Social Sustainability in Caribbean Conservation

Ms. Nerys I. Rudder
The Blue Road: Art, Heritage and Design Consultancy, Bridgetown, St. Andrew, Barbados. BB25912.

Introduction
A case study of how practical social sustainability can be integrated within intervention conservation programmes. The subject is the Montefiore Fountain, a monument within the UNESCO World Heritage site of Bridgetown and St. Michael.

The three recognised pillars of sustainability are Environmental, Economic and Social. Social sustainability is the least defined and most often overlooked. Yet it can be incorporated into conservation practice through facilitating community development, empowerment, participation and sustainability.

As with this project skill sharing, use of locally sourced materials where available and engaging public and stakeholder education programmes all help to promote community ownership and engagement.

"Social sustainability combines design of the physical world with design of the social world – infrastructure to support social and cultural life, social amenities, systems for citizen engagement and space for people and places to exist." Woodcraft et al 2011, Pg 16.

History
The Montefiore Drinking Fountain was presented to the city of Bridgetown by John Montefiore in 1865, to commemorate his father who was one of the first persons to die from a cholera outbreak in 1854.

John Francis Bentlely is believed to have been the architect. Originally at Blewford Place and on the main thoroughfare in the capital city, the monument was moved to its present site in Magazine Lane in 1949. The small garden in the area now serves as a popular meeting point for the public.

The Project
The restoration of the monument was led by consultant conservator Angel Santiago-Torres over two sessions in 2010 and again in 2011.

Mr. Torres has consulted with the NAGC since 2012 on the National Collection as well as assisted many other institutions on island. The author managed the administrative aspect of this restoration project.

The venture was performed under the auspices of the National Art Gallery Committee, a government initiative run through the Ministry of Culture.

4 Training
Mr. Torres was assisted by staff members of the Ministry of Transport and Works and the National Conservation Commission, two of the public institutions mandated to care for the public monuments of Barbados.

A total of four technicians benefited from skill-embarking training under the guidance of Mr. Torres.

All communicated the benefits of working under Mr. Torres’ guidance, and that the experience would have a positive impact on their own work at their respective institutions.

5 Intervention
- Removal of biological decay mechanisms
- Removal of man-made decay mechanisms (graffiti and garbage)
- Cleaning of polychrome and bare stone
- Molding, sourcing and replacing missing parts
- Determining and performing ethically appropriate re-pigmentation, re-painting and re-gilding

6 Sourcing Materials
When working on environmental, economic or social sustainability, sound advice and actions that whenever possible, locally sourced materials should be utilised.

Like many small island developing states, Barbados contends with geographic and market restrictions. However, in the majority of the restoration efforts local, or at the very least regional supplies like points, tiles and substrates were used.

Further Information
Nerys Rudder has provided an article design and the change management services in Barbados for over ten years. He is currently pursuing a LEED in Conservation Practice from the Environmental Designers of the USA.

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7 Education and Awareness
A successful public education activity was the walking tour “Working with Monument”. Grandaddy the National Conservation Commissioner, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Transport and Works, artists and the general public also participated.

The tour encompassed eight monuments in Bridgetown and consisted of discussions and tips on the care of each monument.

Feedback was incredibly positive, with participants expressing an increased knowledge sharing within their institutions and implementation of conservation recommendations.

Networking was also facilitated with the aim to further the cause of public art and monuments in Barbados.

8 Documentation
A leaflet on the care of the monuments within the World Heritage Ceddrum area was produced.

This provided much-needed documentation and educational referencing for the stakeholders.

Media coverage of the project was facilitated both in print and digitally via newspaper articles, personal blog entries and on various government-based websites.

This programme helped to promote significantly higher levels of positive public feedback in comparison to past NAGC interventions.

9 Conclusion
The restoration of the Montefiore Fountain created a strong sense of community ownership, higher perceived value and enhanced use of a popular public space.

Personal and institutional skill sets for public monuments care were considerably expanded.

This is expected to lead to less vandalism and a better maintenance programmes in the future.

Literature Cited
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