

1. Assessing Amsterdam's heritage management framework

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Summary

This paper reveals Amsterdam's heritage management framework and discusses how this framework provides for the assessment and control of development within the 'Seventeenth-century canal ring area' as a recently inscribed World Heritage site.

2. World Heritage management in Amsterdam

The *Seventeenth-century canal ring area of Amsterdam* was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list in 2010 and is the latest Dutch heritage site to receive the World Heritage (WH) label. The property (figure 1) covers a large part of Amsterdam's inner city and its World Heritage status implies an added layer of cultural significance to the site and increased management responsibilities for the city. Management of WH properties like the Amsterdam canal district is particularly complex due to their location within dense urban areas. According to e.g. Pendlebury (2009:350), the dilemma facing these urban WH properties is that the objective of conservation is now confronted with a constantly evolving urban context. This confrontation leads to two opposing problems: On the one hand is the concern that development could damage cultural heritage, and on the other hand is the concern that conservation could be a constraint to the necessary evolution of urban areas. However, a more integrated approach is possible and could, as proposed by Van Oers (2010:14), incorporate the notion of change within conservation practices and position conservation as the process by which this inevitable change is managed for the better. Guidelines for such approach are further developed in the 'Recommendation on Historic Urban Landscapes' (UNESCO, 2011).

With change as an accepted condition, achieving an appropriate balance between cultural heritage and development becomes the key to managing urban WH properties in a sustainable way. For the city of Amsterdam to achieve and sustain such a balance, development has to be allowed but within the limits of acceptable change (LAC) to control the potential impact on cultural heritage.

2.1. Site management and impact assessment

To manage appropriate changes and protect the cultural significance, a sound legislative and policy framework is needed to guide management and development practices (Getty, 2010:6). Amsterdam has a longstanding tradition of monument protection and urban planning (ICOMOS, 2010), both anchored in local and national policy and both now forming key parts of the management plan for the canal district as WH site. The strict regulatory framework in Amsterdam creates a specific and controlled process through which developments have to be approved. A closer look at this process reveals how the balance between cultural significance and development is managed, how conservation decisions are influenced and on which values and guidelines the process is based.

This paper reveals how local policy in Amsterdam assesses and restricts the impact of



Fig. 1.(left)
The core zone of the World Heritage site entitled "Seventeenth century canal district within the Singelgracht, Amsterdam"

Fig. 2. (right)
Classification map for Amsterdam's inner city conservation area

development on cultural heritage values and thus on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the WH property, which is managed within the broader policy framework of the inner city. The recent guidelines by ICOMOS (2011) on Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA), specifically developed for determining impact of development on OUV, emphasize the importance of linking fixed local policies with impact assessment. This research illustrates how the site specific management framework in Amsterdam is used to assess and control potential impacts on the OUV of the property and its attributes.

3. Methodology

With the aim of understanding (in both broad and specific terms) how development is assessed and controlled by Amsterdam's management system, the research forms an overview of the management framework in place by analysing its legal and procedural structures. This analysis is focused on the permit system, which forms the legal basis for conservation within Amsterdam. The permit process is systematically described here as a series of stages that permits follow from application to approval, including the moments when HIA is required. The analysis is based on the management plan (City of Amsterdam, 2009), procedural descriptions available from the municipality and interviews with various experts.

Further analysis identified the most relevant policies, activities and stakeholders that form part of the permit review process in terms of heritage impact assessment. This was collected from various policy documents, and relevance was determined based on their influence on conservation decisions (yes/no) and their direct reference to cultural values (yes/no). Uncovering such management measures within policy allows for a discussion on the possibility of achieving a sustainable balance between development and cultural significance within this policy context. The results discussed in this paper are focused mainly on the broader analysis stages of the research.

