Urban Heritage and Vernacular Studies Parallel evolution and shared challenges

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Abstract

This paper traces and examines the evolution of the notion of urban heritage and reflects on its relationship to the field of vernacular settlements studies. It takes the position that, the emerging notion of contemporary vernacular is analogous to urban heritage, which has evolved significantly during the last four decades. Kellett's call for the re-examination of the notion of vernacular to address 'contemporary constructions' and view them as 'a continuation of existing vernacular traditions' corresponds to the newly constructed definition of urban heritage that involves a 'layering of cultural and natural values that have been produced by passing cultures and an accumulation of traditions'. In addition, the emphasis placed on the social and communal processes in the making of the contemporary vernacular are the same addressed in the re-conceptualisation of urban heritage as a 'social complex' and a 'living heritage'. Similarly, the meeting of the terms 'traditional' and 'vernacular' in the connotations of 'home-made' and 'for home-use' is parallel to that of urban heritage being closely connected to 'national identity and local traditions'. Moreover, the questions of originality, continuity and progress that urged for the reassessment of the notion of historic vernacular are the same that dominates today's discourse on urban heritage and urban conservation.

This paper argues that although urban heritage and vernacular studies are two fields that have grown separately, both fields share three main phases in their evolution: the object-focused phase, the subject-focused phase and lately the calls for incorporating time and change in the process of heritage and vernacular 'making'. In order to demonstrate the occurrence of these phases, this paper starts by examining the evolution in the theory of heritage and particularly urban heritage (including historic vernacular) highlighting the three main phases in this evolution. Then, the evolution of vernacular studies is discussed reflecting on the relationship between vernacular studies and urban heritage and highlighting the similarities in their evolutions. Towards the end, the relevance of conservation/regeneration efforts to vernacular settlements is discussed.

Keywords: *vernacular settlements, contemporary vernacular, urban heritage, theory.*

Introduction

The definition of cultural heritage has evolved progressively through the last four decades. One can trace this evolution in the international documents for heritage protection. The European Charter 1975 (Council of Heritage, 1975), the Burra Charter 1999 (ICOMOS-Australia, 1999) and more recently the UNESCO's Convention for the Protection of Intangible Heritage 2003 (UNESCO, 2003), are just some examples of the expansion in the definition of what consists heritage (see Impey, 2006, Luxen, 2004, Rodwell, 2007). Today, in addition to the material objects, cultural heritage includes people, their values and memories associated

with a broad contextual setting that constructs the totality of the heritage experience (Smith, 2006, Luxen, 2004).

As part of cultural heritage, urban heritage incorporated the newly acknowledged dimensions of heritage into its definition. Our understanding of urban heritage today goes beyond the material aspect and involves a 'layering of cultural and natural values that have been produced by passing cultures and an accumulation of traditions' (UNESCO, 2010). It integrates change as a natural progression of cultures. However, this comprehensive and actually revolutionary re-conceptualisation of the notion of urban heritage has not been achieved overnight. Rather, it took a long series of re-examination and re-interpretation of the meaning of heritage and other related concepts to arrive at such a comprehensive definition.

Similarly, the concept of contemporary vernacular emerged in the keynote delivery of ISVS 5 held in Colombo, followed by Kellett's subsequent publication of an article in ISVS e journal calling for the re-examination of the notion of vernacular to address 'contemporary constructions' and view them as 'a continuation of existing vernacular traditions' (see Kellett, 2011). It has then been subsequently articulated in the call for papers of the ISVS 6 (Dayaratne,2012) which calls for a closer examination of the practices. These calls are somehow parallel to the evolution of the notion of urban heritage which led to the broadening of its definition. Where does this put vernacular settlements in relation to urban heritage?

