

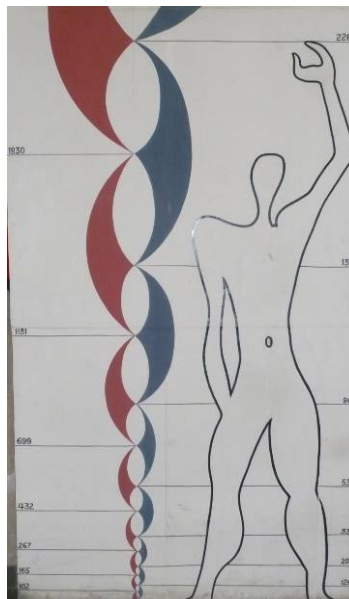
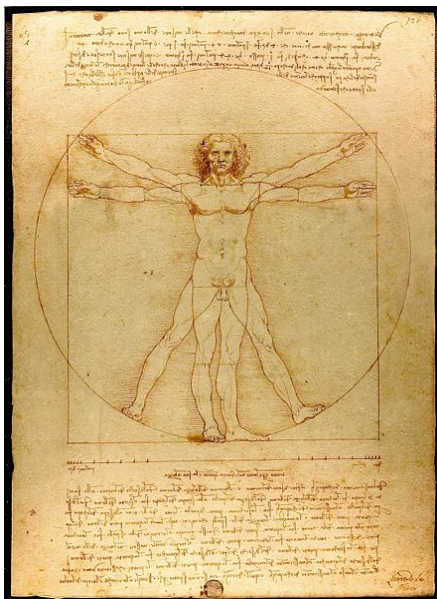
The World Heritage Experts Meeting at Davos, Switzerland on Buffer Zones April 2008

On Buffs and Buffers

In the tradition that it is mandate for the guests to open with words that pay tribute to the host and acknowledge the innkeeper and his house, on behalf of all the participants, I would like to thank the Swiss Authorities for their hospitality in providing the appropriate abode for these deliberations on sites and their buffer zones. In preparation for the subject matter and arriving at this enchanting place, we are confronted by the thoughts of how much space is needed to retain the Magic of a Mountain and what are the elements that provide isolation for a Berghof sanatorium lying on a peak not only geographically, but also figuratively, in its reclusive and separate world.

Opening the topic let me share with you some thoughts to provide a reflection for our concerns and ensuing dialogue. It is the provision of space for, and its perception by, the individual that is a key issue, being the interrelationship between *being* and *object* setting one of the major parameters for debate.