4. Impact assessment within the permit process

Changes within Amsterdam, caused by building activities or development projects, are controlled through permit regulations. These regulations precede the inscription of the canal district to the WH list and were not specifically modified in relation to WH status. Building permits are needed before any building activity can take place and all permit applications are assessed in terms of the impact of a proposal on cultural significance. These impact assessment activities (HIA), in the case of Amsterdam, are dealt with by the municipality internally. Aside from a limited number of "permit free" activities, changes are not allowed without an approved building permit (City of Amsterdam, 2009:127). Provisions within the Housing act of 2002 and the monument act of 1988 fixes permit requirements within the national legal framework (City of Amsterdam, 2009:147), while the application, review and approval of permits involve various policies, activities and organizations on a municipal level. The process that a permit application follows (figure 3), applies to all buildings within the conservation area (which covers a the inner-city, including the canal district) and will be considered here in five stages: 1) Screening (determine permit type), 2) Application (submit documentation), 3) Scoping (identify criteria based on monument classification category), 4) Review (review proposal based on criteria) and 5) Approval (permission or no permission).

4.1. Stage 1 - Screening

The screening stage is the first step in assessing the impact of a proposal. A set of prescribed limits determines whether the scope and nature of the proposed impact justifies further investigation within the permit process. Proposed building activities are assessed to determine whether or not, a permit is required, and if so, which type. Permit types include building-, monument-, or demolition permits and requirements apply to all types of buildings in the canal district and to both private and public ownership (City of Amsterdam, 2013). However, there are certain types of building activities which are "permit free" (Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed, 2011), these activities are exempt from permit requirement based on criteria such as: 1) Scale, e.g. minor building installations such as roof windows or solar installations, 2) Type, e.g. maintenance activities that do not deviate from the original form, colour, material and detailing. 3) Location, e.g. activities outside the building such as garden structures, 4) Historic value, e.g. changes to fixtures without historic value such as non-original interior fixtures, and 5) Monument classification, e.g. certain types of changes to non-monumental buildings such as additions to the back facade.

4.2. Stage 2 - Application

Building permit applications are submitted to the central district of the City of Amsterdam, which has authority over the approval of permits within the inner city (City of Amsterdam, 2009:147). In order to be assessed in the review stage (stage 4), applications need to include documentation such as photographs of the existing building and architectural drawings of proposed changes. Because of the municipality's internal assessment processes, independent heritage impact assessments are not required but can, according to Mattie (2012), be submitted by the applicant in support of the design proposal.

