

Historic Conservation in the Environmental Design Context

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I. Introduction

Change and continuity are two essential processes of the environment. All human efforts and natural phenomena are in a sense located somewhere on the change-continuity matrix, with different degrees of gravity. On the one hand, historic preservation in a conventional knowledge is a human effort to protect valuable remains of previous cultures and histories against negative or sometimes harmful changes occurred in the given environment, so as to keep the continuity. On the other hand, environmental design is another human effort to manage purposeful changes in the environment, with variable regards to continuity.

It is not unusual for the ordinary people to think that historic preservation and environmental design are quite different, and therefore, can not be integrated in a single practice. Conventionally, impatient and single-minded designs have been busy creating the brand-new environment, regarding historic things as obsoletes or obstacles to be removed.⁽¹⁾ In the meantime, historic preservation which is beyond the reach or consideration of the design process that is one of main and well-developed tools to manipulate environment, usually suffered from sporadic protection or arbitrary elimination.⁽²⁾ This discrepancy seems to be

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(1) Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, USA (1969), *Historic Preservation*, p. 10.

(2) Kevin Lynch (1972), *What Time is This Place?* (Cambridge: The MIT Press) p. 37.

caused by the lack of mutual understanding between both efforts, and by the independent evolution of the profession.

It is very important to fuse these two efforts into a single systematic effort because: firstly, both of them involve a lot of public decision-making on the shape and quality of the environment in the present and the future; secondly, it is very difficult to alter the physical environment once formulated, due to involved contradictory interests as well as inertia of the environment *per se*; thirdly, environments under the control of the historic preservation and environmental design are in most cases the same and single entities rather than different ones.

In both efforts, we can find several common attributes by which a unified single effort is available. Firstly, they are related with the change-continuity matrix, even with the different proportion or preponderance. Secondly, both are aiming at providing people with the experiential diversity which is one of the essentials to make an environment better to live in. Thirdly, both deal with the landscape which encompasses various things such as buildings, artifacts, natural elements, etc.

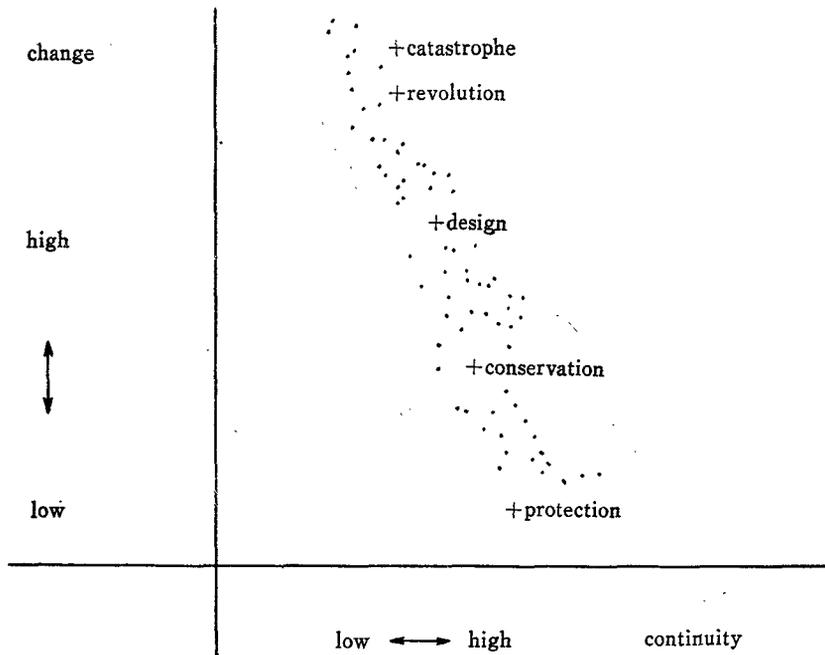
With these conceptions, this study is intended to reason the possibility to incorporate historic conservation in the context of the overall environmental design process, through clarifying the relationship between them.

II. Change and Continuity

Change—birth, growth, decay, and extinction— is the divine providence to which every organism and every component of the environment should conform. At the micro scale, everything undergoes an incessant stream of biological, chemical and physical changes. In addition to these natural changes, men have exercised a lot of change for the purpose of their survival and welfare from the early stage of their appearance on the earth. In one sense, cultures and histories of human being are the result of this process of change.