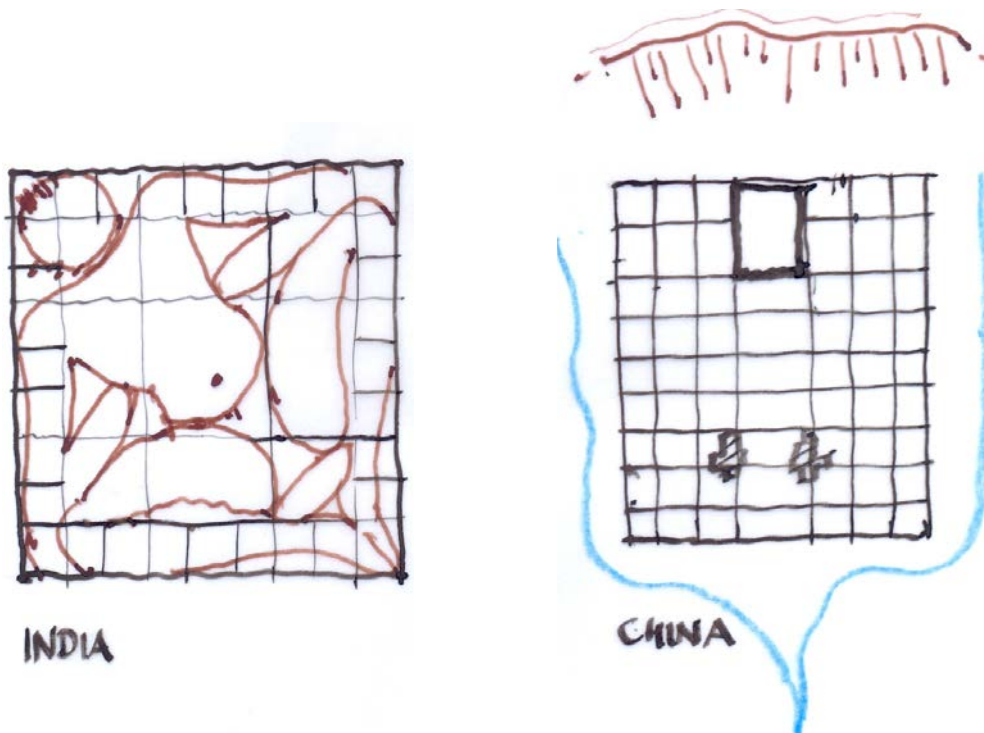
Let us start with the *being*. The concept of a buffer zone applies equally to individual beings, and the virtual space that they carry with them. It is a kind of aura that is perceived as containing supernatural forces and was depicted in religious artworks in the form of a circular or elliptic space around the saint. But essentially, the relationships in space were historically anthropomorphic relating to the person and *being*, and it was only towards the end of the eighteenth century did the new metric order of the French Academy of Sciences evolve transposing this formula by relating the measure to the *object* of Earth and time. From time immemorial, the cubit was the basic measure while the foot deviated according to anthropology and geography of its use and with it, the comprehension of the space in which it appeared. These measures were useful inasmuch that you could carry them with you in all senses of the term and could be applied with ease. 'Do we have a ruler or scale in the room?' was not a relevant question in early history.



Four cubits was the personal height and to this was added the circumference of the space inscribing a fifth cubit. The design concepts and drawings of Leonardo da Vinci and Le Corbusier showed this very clearly with the Vitruvian Man and Le Modular. The image not only provides the perfect example of Leonardo's keen interest in proportion but also represents a cornerstone of his attempts to relate man to nature. "Leonardo envisaged the great picture chart of the human body he had produced through his anatomical drawings and Vitruvian Man as a *cosmografia del minor mondo* (cosmography of the microcosm). He believed the workings of the human body to be an analogy for the workings of the universe." ¹

But the concept of the four cubits was well developed earlier in Talmudic literature, which discussed the three-dimensional envelope or aura that a person carried with him - a virtual space of four cubits. The polemics were devoted to the consideration whether the four metres is circumscribed on the omphalos or if the four metres is a measure to be added to the person. Before we dismiss the debate as the 'number of angels that might dance on a pinhead', we might take the opportunity to reflect on the question of the conceptual relationships between core and buffer zones. ²

Indeed, throughout the ages and around the world, it was considered that every person is the centre of his world, and the circumambient space differentiated in accordance with the schema of his body; it was the very meaning of *being*. Most important, it was truly a *cosmografia del minor mondo*.



¹ Encyclopædia Britannica

² For more reading: Distancing and Death in Rabbinic Excommunication: a theoretical-critical study; Eldan, Y. PhD thesis, BIU

And it is not only in the western world that these concepts have root. The Indian mandala was the very model of the ideal city layout. The purusa-demon is pinned down in the squares of the city dedicated to the gods, thus embodying the complete integration of theomorphic and anthropomorphic ideas. Further east, the feng shui of China symbolizes the meanings of space and place. The prestigious Chinese city model had an arc of mountains in the north protecting the city while water flows on the east, west and south. The emperor resides in the north looking south from his palace towards the hierarchy of lords and plebeians. The cities were depicted with references to the gods, nature, the space and landmarks surrounding and defining its context. This was the true buffer zone protecting the city and its inhabitants from the evil spirits, defined by the cosmology of the place and time.

