

Social Sustainability in Caribbean Conservation

Ms. Nerys I. Rudder

The Blue Road: Art, Heritage and Design Consultancy, Boscobel, St. Andrew, Barbados. BB25012.

1

Introduction

A case study of how practical social sustainability can be integrated within interventive conservation programmes. The subject is the **Montefiore Fountain**, a monument within the UNESCO World Heritage site of Bridgetown and its Garrison, Barbados.

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, capital, responsibility and competence.

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



Before and After treatment photographs of the Montefiore Fountain. Images courtesy of A. Torres and W. Cummins respectively



"Social sustainability combines design of the physical realm 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 evolve."
Woodcraft et al 2011, Pg 16.

2

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 Bentley is believed to have been the architect. Originally at Beckwith Place and on the main thoroughfare in the capital city, the monument was moved to its present site in Magazine Lane in 1940. The small garden in the area now serves as a popular meeting point for the public.



Montefiore Drinking Fountain, Beckwith Place, Bridgetown, Barbados, circa 1875. Image courtesy of the Caribbean Photo Archive.

3

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 2002 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.



Mr. Murphy of the Ministry of Transport and Works in discussion with Mr. Torres. Image courtesy of W. Cummins

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 benefitted from skills-enhancing 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.



Images of treatment in progress. Images courtesy of A. Torres, W. Cummins and N. Rudder

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, in-painting and re-gilding.



Before and after images showing sourced paint, tiles and gold-leaf, replacing losses from the original. Images courtesy of A. Torres



6

Sourcing Materials

When working toward environmental, economic or social sustainability, sound advice cautions that wherever possible, locally sourced materials should be utilized.

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 paints, tiles and solvents were used.

7

Education and Awareness

A successful public education activity was the walking tour "Working with Monuments". Geared towards the National Conservation Commission, 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 descriptions and tips on the care of each monument.

Feedback was incredibly positive, with the representatives agreeing to 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 catchment 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.



Images of the Working with Monuments walking tour through Bridgetown. Images courtesy of N. Rudder

Front page of the Educational Leaflet to accompany the walking tour. Courtesy of the National Art Gallery Committee

9

Conclusion

The restoration of the Montefiore fountain created a strong sense of community ownership, higher perceived value and enhancement of a popular public space.

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

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



Images of the garbage collected from the interior basin of the fountain. The area was filled with locally sourced sand to stop a repeat offence. Images courtesy of A. Torres



Further Information
Nerys Rudder has provided art, design and collections management services in Barbados for over twelve years. She is currently pursuing a MSc. in Conservation Practice (Archaeological and Museum Objects) at Cardiff University, UK. Telephone: (UK) +011447968234997 (Barbados) +0012464399496. Email: nerysrudder@gmail.com

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank William Cummins, the Barbados Museum and Historical Society, the Caribbean Photo Archive, the National Art Gallery Board and Jane Henderson of Cardiff University for their input and assistance with this poster. Special mention and thanks must go out to Angel Santiago-Torres: a true gentleman.

Literature Cited

Woodcraft, S., Bacon, N., Caistor-Arendar, L. and Hackett, T. 2011. Design for Social Sustainability, Social Life. London. Available at: http://www.social-life.com/media/files/DESIGN_FOR_SOCIAL_SUSTAINABILITY_3.pdf. [Accessed 20th March 2014].