However, at the macro scale, everything keeps the sameness to some extent, apart from cases caused by the drastic changes such as natural catastrophes, large-scale human intervention or revolution, etc. This continuity is possible to be existent in two modes: firstly, it is possible in a transmigration sense by seeing that “decline and dissolution are only appearance, that resurrection will follow. i.e., to see that the irreversible change as a cosmic variant of the change, to pretend that change is also cyclical, to imagine that progressive

time is a series of éternal, contrasting repetitions, each rising from the other.”⁽³⁾ Secondly, it is possible by adaptation, a process by which we “respond to outside forces beyond our control, seeking to survive, to preserve something, to maintain some desired level of performance.”⁽⁴⁾ In this sense, neither ‘continuity without change’ on the basis of such retrogressive ideologies as antiquarianism,⁽⁵⁾ conservatism⁽⁶⁾ or whatever they can be called, nor ‘change without continuity’ shown in the rootless ‘throw-it-away’⁽⁷⁾ way of life and



(3) *Ibid.*, p. 65.

(4) *Ibid.*, p. 199.

(5) It is a nostalgic desire to put the clock to any or every era, and to commemorate the past by preserving all relics of former time. There is no measure: equal importance is given to everything, and therefore too much to anything. History’s service to the past life is to undermine a further and higher life. See Friedrich Nietzsche (1873), *The Use and Abuse of History*, trans. Adrian Collins (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1957), p. 19; and David Lowenthal and Hugh C. Prince (1965), “English Landscape Tastes,” *Geographical Review*, 55, pp. 204-207.

(6) It is a political outlook that involves a preference for institutions and practices that have evolved historically (and that are thus manifestations of continuity and stability) over radical political innovations and blue-prints for reshaping society. *Encyclopaedia Britannica Micropaedia*, 1975 ed., s.v. “conservatism.”

(7) See Bernard Rudfsky (1969), *Street for People* (Garden City: Anchor Press/Doubleday), p. 25; Bureau of Governmental Research, New Orleans, Louisiana (1968), *Plan and Program for the Preservation of the Vieux Carre*, p. 1; and Connecticut Historic Commission, USA (1969), *Historic Conservation: Progress and Prospects*, p. 6.

so on are reasonable. Virtually, every thing and process, whether natural or artificial, can be identified on the change-continuity matrix, as shown above.

Genetically, planning [design] is defined as the 'management of change(s)' or "to act on some object for the purpose of effecting *change(s)* one wishes to effect in the object."⁽⁸⁾ And thus, *environmental design is to act on the environment for the purpose of effecting change(s) one wishes to effect in the environment*, in the same manner. As shown in the below diagram, planning[design] occurs depending on the rationality⁽⁹⁾ of the action and teleology of the change.

Therefore, purposeful 'no change' and/or 'deferred change' are also the relevant planning[design] actions just as 'change' is.

"FOR" Purpose	Action "ON"	No Action	Non-designed Action (impulsive)	Designed Action (rational)	Deferred Action (rational)
No change				0	0
Random(or natural) change				1) planning occurs, or 2) lack of control	
Designed change		0		0	0
Deferred change		0		0	0

Source; Hasan Ozbekhan, (1969) "Toward a General Theory of Planning," in *Perspectives of Planning*, ed., Erich Janch (Paris: OECD), p. 55.

In this sense, *historic preservation which aims at purposeful 'no change' in valuable historic things can sufficiently be qualified as a planning action and treated in the planning [design] processes.*

III. Culture and History

We might say that culture is "the ways in which large number of people do things."⁽¹⁰⁾ In this sense, culture is superindividual, or common to all members of a human society. And culture as 'the ways of doing' is virtually the "expression of man's wide and flexible responses, in the form of behavioral patterns and emotional relationship as well as the development of utilitarian objects, to the physical and human environment,"⁽¹¹⁾ and inevi-

(8) Hasan Ozbekhan (1969), "Toward a General Theory of Planning", in *Perspectives of Planning*, ed. Erich Janch (Paris: OECD), pp. 54-55.

(9) Being 'rational' has meant having a problem-solving orientation. Francis Ferguson (1975), *Architecture, Cities and the Systems Approach* (New York: George Braziller, Inc.), p. 8.

