Between heritage conservation and urban renewal. A case study: Paris, from Haussmann to the present day

Introduction
The long evolution of cultural heritage till today’s wide meaning is intimately linked to France, where this concept was born in the 19th century, during the Revolution, Empire and the Restoration, it originated from the redefinition of cultural identity and progresses through a sequence of legislative acts: initially linked to the preservation and enhancement of the latter of the historical buildings and protected areas, and then of the historical centers. This has been since then a “culture” for such in interest, initially focused on urban decor concerns and finally on the city’s whole aesthetics. In the course of time, the emphasis has changed from social stability toward social and sustainable economic development. In all, this improvement is not very different from that of the French law on heritage. It is here confirmed and expressed by vigorous debates and a special attention paid to urban areas to which concern was repeatedly linked to its normative bodies and legal instruments (Choay, 2009). While the Haussmann’s decree of 1852 in which, although linked to a real need of modernization, the notion of ensemble historique came into play, France has constantly pursued its innovative path of urban planning, by enacting the Malraux law on the safeguarding and valorization of historical centers (1962) and the Act on the zones de protection du patrimoine architectural et urbain (1980). In more recent years, following the 1980’s Law on Heritage and Urban Renewal (SRU), the notion of “heritage” has been integrated into an overall concept of urban planning to bring it into line with planning traditional data. Moreover, the process of normalization now concerns not only the zones de protection, including the degradations of big social housing estates created during the Post-war economic boom, but it also extends to the modernization of France, as the 1980’s gran des ensembles ans today ar the issue of some extremely restless claimant thinking on their preservation.

1. From the Grands Travaux to the beautification of Paris
Between 1852 and 1870 and furthermore in the following years (but as a continuation of a program dating back to the Second Empire) Paris has been interested by important architectural projects. Therefore, by the decree of 26 March 1852 and the ensuing legislative acts of 1852-1853, a program of public works was administered by the Administration with special expropriation powers. This has been a program of Great Works (Grands Travaux) for the zones of “urban complexes”. In the public interest, it obliged the Parisian authorities to level and to provide a sort of construction permit; the law also foresaw a mandatory periodic cleaning of the facades. The overall French law has been confirmed and expressed by vigorous debates and public concern, and as considered as the ideal solution to “save the appearances”, while respecting the historical landscape.

2. The beginning of safeguarding measures
With regard to the capital, publications such as La beauté de Paris by La belle de La Chapelle (1886), the first Code pari le for the protection of Paris, and the idea of protecting urban areas, already in 1871, were focused on aesthetic matters rather than on urban hygiene. Nonetheless, it is only forty years later, under Napoleon III, that a new legislative act will mark a real development in this direction. Indeed, in the year 1862, Napoleon III created a “Law on conservation of buildings or vacant lots located within the abords (environs) of the city in order to enhance the appearance of the monument even its urban environment.” It also imposed a supervision over urban development within an area delimited by a circle of 500 meters. The zone was characterized by a series of constraints, a clearly defined perimeter, and an area located within 300 meters of the historic core of Paris. Already in 1879, 1880-1881, 1883-1884, and 1891, the laws of the third, fourth and fifth arrondissements, the sixth and the seventh arrondissements, and the eight arrondissement respectively, were added to this zone.

3. From the urban renovation to the protected areas
In the first years after the World War II, France experienced a serious housing deficit, requiring a massive building policy. The Government, in the purpose of rapidly massifying country’s infrastructures to enhance economic growth, introduced important changes in the 1958 Constitution which gave life to the plan for rebuilding the central districts of Paris. The law of 26 March 1959, known as the law of the 26 March 1959, created a fund for the renovation of the city, under the name of the Fonds d’Aménagement des quartiers des arrondissements, which was considered as the ideal solution to “save the appearances”, while respecting the historic landscape.

Towards a sustainable conservation in historical cities
At the beginning of ‘70, the secteurs sauvegardés policy has been radically called into question. The first PSMV were reviewed and their regulation mitigated. Moreover, in the following twenty years, the opposition of architectors, architects and historians agais the freeze of the urban historical landscape. The French decentralization policies undertaken in the years 1982-1983, also resulted in the improvement of the situation that further expanded its geographical coverage not only to architectural groups but also to large urban, rural or natural areas. Following the Loi Malraux (1962) to the French Law of 12 June 1966, which defined the Protection du Patrimoine Archéologique et Urban (PAPAU) to enable the protection and management of the urban and rural historical heritage in already protected areas, the law of 1971. In the Parisian housing and the demolition in 1971 of the Pavilions in Les Halles built by the Ministry for Housing, among other things, the idea of conservation of the historic center was born, the implementation of the French capital aiming at reestablishing more livable and healthier areas: the Place des Fêtes located in the 19th district, Blvd. de la Résistance, was among the first ones to be decided upon.

Control
At the beginning of the 1980’s, the French Parliament voted the “Solidarity and urban renewal” law, which in order to deeply renew national and local cities, it was necessary to re-examine the historical and architectural potential of the development of French cities, towns and villages, based on the term “urban regeneration” and aimed at upgrading degra-ded urban centers. The case studies of urban centers by the implementation of the principle of mixture of scale and urbanity, its main purpose was to correct what was regarded as past mis-management. At this point, the French Ministry of Housing also introduced the plan local d’urbanisme (PLU) to simplify the plan for rebuilding the core of the city, including the urban and rural areas. This instrument divides the commune into four zones, one of which is called the urban center, where all urban and rural areas of the commune as those areas where the construction is permitted by virtue of their sensitive historical, ecological or environmental nature. Because of this approach, the French government is very careful about the safeguarding of urban areas. Thanks to its easier elaboration and execution, the plan for urban centers as a planning tool to which will be assigned one day, the protection of historic centers in France.
Conclusions
The PLU of Paris has been approved in 2006 and, in order to comply with its strategy and orientations, the PSMV of the Marais district is now under revision. The new version would contemplate a most modern and extensive protection vision, taking into account the city's needs in terms of housing, diversification of urban functions and sustainable economic development, as well as its necessary anchorage dans la ville de demain (fig. 2). In the case of Paris, as in general everywhere in France, urban conservation policies are heading towards simpler procedures, really focused on the people who live in (and use) the historical centers. Their re-appropriation by the poorest families and the integration of patrimonial component within the metropolitan urban policies are regarded as "essential elements" in the relationship of civil society and the process of democratization. In recent years there has been a vigorous revival of urban renewal procedures through traditional practices of demolition, especially related to the urban ghettos (the 2003 Law for the City and Urban Renovation set up a five-year program of renovation) or to other expressions of the architectural culture of the second half of the 20th century, considered as a "shame" by the elite of the country (see the demolition of the Forum des Halles shopping center begun at the end of 2011). However, now France seems to move towards more equalized and concerted policies. The example of the city of Paris highlights a kind of duality in urban strategies, even if based on a single metropolitan project. On one side, the safeguarding of historical buildings and centers is clearly affirmed by the Government and Municipalities. On the other side, urban renewal operations are carried out in both peripheral and central areas.

The future of Paris is moving in balance between these two aspects. An audacious Paris is thus expected, as shown by Nicolas Sarkozy’s presidential ambition to reinvent a greater Paris. Forty years after the approach launched by General de Gaulle, France seeks to transform a vast region, larger than the départements of l’Ile de France, into a model city for the 21st century, sustainable, visionary, "post-Kyoto" and polycentric. At its center, it would of course be Paris, le Vrai, le Beau, le Grand.

Bibliography