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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PRESERVATION
OF THE ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE
IN RELATION TO TOURISM

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I wish that the objectives of this meeting - defined as "to develop guidelines and recommendations and to propose concrete follow-up actions to be considered by countries in their efforts to enhance their natural resource base and environmental assets for the promotion of tourism development, in attempt to achieve a more meaningful contribution from tourism to the overall economic and social development process" had included the work cultural - thus reading "to enhance their natural resource base and environmental and cultural assets...". And here I am proposing to deal only with that important component of the cultural heritage which can be defined as architectural.

In a sense I should not even need to give this paper - the importance of the contribution to the improvement of the tourism product that can be made by the proper utilisation of the architectural heritage has been emphasised over and over again, but the lack of any serious action to date in this field indicates that it is, in fact, essential to make this point once more and, indeed, to do more than that, to ensure that is is highlighted in the guidelines that are to come out of this meeting and, further, to ensure that by some means governments, particularly, are seized of the need to take this matter seriously.

I propose first to remind you of some of the documentation which relates to this particular subject; secondly, to refer to some of the work that is in progress but which is bedevilled, for the most part, by lack of funding; thirdly, to touch on some of the economic benefits of historic restoration, in the context of tourism; and fourthly, to look at some of the funding possibilities

that I know exist but which need to be taken far more seriously by governments if they are to be properly exploited; and lastly, to suggest the form that the guidelines in question should take.

Documentation

For a start, we might look at the background to this particular project, in the course of its rather curious evolution.

The overview on 'Tourism and Environment in the Wider Caribbean Area', prepared by the OAS for the UNEP Caribbean Environment Programme and presented at the second meeting of government-nominated experts held in Managua in November 1980, in talking of the impact of tourism, stated that the "restoration of historic structures has been accomplished in many instances largely because of tourist interest" and cites Santo Domingo; it might also have mentioned San Juan in Puerto Rico and English Harbour in Antigua. It includes in its recommendations for action: "Continued regional co-operation in efforts to preserve and promulgate interest in cultural and historic resources, including art, architecture, places of historic interest...".

The three project sketches related to tourism approved at Montego Bay, in April 1981, were aimed almost entirely at minimising the negative impact of tourism, although there was reference to the possibility of tourism being used to strengthen the indigenous culture and preserve the national heritage, as was evidenced in countries such as Mexico, Guatemala and Panama; this reference is repeated in the current re-drafted project outline. Reference is also made, in the ECLAC/ODCC document concerning Tourism - Resources - Development, to the justification of projects or developments which have benefits that extend beyond the tourism sector, citing the restoration of historic buildings as a case in point. This is

repeated in the note giving the background to the ECLAC/UNEP project.

None of this is, of course, enough. It may be that the fact that this is or was, a project under the aegis of the UNEP Caribbean Action Plan has caused insufficient attention to be paid to the cultural aspects of tourism, since that Plan is related specifically to the natural environment, but it seems to me that we should take this opportunity of exploiting what could be a very important aspect of tourism and one which, incidentally, is unlikely to have negative side-effects.

I think the importance and the significance of 'cultural tourism', in relation particularly to the architectural heritage, has been clearly expressed on a number of occasions and I will just quote a few instances. One of these comes from Jashina Alexandra Tarr's 'A Collaborative Caribbean Preservation Strategy', compiled thanks to a grant from the US National Endowment for the Arts during 1977 and 1978 but not published until 1982, after her death. In answer to the question - Can the Caribbean Become a Cultural Tourism Area? - she writes as follows:

"It can safely be said that the tourism product or package that has been marketed in the Caribbean essentially stresses sea, sand, and sex or variations thereof. It is an example of the brand of international tourism often called recreational tourism.

There is no reason, however, for the Caribbean to be restricted to this formula. The Caribbean is assuredly not as cultural as Europe, as primordial as Africa, as exotically diverse as Asia. Yet it has a distinct identity worthy of being appreciated and understood. The Caribbean

must not become convinced, by the advertising about itself, that all it has to offer are sun, sea, and fun. It has spectacular fortifications, splendid great houses, and unique vernacular and urban architecture. Caribbean tourism could include, beside the usual shopping, golf, and beach, alternatives that not only fill the leisure hours but also assist the tourists in obtaining more well-rounded impressions of the islands.