(10) Philip Bagby (1958), *Culture and History* (London: Longmans, Green and Co.), p. 124.

(11) René Dubos (1968), *So Human an Animal* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons), p. 40.

tably, differs with time and from one place to another, not only because of the diversity and change of the environment, but also because of the diversity inherent in mankind and the change in value.

On the other hand, culture is an accumulation, the ways of doing handed down from generation to generation. However, this does not necessarily mean that the temporal section of the culture should be handed down intactly. Rather, should culture adapt itself to changes in the environment as well as in the human values, renew itself, and select those parts which become obsolete as time passes, but keep the overall framework. Therefore, change and continuity are the main essences by which a culture can survive or prosper. In this sense, *environmental design is a mode of cultural activity to provide a setting in which people do things through purposeful and organized responses to the environment.*

Similar it is with the history. History proper is "what large number of people do,"⁽¹²⁾ in contrast to the culture which is *how* large number of people do. Therefore we now can say that culture and history are in a supplementary relationship, although they are not exactly identical. What the history is usually concerned with is, however, not the present or the future, but the past, i.e., the past of human culture which has been accumulated through generations; on the contrary, culture is genetically present- and future-oriented. Furthermore, 'concerns' are not always limited "to inform and explain the events of past, to please people and inspire them to action in the present and future."⁽¹³⁾ Rather, history might be regarded as "a mode of thought using past as the form of reference and rationalization."⁽¹⁴⁾ This means that history should be employed to understand how and what the large number of people did in the past to respond to their environment, so as to develop the present and the future culture, within the change-continuity continuum. Understanding of knowledge of the past is regarded as useful solely for the "understanding of life in the present and in the future, not because history repeat itself,...,but because the past is incorporated in all manifestation of the present and will thereby conditions the future."⁽¹⁵⁾

Just as culture is the expression of human response to the environment, so the environment is the record of the cultural activities. If 'landscape' takes on the meaning of

(12) Philip Bagby (1958), p. 24.

(13) *Ibid.*, p. 48.

(14) Dharmendra Goel (1967), *Philosophy of History* (Delhi, India: Sterling Publishers Ltd.), p. 17.

(15) René Dubos (1968), p. 66.

“everything which surround us wherever we are,”⁽¹⁶⁾ landscape can be interpreted as identical with the concept of ‘environment.’⁽¹⁷⁾ In this sense, ‘cultural landscape’ in geographer’s term⁽¹⁸⁾ indicates the very geographical record of the cultural activities or the interaction of man and nature.

We might divide the landscape into two kinds: one is the ‘natural landscape’ that was not intervened and left intact; the other is the ‘cultural landscape.’ “All contemporary landscapes are virtually cultural landscape, because they have been impacted in differing degrees by human processes.”⁽¹⁹⁾ And thus, definition of environmental design is once again modified as the process to create the cultural landscape.

However, this cultural landscape, being the record of man/nature interaction, consequently encompasses all aspects of so-called “material culture which are the physical objects and the products of human activity; tools, weapons, pots, buildings, works of art and so on.”⁽²⁰⁾

Now we can say that just as the temporal facts of the culture is the concern of the history, so is the spatial facts of the culture expressed in the cultural landscape. This conception leads us into a complementary view, ‘historic landscape.’ Since any landscape in an extreme sense can be interpreted as a cultural landscape, any landscape can be understood as a historic landscape.⁽²¹⁾ In this view, landscape is the very accumulative record of the work of human efforts and natural processes. Needless to say, object to be served in historic preservation is this historic landscape, including various remains of the ‘material culture.’ Therefore, preponderance to architecture or independent object in the implemen-

(16) Garrett Eckbo (1969), *The Landscape We See* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co.), p. 3.

(17) There is a different view that landscape is related to, but not identical with, environment. Environment is an inherent property of every living thing, it is that which surrounds and sustains us as creatures. Meanwhile, landscape is less inclusive, more detached, not so directly part of our organic being, it displays us as cultures. However, for the purpose of this paper, it is not a big mistake to see the landscape identical with the environment. See D.W. Meinig (ed.) (1979), *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press), p. 3.

(18) Carl O. Sauer (1925), “The Morphology of Landscape,” in *Land and Life: A Selection From the Writings of Carl Ortwin Sauer*, ed. John Leighly (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1963), pp. 315-350; Marvin W. Mikesell, “Landscape,” *The Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 8, 1968, pp. 575-80.