Perception not only changes between people but also between time and state. Yi-Fu Tuan in his seminal book³ relates to spaciousness and crowding. People crowd us, but they can enlarge our world; people working together for a common cause manage in spaces that others will find difficult. He quotes the eighteenth century theologian Swedenborg "The more angels there are, the more free space", not just the use of space but the creation through selfless acts.⁴

In this world of uncertainty, with the need for experts, cognoscenti and the wisdoms' of our sages to quantify and qualify, it is the buff that is the epitome of the concerned stakeholder as the aficionado, a connoisseur and enthusiast bordering on the fanatic. The World Heritage buff by definition is our barometer and thermometer rolled in one measuring and reacting to the questions raised and responding to our perceptions. So here we are on this Magic Mountain discussing as experts et alia, but with the endearment of the buff, true feinschmeckers of the buffers and their zones.

Let us now turn our attention to the *object*, both natural and man-made, and consider the space and its context. First and foremost it is how far we buffs are willing to balance anthropomorphic or theomorphic analogies between *being* and *object* that will affect our normative conduct for evaluation criteria. And what are the intrinsic differences between the natural and cultural object that shape our understanding of the space around them and their context? Essentially, while culture might also be scientifically measured and nature can also be the subject of poetry and art, it is the perception by the *being* of culture and the consequence on the *object* of nature that differentiates the understanding of context and its definition of the buffer zone. Consequently, there are different methods and applications for nature and culture demanding a more focused resolution.

It is also the difference in the application between *enhancement* and *protection*. Regarding the state of the core and its surroundings, what seems to be consistent in these seemingly incompatible circumstances is that the norm prefers a graduation between worlds and scales. The staccato and sudden can be applied, but it has meaning only inasmuch that this divides the set or is ab-normal and benefits accordingly. The shoreline between the land and the seas and the fortified walled city between the urban and the rural are examples of abruptness that come to mind.

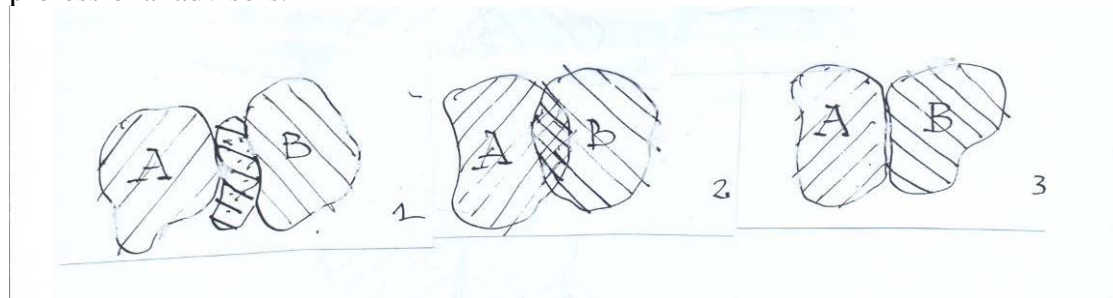
³ Tuan, Yi-Fu; Space and Place, The perspective of experience

⁴ For more reading: Robert Sommer *Personal Space, The Behavioral Basis of Design* (NJ, 1969)

The buffer zone definition has come to us entrenched through the world of science and specifically the Biosphere programme. It usually has a sense of enhancement and support for the core values and is part of the integrity or measure of wholeness⁵. Natural sites seem to have their own Darwinian selection and comprehend their values in an all-encompassing environment. A possible example of a protection mode in nature could be the oceans around the Galapagos Islands and their role in the value of isolation.

Moving through time from nature to culture and the combination of the works of nature and man as embodied in the cultural landscapes, we can identify the isolation of the forbidden cities of the east and the sacred grove or temenos of the west that have meaning as spaces segregated from the everyday life. Vitruvius relates the demarcation of an abaton, an inaccessible space, by the people of Rhodes around the statue of Artemesia, once again as an act of isolation⁶. But was the city considered the buffer zone for the dedicated places or was this inherent in its distinction between holy and profane. Certainly, this isolation could also be achieved in the mind; however, to do this we have to step out of our inscribed spaces to understand and comprehend their meaning.