Vernacular settlements or more precisely, historic vernacular settlements have been commonly placed under the labels of urban heritage, historic areas or historic landscapes even before broadening the definition of cultural heritage (Lowenthal and Binney, 1981, Rodwell, 2007). This is evident in a number of cultural heritage policy documents. For example, the Recommendation Concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Role of Historic Areas, adopted by UNESCO in 1976 specifies the inclusion of 'vernacular' in its definition of 'historic and architectural areas' (UNESCO, 1976). Also, the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) issued a Charter particularly concerned with vernacular heritage: Charter on the Built Vernacular Heritage 1999 (International Council on Monuments and Sites [ICOMOS], 1999). However, the element of vernacular that concerns the heritage field has been mainly that related to its conservation (whatever that means depends on the understanding of heritage conservation at that particular time). Other than that, the two fields have grown apart with two separate bodies of literature. Can a broadened definition of vernacular settlements provide grounds for more integration between the two fields?

This paper argues that although urban heritage and vernacular studies have evolved separately, the two fields more or less passed through the same phases in their evolution. Particularly, one can identify three phases in the evolution of both fields: the object-focused phase, the subject-focused phase and lately the call for incorporating time and change in the process of heritage and vernacular 'making'. This paper first examines the evolution in our understanding of the notion of heritage and particularly urban heritage (including historic vernacular) highlighting the three main phases in this evolution. Then, it traces the evolution of vernacular studies reflecting on the relationship between vernacular studies and urban heritage and highlighting the similarities in their evolutions. Towards the end, the relevance of conservation/regeneration efforts to vernacular settlements is discussed highlighting the challenges and responsibilities of the broadened definition of vernacular.

The evolution of urban heritage and its conservation

At the beginning of the 20th century, heritage conservation in general was perceived as a scientific activity that is concerned mainly with the integrity of the physical/material aspect of heritage. Muñoz-Viñas (2005) describes the theoretical basis behind conservation at this time as 'the material theory of conservation' or 'objectivism'. The meaning of objectivism in this context is twofold. First, it illustrates the attempt of conservation to preserve or restore the 'true nature' of conservation objects (Munoz-Vinas, 2005). Thus, conservation in this sense is an 'objective' activity that is approached by reason and science. Second, objectivism also expresses the focus on objects, their material constitutes and their conditions.

With the increased critiques of objectivism and the acceptance of subjectivity and pluralism in many fields, a new theory in the heritage conservation field emerged: inter-subjectivism (Munoz-Vinas, 2005). Inter-subjectivism implies both: the focus on the subjects as well as the acceptance of subjectivity and plurality. Unlike the ideas associated with objectivism, there is not only one 'true' value of a heritage object, but there are as many as viewed from the different perspectives of people who possibly value that particular object. Central to inter-subjectivism theory is the idea of communication of meaning. Communication here means 'the subject's ability to derive a message from the object' (Munoz-Vinas, 2005). According to inter-subjectivism theory, communication is not a feature or a quality that is intrinsically present in the object, but rather it emerges as a result of the interaction between the object and the subjects. Meaning, on the other hand, is activated by the subjects. In this sense, objects became tools to communicate meanings to subjects. Thus, the primary interest has shifted from objects to subjects (Munoz-Vinas, 2005).

This shift in the general theory of cultural heritage from objectivism to inter-subjectivism can be traced in the evolution of urban heritage as will be shown in this section. Yet, the case of urban heritage is more complicated. This is because until the first quarter of the twentieth century, the only built forms that were acknowledged and thought to be heritage and worth preserving were monuments and great work of art. Those were protected individually and in isolation of their surroundings (see for example Rodwell, 2007). Hence, one can argue that the notion of urban heritage that goes beyond monuments was almost non-existent at that time.

Between the 1930s and the 2000s, significant milestones towards the recognition of urban heritage beyond monuments have been accomplished. For the purpose here, international cultural heritage policy documents (charters, conventions, recommendations, etc) are used to exemplify the evolution of the notion of urban heritage. These documents are found representative of the general theory of their time due to their authorship, institutional status and the contribution of a number of experts in their script.