(19) Paul W. English and Robert C. Mayfield (ed.) (1972), *Man, Space, and Environment: Concept in Contemporary Human Geography* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press), p. 5.

(20) Philip Bagby (1958), p. 80.

(21) D.W. Meinig (1976), “The Beholding Eye: Ten Version of the Same Scene,” *Landscape Architecture*, January 1976, pp. 52-53; Carl O. Sauer (1941), “Foreword to Historical Geography,” in *Land and Life: A Selection From the Writings of Carl Ortwin Sauer*, ed. John Leighly (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1963), pp. 351-379.

tation of historic preservation is not the proper form of the historic preservation. Though buildings are by nature easily identified, recorded and somewhat isolated for effective preservation, "it is not only the individual buildings that matter; their settings may also be important. Visually as well as in other respects, a good building may be made or marred by what goes on around it."⁽²²⁾

To summarize, the historic landscape is a subsystem of the cultural landscape and/or an another aspect of the cultural landscape. Therefore, it is a corollary that preservation to maintain the historic landscape should logically be incorporated in the environmental process which deals with the cultural landscape.

IV. Preservation vs. Conservation

With the advent of environmentalism as a social and political movement, exploiting the natural environment as it has been treated for centuries, or preserving the natural environment intact, largely based on the ecocentric philosophy which believes that "nature is not only essential to man's livelihood, but is the fundamental medium through which people understand their own personalities, their social functions, and the pattern of human relation"⁽²³⁾ become regarded as extreme ideologies, losing persuasiveness.

Instead of this 'all or nothing' approach, conservation which seeks for a moderate relationship between human being and natural environment is emerging as a relevant guideline. In general, conservation is the control of uses of resources which are important for the present generation and are expected to remain important most likely for the future generation. Resources are 'something useful' for the present and future of the human life: reversible if used in an adequate manner, or purely irreversible in some cases. Conservation in this sense largely includes not only the management of reversible resources, but also the protection of irreversible resources. What is additionally important is to dispose properly of old and obsolete things such as pollutants, which are virtually another form of materials, but are regarded unuseful.

As discussed previously, 'no change', 'deferred change', and/or 'change' on the basis of rationality are sufficiently qualified as a planning [design] activities. The conservation/planning

(22) Ministry of Housing and Local Government (1967), *Historic Towns: Preservation and Change* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office), p. 30.

(23) T. O'Riordan, "Environmental ideologies," *Environment and Planning A*, Vol. 9, No. 1, January 1977, p. 4.

ning relationship can be clarified as follows:

Conservation	Planning(Design)
management of reversible resources	deferred change
protection of irreversible resources	no change
disposal	change

Same it is with the historic landscape. Historic landscape is a kind of resource because it is useful for the human life in the present and future. All-or-nothing philosophy is once again irrelevant: to preserve all of the past would be unreasonable because all of old things are not necessarily good enough to be maintained,⁽²⁴⁾ just as all new things are not bad, and would be impossible because we have to dispose of obsolete old things so as to prevent our environment from being reduced to a junkyard; on the contrary, to deny all of the past would be inefficient because historic landscape is a sort of resource, and would be impossible because we actually are living on the node of the past and future.

The fact that it is an irreversible resource created in the past "cannot now be changed in any detail whatsoever,"⁽²⁵⁾ that it is a vulnerable resources against a lot of conflicting variables on the one hand, and that it does not always represent the pure and typical past valuable enough to be maintained, but sometimes they have been selected arbitrarily or survived by chance calls for being 'conserved', as it is in the case of conservation of the environment in general.

Furthermore, to employ the historic landscape as a vehicle to understand how and what the people did in the past to respond to their environment and so as to develop the present and future culture, what we need is not "an encyclopaedic scattered knowledge about the past."⁽²⁶⁾ This fact augments the eligibility of the historic conservation to be conducted in the environmental design process.

To summarize, historic landscape should be treated in the form of conservation, in the course of environmental design. In other words, *conservation is the most relevant and comprehensive doctrine to treat historic landscape in the context of environmental design.*

(24) Nobody can study the past: they can only study relics of the past. By Nature, those relics are not always good or typical. See David Thomson (1969), *The Aims of History: Values of the Historical Attitude* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd.), p. 17.