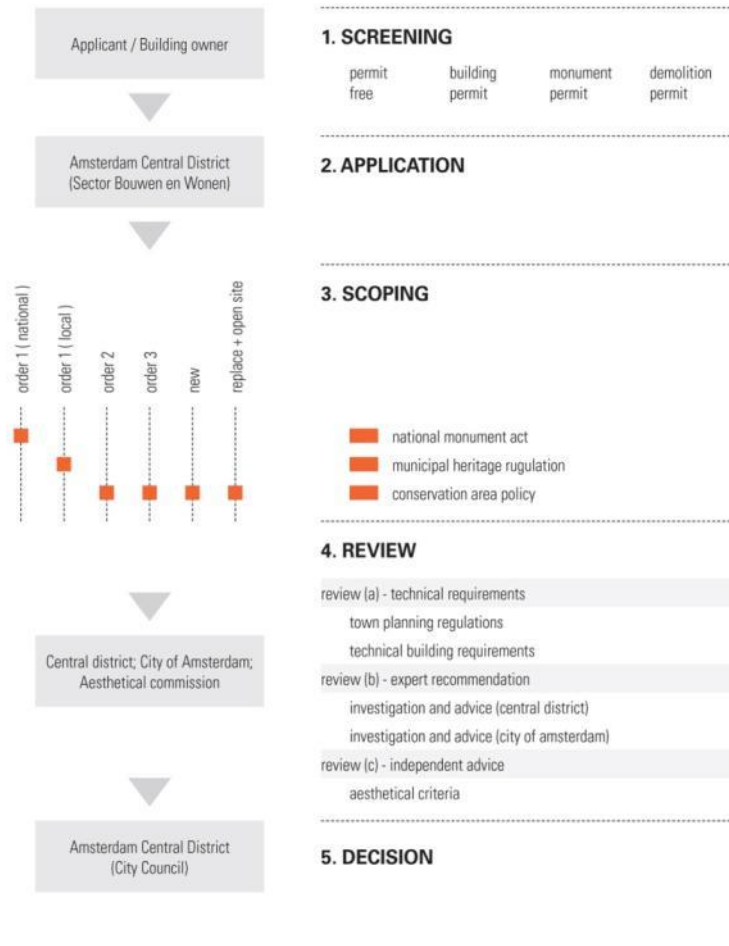


Fig. 3. The five stages of the permit process

4.3. Stage 3 - Scoping

The pre-existing monument classification of the building or site is identified in the scoping stage. The assessment criteria for the type and LAC are based on this classification and the allowed impact level of a proposal falls within such pre-determined classification. This classification is found in national and municipal monument listings as well as the valuation maps related to national conservation areas (the historic inner city of Amsterdam's was listed as a national conservation area in 1999). The different monument classifications imply variations to the process followed during the review stage (stage 4). Figure 2 illustrates how buildings are grouped into various categories: *Order 1* buildings are national or municipal monuments, *order 2* and *order 3* buildings are non monumental buildings valued within the conservation area as part of the urban ensemble and other categories include *new buildings*, *buildings to replace* and *open sites*. (Amsterdam Central District, 2000).

4.4. Stage 4 - Review

Within the permit process, proposed building activities are judged against various test criteria, the Housing Act of 2002 describes the review areas where this criteria is applied: "...a permit can be refused if a proposed structure does not comply with: the technical specifications of the Building

Code; the municipal building regulations; the provisions of the current zoning plan; reasonable demands of building aesthetics; the requirements relating to the monumental status of a structure” (City of Amsterdam, 2009:147). During the review stage the permit application is circulated, within a structured process, to the relevant local departments and organizations involved in the review process. This process (figure 4), can be explained in three parts:

a) First, all permit applications are tested against technical building requirements and town planning regulations by appointed experts within the local authorities. If an application fails to meet their criteria it is rejected before passing to the further stages of the review. The technical execution of building activities is guided by national and municipal building regulations, which provide criteria for issues such as safety and quality of construction. Urban planning criteria such as function, building height, floor area and building plot divisions are determined by the city’s zoning plans. The canal district is situated within a national conservation area and the related policy (Amsterdam Central District, 2000) links the level of cultural significance (e.g. order 1, 2, 3) to spatial planning by requiring valuation maps (fig.2) within zoning plans. Specific technical and town planning regulations thus restrict the impact of development on heritage. The town planning guidelines are to link the type of building activity with the LAC per determined level of cultural significance to see if the proposed change is allowed or not. After that, the following parts of the review process (b+c) consider the impact of a proposal on historic value and aesthetic quality.



Fig. 4. Overview of the permit review stage

b) What follows is a case specific advice, based on site investigations, expert recommendation and heritage impact assessments. This plays an important role in eventual adjudication of a permit. Amsterdam’s heritage authority, the “Amsterdam Bureau of Monuments and Archeology” (BMA)

assesses proposals related to all national or municipal buildings (order 1) while heritage experts within the planning department of Amsterdam's central district assess monuments of lower categories (2, 3 and other). Detailed policies such as the "Program of requirements for quality monuments" (Amsterdam Central District, 2009) are used as criteria for assessing proposals for the renewal and restoration of monuments. For urban scale projects the Central district considers the impact of a proposed development on the historic urban context and compiles specific development criteria to be used further in the review process. The BMA and the central district cooperate on reviewing applications and both remain involved the following part (c) of the review stage.

c) The final part of the review stage considers proposals in terms of aesthetic impact. It is the responsibility of the independent "Building Aesthetics Agency" (Welstand) to judge aesthetic implications based on the criteria defined by the central district in the "Aesthetic Appearance Document for the Central District" (City of Amsterdam, 2013). This criteria guide visual impact assessment, and is based on the aesthetic and historic values of buildings and their relationship with the historic urban context. The "Building aesthetics agency" makes an independent recommendation and refers the application back to the central district for adjudication in the decision stage (stage 5)..