The Object-focused phase

This phase consists of three milestones. The first was the recognition of the 'surroundings' of monuments. This took place around the beginning of the 1930s. Value was still attributed to monuments and not to their 'surroundings'. Surroundings themselves were not acknowledged as being of heritage interest or value. They were considered as part of the qualities supporting the value of the monument. This is best expressed in section III of the Athens Charter 1931 (International Museums Office, 1931): Aesthetic enhancement of ancient monuments:

In the construction of buildings, the character and external aspect of the cities in which they are to be erected should be respected, especially in the neighbourhood of ancient

monuments, where the surroundings should be given special consideration.(International Museums Office, 1931)

Although this statement did not consider the surroundings of monuments as being for heritage value, the fact that the heritage community started to look beyond monuments was significant at that time. This is especially true because the Athens Charter is considered one of the main references in the heritage field and all the heritage documents that were produced later were based on it.

The second milestone was when the 'surroundings' started to be considered as part of monuments. The surroundings, or what was referred to as 'settings', although still allied to monuments, started to be valued as heritage assets in their own right and not just as associations. Article 1 of the Venice Charter 1964 (ICOMOS, 1964) states:

The concept of an historic monument embraces not only the single architectural work but also the urban or rural setting in which is found the evidence of a particular civilization, a significant development or an historic event. This applies not only to great works of art but also to more modest works of the past which have acquired cultural significance with the passing of time. (ICOMOS, 1964)

The significance of this statement is not only in the inclusion of settings in the definition of monuments, but also in subjecting them to conservation once they are identified. This was represented in article 6 of the same charter:

The conservation of a monument implies preserving a setting which is not out of scale. Wherever the traditional setting exists, it must be kept. No new construction, demolition or modification which would alter the relations of mass and colour must be allowed. (ICOMOS, 1964)

Although the word vernacular has not been mentioned *per se* in the Venice Charter, one can consider this Charter the first introduction to the international recognition of vernacular settlements in the heritage field. This is because the earlier recognition of urban heritage was only associated with monuments which makes it very specific and limited in its scope. Thus, before the Venice Charter, there was no room for vernacular settlements to be perceived as heritage.

The third milestone in the object-focused phase of the evolution of urban heritage came with the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage 1972, widely recognised as the World Heritage Convention (UNESCO, 1972). Article 1 of this convention separately defines 'monuments' and 'groups of buildings' under Cultural Heritage. According to this convention, groups of buildings are defined as:

groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science; (UNESCO, 1972)

In this sense, 'groups of buildings' in this convention are presented as cultural heritage parallel to monuments and not in association with them. Thus, they were no longer 'surroundings' or 'settings', but independent heritage assets that could have outstanding universal value worth protection. This was also emphasized later in the Convention, in section II that deals with the protection of cultural and natural heritage. This section provides measures and means for the protection, conservation and presentation of cultural and natural heritage which now includes 'groups of buildings'.

Also, in this Convention, the role of heritage was broadened by positioning it in its communal context. This was demonstrated in the first point of article 5, where each State Party to the Convention, as possible, was recommended to:

> Adopt a general policy which aims to give the cultural and natural heritage a function in the life of the community and to integrate the protection of that heritage into comprehensive planning programmes. (UNESCO, 1972)

This was the beginning of the recognition of urban heritage assets beyond their physical existence and the excessive attachment to the past. It reshaped the static perception of heritage. Having a function or a role means giving people the opportunity to interact with their heritage and relate themselves – and not just their ancestors – to it. It also means developing new values that reflects the wider acknowledgement of heritage by the public. Such additions show a deviation from the pure focus on the material aspect of heritage, which dominated earlier ideas in the field. Yet, as indicated in the paragraph cited above from the Convention, the focus was still on the heritage asset and its protection and not on sustaining the community that happens to be in a position to support it. Also, one cannot ignore the fact that this convention is concerned only with World Heritage and thus other heritage areas which are not granted this status may not be given the same attention. This however can be considered as a transitional step towards inter-subjectivism theory and the subject-focused phase.

The subject-focused phase

This phase in the conceptual development of urban heritage came as a result of a questioning of purpose; the 'so what?' and 'why?' questions. On this, Muñoz-Viñas (2005) states:

> Understanding why an activity is preformed comes very close to understanding the activity itself. It may reveal its goals and, by doing so, how to better fulfil them, which rules to abide by, and why they should be followed (Muñoz-Viñas, 2005).