(25) *Loc. cit.*

(26) *Ibid.*, p. 15.

V. Diversity and Ordered Experience

For all, design is a process of organizing parts into a unified entity. Usually there are two ways to make the whole of the parts. One is to create inductively a whole by aggregating independent and self-contained parts: the whole is just a set in which parts are occasionally and passively got together by exogeneous pressure. 'Suboptimization,' which is "the attempt to optimize the performance of a particular subsystem [part] without regard to the effects of this optimizing action upon the larger whole of which is the subsystem[part] is but a constituent part,"⁽²⁷⁾ is a relevant concept to explain this approach. We can find such a situation in an ugly urban landscape that has been created through piece-by-piece addition and subtraction of parts.

The other is to create an organic whole, in which the positional values are given to parts by the whole, and thus parts function just as the organizing members. Therefore, the whole become "more than the mere sum of the part," on the basis of the principle of unity in variety [diversity].⁽²⁸⁾

However, this extreme unity reveals a feeling of monotony, since the sameness of the involved parts eventually decreased the impressiveness of parts, and consequently of the whole. "The environment is a demeaning experience when the small scale elements that comprise the urban scene are neglected, and the synergism of that neglect becomes a shabby, uninspired, unattractive urbanscape."⁽²⁹⁾ On the contrary, too busy diversity caused by totally individual and different parts also fails to create a unified sense. Therefore, in order to create a sense of unity, the whole should be an organic whole, while the parts have identities. However, identity of part should be defined in the overall framework of the whole.

From another viewpoint, diversity of choice is the characteristic which distinguish human being from other organisms. Diversity is the prerequisite of the stability of any system as a whole⁽³⁰⁾: people who have no choice are subject to fall into fatalism. "The ultimate

(27) Francis Ferguson (1975), p. 6.

(28) Morris Weitz (1969), "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics," in *Aesthetic Inquiry: Essays on Art Criticism and the Philosophy of Art*, eds., Monroe C. Beardsley and Herbert M. Schueler (Belmont: Dickenson Publishing Co., Inc.), pp. 4-5.

(29) Richard P. Dober (1969), *Environmental Design* (Huntington: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Co. Inc.), p. 184.

(30) See Paul W. Barkley and David W. Seckler (1972), *Economic Growth and Environmental*

purpose of a city[a cultural landscape] in our time is to provide a creative environment which has great diversity and thus allows for freedom of choice.”⁽³¹⁾

Then, what is the diversity in the environment and thus environmental design? The implicit premise is that the environment can be divided: it is divisible in various ways from the different viewpoints. So called ‘formative elements’ or visual elements⁽³²⁾ are those design elements which take the form of base planes, verticals, overhead planes or buildings, trees, roads, etc., or any operational classification. Contrarily, ‘experience elements’ refer to enclosure, openness, transition, tension, relax, such and such. Compared with the concept of formative elements, the concept of experience elements is more relevant for explaining and manipulating environmental phenomena which are the juxtaposition of various activities by various people over a long period of time.

Experiences are made through awaring events and thus we are actually in the stream of experiences running along the spatial as well as temporal axis which originate from our selves. “Just as we cannot escape from the experience stream which engulfs us, we seemingly cannot refrain from manipulating those experiences into pattern which are meaningful to us.”⁽³³⁾ The significance of disturbing impact on ordered experience caused by the urban renewal,⁽³⁴⁾ for instance, demonstrates this conception.

Now, we can agree with John Ormsbee Simonds’ remarks on design philosophy that “one plans[designs] not places, or spaces or things—one plans[designs] experiences.”⁽³⁵⁾ Summarily, environmental design is to create an experience unity of the environment through organizing diversified experience elements which have a characteristic but organic quality so as to make people achieve ordered experience in the environment.

Historic landscape under conservation is actually a part in the whole context of the

Decay (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.), p. 7; Kenneth E.F. Watt (1973), *Principles of Environmental Science* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co.), pp. 265-266; and Jane Jacobs (1970), “The Generators of Diversity,” in *The Urban Vision: Selected Interpretations of the Modern American City* (Homewood: The Dorsey Press), pp. 272-277.

(31) Lawrence Halprin (1972), *Cities* (Cambridge: The MIT Press), p. 7.