Many technical assistance consultant missions from both the OAS and UNESCO have produced detailed analyses and proposals on how to use cultural resources within the Caribbean tourism context. These projects appear either to remain at the study stage, or to move at a snail's pace".

That was written at least seven years ago; I suggest that we have been moving at rather less than snail's pace.

To move a little nearer the present day - we should look at the final report published as a result of a seminar organised by the OAS and CTCR in conjunction with CCA in July 1983 on the subject of 'Cultural Patrimony and the Tourism Product - towards a mutually beneficial relationship'. In the context of the architectural heritage David Buisseret, formerly of the Mona Campus of the University of the West Indies and now Director of the Centre for the History of Cartography at the Newbury Library in Chicago, Eugenio Perez Montas, architect, of the Dominican Republic and co-ordinator of CARIMOS - the Wider Caribbean Plan for Monuments and Sites, and Patrick Delatour, architect, of Haiti, in their several presentations, left no doubt whatever about the significance of the architectural heritage, particularly in relation to tourism.

David Buisseret deals with a very wide range of types of structures in Jamaica and the Lesser Antilles - domestic buildings, commercial architecture, industrial structures, military works, public buildings. In addition to identifying sites which have been successfully exploited in the interests of tourism, which are fairly well known, he mentions others which seem to have been neglected. Among these are Spanish Town and Falmouth in Jamaica, Kingstown in St. Vincent, numerous sites associated with the sugar industry, the Cabrits in Dominica (where work is now in progress), St. Ann's Fort in Barbados (where plans are being made for the preservation of the whole of the Garrison as a conservation area), various signal stations including the one at Fort Barrington in Antigua, and bridges and lighthouses in various islands.

Eugenio Perez Montas, in looking at various aspects of 'cultural tourism', makes reference to the very important point that to look at the touristic potential of historic restoration is not in any sense to degrade it; he quotes from the Quito Convention of 1967 as opening the way to relations between the cultural values and the interests of tourism:

"Cultural values are not denaturalised nor comprised when they are linked to the interests of tourism, and far from it, the great attraction of the monuments and the growing affluence of the foreign admirers contribute to strengthen the awareness of its national importance and significance".

Patrick Delatour, speaking of the restoration work at the Citadelle in Haiti, emphasises the contribution accruing to the economy both in the providing of jobs for, and training of labourers, and the visits of locals and tourists alike. He also demolishes the theory that monuments relating to colonial days form no part of the Caribbean historical heritage. He says that these

buildings constitute an important evidence of the work, the suffering, the skill, the customs, and the social conditions of the black population of those days. By unveiling and revealing these facts of colonial days, and by recognising the architectural value of vernacular architecture, he says, we can begin to attract the attention of the average citizen of the Caribbean in the conservation and restoration of our many historic monuments and sites.

The conclusions and recommendations concerning monuments, sites and vernacular architecture are far-reaching; to go into them in detail, and to note the extent to which they have been implemented, would be, I am afraid, to document an exercise in non-action.

Work in Progress

There is, of course, much work going on, largely owing to the efforts of various concerned individuals and organisations, for the most part national trusts and similar types of organisations. Certainly, we have English Harbour, Brimstone Hill, Pigeon Island among the major fortifications which can be counted success stories; we have work in progress at the Cabrits in Dominica, we have plans for the Garrison in Barbados, we have had limited restoration work at Fort Charlotte in St. Vincent and Fort George in Grenada, to mention only a few examples of monuments of this type. Impressive work has been carried out by individuals on their own properties. Lists of buildings of historic and architectural interest have been compiled, notably for Saint Lucia and Barbados. Patrick Delatour carried out a tour of the Commonwealth Caribbean, on behalf of UNESCO, in 1983 and produced a report which indicates something of the value of the architectural heritage.

There is at present a growing interest in and awareness of the value of this heritage, and of the need

to take action to restore and preserve it. There has been interesting evidence of this very recently in Port-of-Spain, when the impending demolition of the George Brown House led to a public outcry, resulting in the rescinding of the order and agreement between the Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Architects and the owners that the house would be restored and, perhaps most important of all, to a realisation of the need to set up a national trust, or similar organisation. I hope, also, it has reminded those concerned that a UNESCO consultant, carrying out a mission some six years ago, made very detailed recommendations for the establishment of a national heritage trust which seems somehow, to have fallen into indecent oblivion.