By the end of the 1970s, many scholars were debating the purpose of conservation. For those advocating conservation, there was a search for 'something' beyond aesthetics and history; for 'something' that deals with an interactive present population. For instance, for Dobby (1978) this thing was 'associations'. For Lowenthal and Binney (1981) it was 'identity and the sense of permanence'. Likewise, Sandys (cited in Dobby, 1978) found it in 'values'. Yet, many of these new acknowledged justifications for conservation remained blurred due to their immaterial nature. This is clearly expressed in Dobby's statement: 'The most vague justifications for conservation are those which rely upon identity, associational and psychological needs' (1978). The search for a wider purpose for conservation continued until a coherent social framework was developed when the immaterial aspects were gathered under one overarching 'material-focused' category: the social. While values, memories and associations are intangible and often considered unquantifiable, shifting the focus from their stimulation to their effects on the society made them qualitatively measurable.

Also, within the same framework a broader definition of 'urban' has been addressed. 'Urban' in English, as defined in the Oxford Dictionary is 'in, relating to, or characteristic of a town or city' (Oxford University, 2012). It simply can be anything that has to do with a town or a city. If we abstract the city to built-up areas, open spaces, people, an economic system and governance, we can see that 'historic towns and urban areas' are not just the physical fabric or the 'groups of buildings' mentioned in the World Heritage Convention. Yet until that point, in conservation matters, attention had only been given to the 'built' heritage. It was therefore quite

revolutionary to broaden the definition beyond the physical aspect of 'urban'. Thus, the question of purpose found a meaningful fulcrum to support it. In urban heritage, this was addressed by the Charter for the Conservation of Historic Towns and Urban Areas 1987 (ICOMOS, 1987), widely known as the Washington Charter:

> In order to be most effective, the conservation of historic towns and other historic urban areas should be an integral part of coherent policies of economic and social development and of urban and regional planning at every level.

> [...] The conservation of historic towns and urban areas concerns their residents first of all. (ICOMOS, 1987)

Understanding the different dimensions of 'urban' makes urban heritage and its conservation no more an isolated task that only concerns conservation professionals. This led to, as mentioned in the Convention cited above, the integration of conservation in the established systems of the urban matrix; urban planning and urban, economic and social developments. This broadened definition of urban heritage led also in 1996 to the revision of the term 'groups of buildings' in the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention. Although the term was not changed in the original text of the World Heritage Convention, the word 'urban' was added in the Operational Guidelines to indicate the new dimensions of this category. In addition, the social aspect has been emphasized in paragraph 27, which elaborated on groups of urban buildings as falling into three main categories, one of which is historic towns which are still inhabited (UNESCO, 1996: 8).

The incorporation of the time dimension

More recently, the cultural heritage field has been moving towards incorporating the time dimension in the definition of cultural heritage. It is the realization that historic towns and urban areas, in addition to their material manifestation, are accumulated layers of social, cultural, economic and environmental constructs having tangible and intangible dimensions and are subject to constant change and evolution. Such view expands the scope of our understanding of urban heritage. Orbasli (2000) demonstrates this by stating that:

> Urban heritage exists in the physical attributes of buildings, public spaces and urban morphology; it is experienced by users [inheritors] in the present and it is concurrently in the making of the next generation of heritage. (Orbasli, 2000)

Also, a recent document by UNESCO highlights the evolving nature of urban heritage by defining it as:

> A human and social element, defined by a historic layering of cultural and natural values that have been produced by passing cultures and an accumulation of traditions, recognised as such in their diversity. (UNESCO, 2010)