(32) Edmund B. Feldman (1967), *Art as Image and Idea* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc.), p. 280; Richard P. Dober (1969), p. 70; and James A. Schneller (1966), *Art: Search and Self-discovery* (Scranton: International Textbook Co.) p. 21.

(33) Ronald Alber, John S. Adams, and Peter Gould (1971), *Spatial Organization: The Geographer’s view of the world* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc.), p. 6.

(34) Marc Fried (1966), “Grieving for a Lost Home: Psychological Costs of Relocation,” in *Urban Renewal: The Record and the Controversy*, ed., James Q. Wilson (Cambridge: The MIT Press), pp. 359-379.

(35) John Ormsbee Simonds (1961), *Landscape Architecture* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc.), p. 225.

environment. Therefore, experiences acquired within the historic landscape should be distinctive, but be incorporated in the whole stream of total experience, especially in the urban setting where historic landscape is in the web of daily life.⁽³⁶⁾ However, we usually overlook this fact. For example, period-museum-typed historic landscape in which mostly buildings are viewed as monuments or abstract *objets d'art*, with the appearance frozen at a specific time period is the most typical outcome of this outlook. Although this method might be appropriate if it is a cluster of several buildings or objects of exceptional value, basically they are in negative uses, which denies the interaction with the environment. Historic district, although it is less passive than period museum, also takes less account of the interaction with the environment. If they cannot be interpreted in the context of contemporary environment, they are liable to become unexpected obstacles to sound change, while hurting themselves.

In any way, historic landscape which has a unique quality provides diversity to the whole environment and thus to the people. Furthermore, historic landscape provides people with another chance of behavioral support: physical appearance and ambiance of the historic landscapes are so familiar that people need not raise questions in the course of ordering experiences.⁽³⁷⁾ A rich or profound experience which is critical to order other experiences is often available through cumulation of previous experiences.

Logically enough, I can spell out that historic conservation is aimed at maintaining the unique identity of the historic landscape so as to provide people with a characteristic experience. Moreover, this experience enriches the inventory of the total experience of the environment, and helps to create the ordered experience. In this sense, historic preservation can and should be incorporated in the environmental design process.

VI. Conclusion

Environmental design and historic preservation are commonly concerned with the change-continuity matrix. Environmental design is to act on the environment for the purpose of effecting change(s) one wishes to effect in the environment. Since deferred change, no change i.e., keeping continuity and change conducted based on the rationality are, by definition, sufficiently qualified design activities as well as conservation, historic landscape,

(36) David Tomson (1969), p. 17.

(37) See Ronald Alber, John S. Adams, and Peter Gould (1971), p. 10; and Kevin Lynch (1972), pp. 36-40.

which is a part of cultural landscape can and should be fused in the environmental design process.

Moreover, environmental design aims at creating an experience unity of the environment or the cultural landscape through organizing diversified experience elements, which have characteristic but organic qualities, so as to make people achieve ordered experiences in the environment. In short, it provides experiential diversity so as to make people easily order their daily experiences. Historic conservation, on the other hand, which is intended to conserve the unique characteristics of the historic landscape, enriches the experiential diversity of the whole cultural landscape which encompasses the historic landscapes and provide people with experiences familiar enough not to arise questions in the course of ordering. By this relationship, historic conservation can and should be incorporated into the environmental design process. These clarified relationship are useful to improve the existing implementation tools:

- to reorient architecture-oriented efforts toward landscape-oriented endeavors.
- to widen the narrow scope of preservative and preventive philosophy toward the conservation approach.
- to reapproach both toward people-oriented or experience-based efforts.

As it is with all human activities, the most important procedure in the course of doing something is, firstly to clarify what should be done and why, before developing the know-how. Unfortunately in the conservation practice(including historic conservation), "there is much knowhow but little understanding what should be conserved and why."⁽³⁸⁾ This situation calls for identifying competent criteria on which proper judgement or decision-making may base. And more propoundly, "to understand how and why their criteria become criteria in the first place is important."⁽³⁹⁾ The relationship studied in this study is expected to be referred to this end.

(38) René Dubos (1968), p. 221.

(39) Richard Toth (1971), "Criteria in Land Planning and Design," *Landscape Architecture*, October 1971, p. 44.