What is depressing about this scene is that much of the work being carried out seems almost to be achieved in spite of the attitude of governments and tourism organisations - though there are some exceptions - and what is needed is to succeed in persuading these authorities not only of the need for action to prevent the disintegration of the architectural heritage but of the positive economic advantages of so doing.

The economic benefits of historic restoration in the context of tourism

I think that I should like to turn this subject upside down - as it were - to start with, and look at the economic disadvantages of continuing to neglect our architectural heritage. There is no doubt whatever about the extent to which the general public in developed countries - whom we presumably wish to lure to the Caribbean - is becoming increasingly geared to visiting museums, historic buildings and the like. Indeed, in the United Kingdom, where, as David Lowenthal says in 'Our Past Before Us: Why Do We Save It?' "preservation is the concern of millions of ordinary folk who take pleasure and pride from the relics of their own and others' past; it can

no longer be the exclusive province of a small elite", and, "saving old buildings often costs less in materials, energy, and capital than replacing them with new buildings, and national pride or tourism may also justify their retention". Elsewhere in the same collection of essays another writer deals with the dangers, from the conservation point of view, of the over-exposure of historic monuments to an overwhelming press of visitors; that is not something, it seems to me, that we are likely to suffer from in the Caribbean for some time to come. My point here, of course, is that, unless we take some immediate action to make the most of our cultural heritage, and restore the characteristic features of our architectural heritage, we shall to an increasing extent be losing those visitors who, in their own countries, are becoming accustomed to 'cultural tourism'.

The other points that I might mention here are, I think, obvious: the creation of new jobs, the potential increase in the number of tourists and the multiplier effect in terms of additional services etc., and the improved image that the Caribbean will gain as the result of an increase in the cultural content of the package - not to mention the benefits to ourselves of a strengthening of Caribbean cultural identity.

Funding Possibilities

Clearly, the work that has to be done cannot be carried out without assistance, to some extent technical but in the main financial, and there are signs here that the money needed to carry out actual restoration work, not to prepare yet more feasibility studies unrelated to work with bricks and mortar, may be a possibility in the near future, provided we go about it the right way. This depends, to a large extent, in having the support of governments and the organisations concerned with tourism.

I would draw your attention first to Article 127 of Lome III, which refers to support being provided for action by the ACP states, in part, "to conserve historical and cultural monuments and promote traditional architecture". I understand here that regional programmes related to this area of activity have yet to be drawn up but that discussions are to take place in the near future.

I would also note that the Inter-American Development Bank is interested in assisting in this area; CCA is, in fact, working with the Caribbean Development Bank in preparing a project related to the restoration of fortifications in the Eastern Caribbean for eventual submission to the IDB. If this works, then its expansion to other types of buildings should certainly be a possibility.

There is also a possibility of large-scale UNESCO/UNDP funding for cultural activities, including those related to the architectural heritage. I might add that this seems at present to be bedevilled by the problems which some governments seem to have in despatching telexes to the UNESCO office for cultural affairs requesting a visit from the official concerned.

I also want to mention here something which has, perhaps, an interesting twist in relation to one component of the architectural heritage, and that is vernacular architecture; CARIMOS has been doing interesting work in this connection but the work that is best known in the Lesser Antilles is certainly that of the Guadeloupean architect, the late Jack Berthelot, and Martine Gaumé. An exhibition of vernacular architecture, probably to be called 'The West Indian House and Home', using their work as a basis, is to be mounted by the CCA at the Commonwealth Institute in London as part of 'Caribbean Focus 2 1986'. This can certainly be expected to play some part in encouraging tourists from the UK to visit the Caribbean but it is interesting to note that, to date, the main part of the funding is being provided by

the Ethnic Minorities' Unit of the Greater London Council.

Proposed Guideline

That governments, bearing in mind the urgent need to improve their tourism product, if it is to compete with that offered by other countries, usually at lower prices, give high priority to the restoration of historic buildings, monuments and sites, and their utilisation as part of the social, economic and cultural life of the population.

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