely this (still) applies to domains of the church and the aristocracy, and with increasing limitations to

11 Richard SENNETT, *The Fall of Public Man*, New York 1974.

12 Helmut KLAGES, *Die unruhige Gesellschaft, Untersuchungen über Grenzen und Probleme sozialer Stabilität*, Munich 1975.

13 Ronald INGLEHART, *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society*, Princeton 1989.

14 Gerhard SCHULZE, *Die Erlebnisgesellschaft, Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart*, Frankfurt a. M. – New York 1992.

15 Ronald HITZLER – Anne HONER, „Bastelexistenz“, Über subjektive Konsequenzen der Individualisierung, in: Ulrich BECK – Elisabeth BECK-GERNISHEIM [eds.], *Riskante Freiheiten, Individualisierung in modernen Gesellschaften*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, Frankfurt a. M. 2002, pp. 307–315.

16 Marianne GRONEMEYER, *Das Leben als letzte Gelegenheit, Sicherheitsbedürfnisse und Zeitknappheit*, Darmstadt 1993.

17 Ronald HITZLER, „Ein bißchen Spaß muß sein!“ Zur Konstruktion kultureller Erlebniswelten, in: Wilfried GEBHARDT – Ronald HITZLER – Michaela PFADENHAUER [eds.], *Events, Soziologie des Außergewöhnlichen*, Opladen 2000, pp. 401–412.

18 Wilfried LIPP, *Kultur des Bewahrens, Schrägansichten zur Denkmalpflege*, Wien – Köln – Weimar 2008.

19 The focus here is on the countries of Central and Western Europe.

bourgeois and rural segments. Reasons for the diminishment of preventive traditions are to be found in demands and pressures for modernization, connected in the city with social and economic prestige and in rural areas with needs that have to some extent truly undergone changes but are largely intended as compensation for the supposed “cultural lag”. This means that various categories of monuments and types of ownership show greatly differing tendencies for constancy and change. Simplified, the shrinking segment of the aristocracy and of upper middle class and bourgeois lifestyles is characterized by constancy and a sense of owner and generational obligations. With regard to prevention awareness, strong binds to traditions find their correlate in the principle of repair and in maintenance and upkeep; an outlook formed by conservative values finds its equivalent in the restoration of existing buildings and in moderate modernization – if the economic base permits. A “willingness to make sacrifices” in connection with preventive measures, often related to special occasions (anniversaries, marriage), accords with the exclusion of a pointedly “economic” value system.

The same applies in principle to the ecclesiastical sphere, although differences arise as a rule because of the shorter intervals between interventions (25 years and less) and the problems of “de-restoration” and “over-restoration”. The evolved state of a monument increasingly appears as a patchwork of various interventions, as a state that never existed historically. Modernization options are developed in connection with liturgy and church music and, not inconsiderably, with the increasing demand for comfort (pews, heating, light). As positive aspects in the ecclesiastical sphere mention could be made of preventive programs aimed at particular architectural concerns or at precious fittings, as well as in the field of education and advanced training.

In the urban sphere, there is a diminishing continuity of ownership and owner-occupied use on the one hand, and increasing real estate management on the other hand. Changes in function aimed at an increase in use value (higher zoning, gutting) signify increasing loss of historic fabric: minimal to no prevention, repairs (of the historic remnants, in general the façade) that are undertaken only for a particular occasion or are motivated by real estate economics.<sup>20</sup>

Major national monuments, some of which are part of the World Cultural Heritage, occupy a special position within the general framework that I have only very cursorily sketched here. These monuments are largely removed from changes; to a certain extent they are subject to a “taboo against change”. A conservation approach applies to them on principle. This category is therefore characterized by a significant degree of continuity of preservation; prevention, conservation, restoration, repair, maintenance and upkeep have priority. For national monuments and World Cultural Heritage sites identification is based on the unchanging continuity of the image – which conversely means that something like a “perception shock” occurs if changes do occur.<sup>21</sup> However, even this fundamental taboo against changes to national icons is undermined by the pressure of commercialization, for instance by adaptations for tourism or museum use. The results are in fact quite ambivalent for this category of monuments: increased preventive measures and shortened intervals of restoration and repair on the one hand, and intensified pressures to change deriving from the demands and needs of the “consumers” as well as from the requirements of tourism marketing on the other hand. In this context it should be noted that the continuity of the image of national icons –