4.5. Stage 5 - Decision

Final permit decisions are made on a political level, by representatives of the city council. They interpret all the recommendations received for a specific application and make the final decision regarding the approval or rejection of a permit application (City of Amsterdam, 2009:147). The final decision on whether a proposed change is appropriate is based on the process and recommendation preceding it, but ultimately lies within the political realm.

5. Conclusion and discussion

Project based HIA's are not obliged to accompany a development proposal in Amsterdam. However, the process followed does include assessment of the impact of development within Amsterdam based on pre-determined cultural values, which is governed by a stringent process involving various policies, activities and role-players. Within this process there are pre-set criteria on both an urban and detailed level that set the LAC towards the level of cultural significance. Further, case specific analysis and discussions provide opportunity for site specific values to be identified and conflict areas to be mitigated.

On a collective (urban) scale, the general historic characteristics of the conservation area form the background to the impact assessment for most buildings in the canal district and these values are said to be integrated with urban planning policies and building regulations. Although buildings are classified according to their monument categories (order 1,2,3), neither the specific values nor the OUV of each individual building is defined within official conservation or urban planning guidelines, causing an initial reliance on generic values until the review stage is reached where site specific analysis is done. The relationship between urban scale policy and individual assessments is crucial in order to protect the intrinsic values of buildings and at the same time control the collective impact that a series of smaller changes might have on the broader context.

The official documents on the WH property such as the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (UNESCO, 2010) include a wide array of attributes. However, the policies still lean strongly towards the protection of visual attributes such as building facades, the property's visible streetscape not expected to change significantly in the future. Preceding research (Swart et al., 2012) does indicate recent and dramatic changes to less visible attributes of the property such as parcellation structure and roofscape. As a result of a focus on the visible attributes, and the lack of overview on series of smaller changes, underlying building consolidations affected the basic typology and use of Amsterdam's canal houses. Policy measures against these types of changes are now starting to be implemented and local authorities have supported the research related to these issues.

Classification categories provide LAC and the amount and distribution of categories within the property on the one hand has a big effect on how the canal district can still evolve and what space is allowed for development. Yet, the level of significance (orders) is not specifically linked to the Outstanding Universal Values of the property as a World Heritage site but remain embedded in local policy and valuation processes. As such, conflict between the WH value of the urban area and the more lenient rules towards redevelopment proposals for lower order monuments could arise, as it is not set, that a order 3 monuments has no attributes of OUV. With stringent guidelines as a given, there is always need for impact assessments to deal with the detailed implications of proposals.

However, impact assessments are also crucial on an urban level, and the spread of the attributes and values.

This paper attempted to clarify and assess the Amsterdam's management system in order to understand the processes surrounding conservation, assessment and management. However, the variety of control measures, the complexity of the process, the depth of Amsterdam's policy framework provides problems of complexity on the one hand but a thorough series of checks and balances on the other. Further, the fact that Amsterdam's policies are constantly changing and the fact that these processes are often open to interpretation and exceptions makes attempts to provide definite answers through analysis difficult. The researchers see a contradiction that could complicate such research even more: Policy in Amsterdam seems to increasingly require consideration for the impact of development on cultural significance, yet on the other hand a shift towards deregulation can be found in Dutch policy in general (OCW and I&M, 2011). Comparing Amsterdam to other WH case studies in future research could place Amsterdam's policy system in perspective and illustrate the positive and negative aspects more clearly. To predict how the future relationship between development and conservation in Amsterdam and other WH sites will be balanced is difficult, but the need to understand and assess the implications of ongoing changes will remain of crucial importance.

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