This definition emphasizes the social aspect of heritage, acknowledges cultural change, the layering quality of heritage, and celebrates cultural diversity. According to this definition, urban heritage is not static; it can change over time, new values may be added and new traditions may be created. Although may not be fully acceptable to the conservation community yet, the definition also implies that some values or traditions may be replaced if the layering process happened to 'overwrite' them. The totality of the interaction between people, their environment, their values and the accumulated layers of culture over time generates the urban heritage of today and forms the basis of the urban heritage of the future. Undeniably, such definition is very broad and many of the urban aspects that have not been thought of as heritage in the past are heritage in today's terms. Figure 1 below demonstrates the three phases in the conceptual development of urban heritage and summarizes the milestones accomplished between the 1930s and the 2000s.
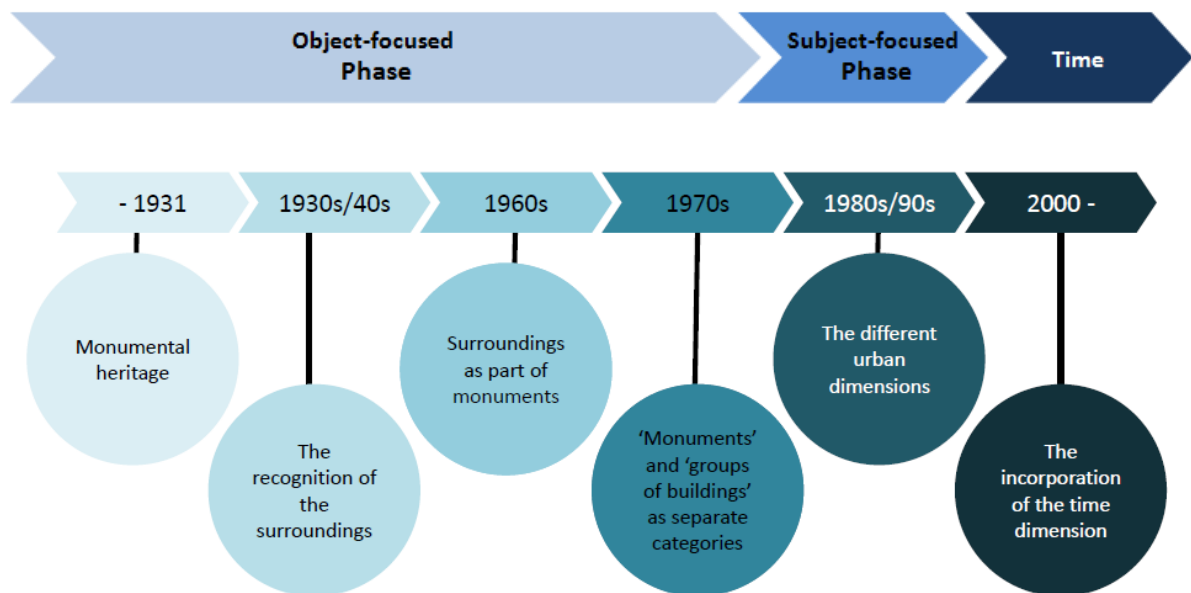

Fig. 1: The three phases in the evolution of urban heritage and the milestones accomplished between the 1930s and 2000s

Urban heritage and the evolution of vernacular studies

Since the Venice Charter 1964 (ICOMOS, 1964) and the recognition of built heritage beyond monuments, historic vernacular settlements has been covered implicitly as a type of cultural heritage. Then the Recommendation Concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Role of Historic Areas 1976 (UNESCO, 1976) made an explicit move towards the recognition of vernacular settlements in the heritage field by specifying the vernacular in the definition of 'historic and architectural areas'. Accordingly, from the cultural heritage point of view, as far as urban heritage is concerned, vernacular settlements are included. This means that the later definitions of urban heritage which included social, cultural, economic and environmental aspects in addition to the material one, apply to vernacular settlements. Also, it means that the

most recent re-conceptualization of urban heritage that incorporated time and the natural layering quality of culture is relevant to vernacular settlements in general.

If we look at the vernacular literature, we can see that the notion of vernacular settlements has evolved more or less in the same way of that of urban heritage. Thus the new conceptualizations of the vernacular in the urban heritage field is not completely out of context from the vernacular studies perspective. However, while, the starting point in the urban heritage field was marked by the recognition of built heritage beyond monuments, the starting point in the vernacular field is less clear. This is due to the controversy over the very definition of vernacular in the built environment.