(still) with a concomitant taboo against change – is increasingly limited to the narrowly framed image of a postcard cliché; the surroundings, which often have already been misused, are blended out.<sup>22</sup>

Although a certain degree of common sense regarding the continuity of visual preservation and a taboo against changes prevails with national icons that are individually listed as World Cultural Heritage sites, there is a decisive difference regarding larger sites, ensembles or historic districts (such as the World Cultural Heritage category “historic center”), as well as regarding core zones and buffer zones in World Heritage sites, cultural landscapes, etc. In these contexts the opposite “common sense” viewpoint can be observed. It is said that the city cannot become a museum or be placed under a bell jar; the Stone Age metaphor is mentioned, and there is talk of being “anti-progressive”, “backward-looking”, “conservative”. The preservationist is repudiated as a preventer, and the rallying cry “We are living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century” is brought into circulation; development is played off against stagnation. According to prevailing political and social conventions, in these areas change not only may but should take place. The category “life” is the imperative. Historic sites, World Heritage sites, have to “live”, even if this watchword is based on a very limited and one-dimensional concept of “life”. The philosophy that is propagated for these areas follows the “Well, why not?” mentality,<sup>23</sup> the principle “why not?” and “anything goes”. Why not high-rises, added stories, renewal, modernization, gutting, demolition, designation of land for construction, etc. etc.? This attitude corresponds to a change of aesthetic perception. The revaluation of contrast, fragment, breaches of scale and the stylization of the fractal and the part now stand for the loss of the aesthetic categories of harmony, coherence, proportion, scale and appropriateness, and thus correspond to the loss of an understanding of the whole. Corrective strategies, such as the current international discussions of “surroundings”, “setting”, “skyline”, “historic urban landscape”, etc. etc., come only in the aftermath of developments and are faulted as being “too late”, “too slow”, “not dominant enough”, “not professional enough”.

### For this very reason

Prevention runs counter to all the accelerated processes of change that characterize the globalized world. But precisely this could/should be the flexible point of cognitive mobility’s provocation, inaugurating a rethinking, reflection, an ideological turn. With this change we could/should become conscious of the fact that, in their deepest core, the prevailing acceleration fantasies

20 See also Wilfried LIPP, Produkt Denkmal, Skizzen einer ökonomischen Theorie des baukulturellen Erbes, in: Produkt Denkmal, Denkmalpflege als Wirtschaftsfaktor, Munich 1998, pp. 43-52.

21 See Wilfried LIPP, „In restauro“ – Assoziationen zu einer Metapher, in: Ursula SCHÄDLER-SAUB [ed.], Die Kunst der Restaurierung, Entwicklungen und Tendenzen der Restaurierungsästhetik in Europa, Munich 2005, pp. 13-24.

22 Eva TROPPEL, Das Medium Ansichtskarte und die Genese von Kulturerbe, Eine visuelle Spurenlese am Beispiel der Stadt Graz, in: Moritz CSÁKY – Monika Sommer [eds.], Kulturerbe als soziokulturelle Praxis, Innsbruck [etc.] 2005, pp. 33-56.

23 Wilfried LIPP, Worüber reden wir? Ein Verständigungsversuch, in: Wien, Weltkulturerbe, Der Stand der Dinge, Vienna 2006, pp. 30-32.

are borne by the redemption idea of their opposite, the concept of the good end. In almost all concepts of history – theological and philosophic profane – the teleological element, the concept of “arriving”, plays a critical role. In the major religions it is the concept of the arrival in a redeeming hereafter, in the philosophical concepts the idea of the blissful fulfillment of the self; the topos of arriving at oneself, of coming to peace, is important even in our secularized, everyday yearnings. In this sense, heritage – and World Cultural Heritage in particular – represents a

state of arrival in the course of history; it represents a stabilizing element and place of repose in the frantically accelerated and variable state of change that is all around. In order to continuously and preventively secure these places of constancy and repose in an era of forgotten traditions and weakened institutions, there is a need for cognitive efforts to achieve a restabilization of traditions and institutions.

Da capo: prevention begins in the mind.