The study of traditional settlements has a long history that goes back to the work of Morgan and Morse in the nineteenth century (Bourdier and Alsayyed, 1989, Morgan, 1965-original 1881, Morse, 1961-original 1896). Particularly, the term 'vernacular' is very common and has been used by different disciplines; each has defined it loosely from the perspective of the field. Hence, it is not surprising that there is actually no agreed definition for the term within the built environment. Vernacular architecture is commonly - and casually - explained as 'architecture without architects'. This seems partially because Architecture Without Architects; an exhibition of commented photographs of vernacular structures by Rudofsky in the 1960s at the New York Museum of Modern Arts (MoMA) is argued to be the event that triggered the interest of architects and architectural theorists in the area of vernacular studies (see Bourdier and Alsayyed, 1989, Arboleda, 2006b, Arboleda, 2006a).

However, there are other views on the term vernacular that particularly look at it as an area of theoretical studies that concerns only historic structures. Upton (1983) for instance, clearly expresses his view on the definition of vernacular by stating that vernacular architecture should be understood 'not as a category into which some buildings may be fitted and others not, but as an approach to architectural studies that complements more traditional architectural historical inquiries'. One would notice that Upton (1983) is very precise in defining the scope of studies under vernacular architecture as 'traditional architectural historical' inquiries. Also, this definition does not indicate anything about who is involved in the building process of vernacular structures. Actually, Upton (1983) particularly criticized that vernacular architecture has been a 'catch-all term' that covers studies of buildings, which are often neglected by traditional architectural history. He describes this attitude as grouping 'not-high-style architecture' under this term. Hence, his definition comes as a response to this attitude, which he strongly opposes. This stance of Upton (1983) regarding the definition of vernacular architecture shows that back in the early 1980s, the two schools of thought existed already: the one that limits the scope of vernacular architecture to historic and traditional practices, and another that adopts the idea that vernacular architecture is the architecture of people. In fact, the latter one, which can be described as interdisciplinary, seems to be more popular at that time.

A more recent definition by Arboleda (2006b) considers vernacular architecture as:

> An area of architectural theory that studies the structures made by empirical builders without the intervention of professional architects.

In this definition, Arboleda (2006b) agrees with Upton (1983) that vernacular architecture is an area of architectural theory, however, he eliminates limiting it to 'traditional architectural historical' inquiries. Instead, he adopts the common idea of vernacular as being 'architecture without architects'. These three definitions of vernacular within the built environment are just samples from the 1960s, 1980s and the millennium of this unresolved debate that continues

until today. In fact, introducing the notion of contemporary vernacular at this time can be seen as an attempt to put a limit to this dispute. Since this paper is concerned with contemporary vernacular, the more general definition of vernacular as the architecture of people is adopted here.

Without debating more on the starting point of the evolution of the notion of the vernacular, in a broad sense, one can trace the same milestones of the evolution of urban heritage in the vernacular field. Parallel to the era where objectivism was dominant in the heritage field, there was the same focus on the form and visual appearance of vernacular settlements. According to Upton (1983), there were two inherited traditions of eighteenth and nineteenth century artistic thought that influenced vernacular architecture scholars. The first valued the historic and romantic associations and the visual effects created by the passing of time and human alterations on old buildings. The second looked at vernacular architecture from an architectural historian point of view. Such studies involved field examination and precise recording and documentation of buildings and drawings. Typical works on vernacular architecture of this time are those by Norman Morrison Isham, Irving W. Lyon, and Henry Chapman Mercer (Upton, 1983). Those scholars were particularly attracted to the visual appeal of indigenous architecture and hence their studies reflect such interest, which is quite similar to that proposed by objectivism in its focus on the built 'objects'.

Yet, such romantic perceptions of vernacular architecture as being works of art have not been the case when it comes to modest examples of indigenous constructions. For example, Harrison (1980 cited in Kellett and Napier, 1995) in his description of third world cities, expressively states:

> Every Third World city is a dual city - an island of wealth surrounded by a black belt of misery. Outside the bright, shining modern city of skyscrapers, flyovers and desirable residences, the poor are camped in squalor, disease and neglect, in shacks and hutments of plywood, cardboard, mud or straw [....] (Harrison, 1980)

The description above of shacks, hutments, diseases and neglect is indeed a description of spontaneous/informal settlements built by people, mainly immigrants to house themselves. It is clear here that such settlements were viewed as problematic and an ugly challenge facing many cities in the world. Kellett and Napier (1995) refer this to the focus and emphasis placed on the 'built form' of spontaneous settlements which miss the acknowledgement of the processes that give rise to those informally-produced housing. Kellet (2011) goes further to describe such views as visually-based, romantically-driven and as value judgments provoking negative critiques. Spontaneous settlements seem different from the vernacular viewed by the romantic lens, and way different from the early stages in the evolution of urban heritage as discussed above. However, they all share the same focus on the object.

Again, parallel to the shift in the cultural heritage field from objectivism to inter-subjectivism, socially oriented studies in vernacular architecture emerged to provide new perspectives in the field. Kellett (2011) makes a distinction between early socially oriented studies in vernacular environments and later ones. He argues that early studies started by viewing the artefact and accordingly made conclusions about the people involved in the making of this artefact and those who uses it. On the contrary, in later studies, the frameworks were centred on societies in which the artefacts are produced. Examples of early 'socially oriented studies' in vernacular architecture are those discussed by Upton (Upton, 1983). The questions that such studies are designed to address includes investigating the social uses of spaces and how possessions and the daily activities are distributed within those spaces. Also, how a particular distribution can reflect a change in the social structure. Similarly, Rapoport studied

the 'design quality' of informal settlements and how they respond to the needs of their inhabitants (Rapoport, 1988).

Examples of latter social oriented studies emerged by the end of the 1960s. These studies made a shift in the way spontaneous settlements were perceived. Kellett and Napier (1995) describe it as a shift 'from problem to solution'. Before these studies, spontaneous settlements were viewed as social and visual pollution (Kellett and Napier, 1995). However, with shifting the framework of study from the artifacts to the societies in which the artifacts are produced, conclusion of such studies gave a positive interpretation of spontaneous settlements by considering them a first stage in an incremental process of betterment (Kellett and Napier, 1995). These studies arrived at a positive conclusion through interpreting and analysing the process of construction and the actions and choices of the residents of spontaneous settlements. Kellett (2011) describes this as a shift 'from visual bias to holistic approaches'. This is in many ways similar to the realization of the different aspects of 'urban' in the urban heritage field.

Finally, parallel to the recognition of the time dimension and the layering quality of cultures in the heritage field, there is a similar move towards more holistic approaches to vernacular studies, which incorporates time and change. Oliver (1987) for instance, emphasizes in his approach the evolutionary development of the building process of vernacular settlements. He goes further to detail stages in the progression of such form of housing production. For Oliver (1987) informal settlements are 'processes of emergent vernacular types' that will be developed and refined over time (see also Oliver, 1990). Similarly, Stea and Turan (1990) take into account in their analysis of vernacular settlements 'conditions of change'. These are the conditions that come from outside the society. They also consider 'basis of change' which are the conditions within the society that shape its response to external forces. More recently, introducing the very idea of 'contemporary' vernacular boldly suggests the integration of the time dimension into the definition of vernacular settlements. However, these views do not seem to be common. According to Kellett (2011), still common studies of informal settlements use 'superficial' approaches that focus on comparing them with formal traditional vernacular. This struggle in shifting the idea of vernacular from the historic traditional structures goes back to the original controversy over the definition discussed above. Again, until this dispute over the definition is resolved, it will be difficult to move forward with this matter. Figure 2 below summarizes the three phases in the evolution of vernacular studies and the focus of each phase.
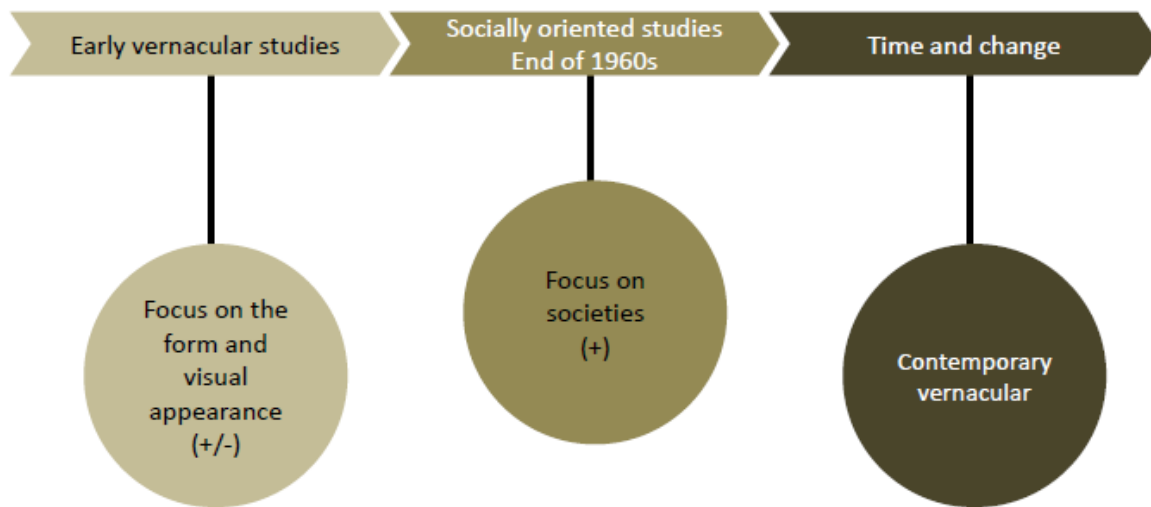
Fig. 2: The three phases in the evolution of vernacular studies and the focus of each phase

Final thoughts: The way forward

The discussion shows that there are parallels between the evolutions of vernacular in the two fields. More or less, similar ideas have been introduced into the two fields that have direct influences on the way vernacular settlements are perceived. Understanding this should encourage more interdisciplinary work between the two fields to sustain vernacular settlements and practices.

When discussing the evolution of urban heritage and vernacular settlements studies, it is central here to understand the meaning of conservation in this context. This is because unlike conservation objects in museums, cities and towns are living places. Thus, change is not just a result of the passing of time or the accumulation of cultural layering that happens over a long period of time. It is something that is experienced in everyday life in a form of adaptation to cultural, social, economic or environmental variations. Early recognition of this fact came with the Washington Charter which emphasises the protection and conservation of historic townscapes and highlights the importance of 'their developments and harmonious adaptation to contemporary life' (ICOMOS, 1987). A more recent definition is proposed by Orbasli (2000) where she defines urban conservation as:

> [...] a long-term political, economic and social commitment to an area with an intention of providing a better quality of life for its users. Conservation encompasses not only the physical urban fabric, but also an understanding of the spatial morphology and social dimension which makes urban heritage so distinct from the more 'object' qualities of the singular built heritage.(Orbasli, 2000)

It is important to understand that conservation is not about preventing change. On the contrary, change is part of the process that creates heritage. The conservation task is to manage this change and ensure the provision of a better quality of life for the users through this change. This makes the relationship between urban conservation and urban regeneration very blurred (Hohn, 1997). This is an advantage rather than a disadvantage because it sustains the life in the place through sustaining the interest of users. If contemporary vernacular is looked at as a

continuous process of betterment (Kellett and Napier, 1995, Kellett, 2011), this is not far from the idea of conservation/regeneration in the urban context. However, efforts from governments have to meet the residents' efforts to secure long-term development. Those places may or may not be of interest to visitors or tourists, but they are probably valued by their builders and residents and these are their 'conservation' merits.

In the end, we should not ignore the fact that as much as a broadened definitions may be viewed as an accomplishment; it is in fact a great challenge. A challenge that urges us to answer: what more should be done now once we have broadened the definition? How the newly addressed heritage/vernacular categories should be managed? And more importantly, what are the implications- of such developments in theory on practice?

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