So we are left with more questions than answers, and formulating the questions is half the problem resolved. Are we dealing with the *protection* or the *enhancement* of the object? The ethics of interventions by society in the prevention of the 'bad' or the encouragement of 'good' is at the basis of planning principles and the root of the matter. The arguments that are debated seem to spread evenly between criminal and constitutional law. But it is the normative resolution that is decisive, resting on the ethical commitments of the World Heritage Convention, its committee and professional advisors.



We really need to start with the definitions. Is the buffer⁷ zone something inherent to keep two or more areas distant from one another but shared, to *integrate* like a greenbelt? Is it dynamic and flexible element which might cushion impacts being a

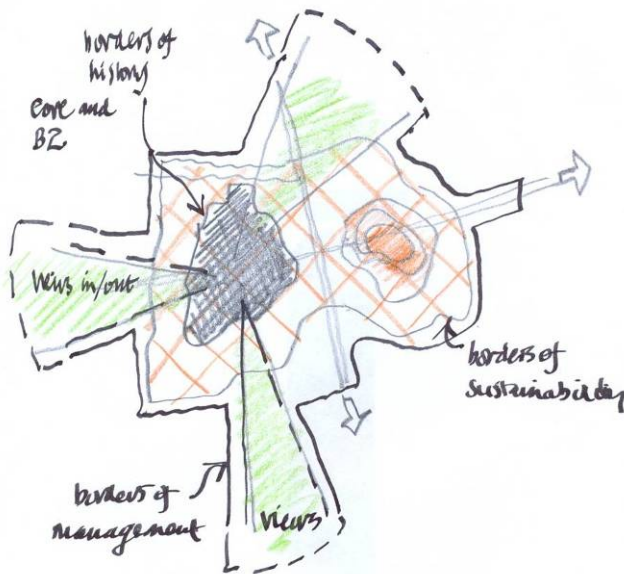
⁵ Operational Guidelines, paragraph 88

⁶ Vitruvius, De architectura, ii, 8

⁷ **1:** any of various devices or pieces of material for reducing shock or impact due to contact, usually by interception **2:** a means or device used as a cushion against the shock of fluctuations in business or financial activity **3:** something that serves as a protective barrier: as **a: Buffer State b:** a person who shields another especially from annoying routine matters **c: Mediator 4:** a substance capable in solution of neutralizing both acids and bases and thereby maintaining the original acidity or basicity of the solution; *also* : a solution containing such a substance **5:** a temporary storage unit (as in a computer); *especially* : one that accepts information at one rate and delivers it at another – edited from open dictionaries

neutral area separating conflicting forces, broadly speaking an area designed to *separate*; an area of mediation. Could it be the overlapping spaces where the characteristics of each area are noted within a common denominator? Or even abutting spaces with little place for maneuver and possible exchange of pressures, essentially a protective barrier..

Buffer zones cannot, by definition, exist alone. They can be part of a system which involves areas of sustainability or areas of concern⁸ and have been defined as a set of problems that a given project is intended to address. These areas are identified not only from *inside-out* but *outside-in*. They will include the areas of concern as defined by the various community interests. Finally their determination is both normative and technical. Technically, the issues of sustainability are the balance between the various interests in time and place through the economics of the mutual benefits within well-defined constraints. This leads us to the question of the necessity of buffer zones in all cases⁹ and their application. The interrelationship between integrity and sustainability as a panacea for the buffer zone has been indicated by IUCN for the older defined natural sites and is being hotly debated in the newly formed Historic Urban Landscape encompassing complex relationships in cities. This parallel debate on HUL is surely going to help us to expand on our vocabulary and enrich us with more relevant terminology. The areas of concern are surely a new way of looking at the problem and we should also read them as part of the urban texture and we could perhaps call the action simply, contexture?



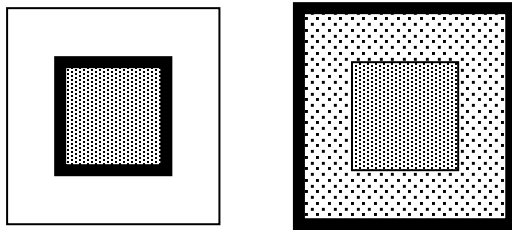
There is much experience and interest in the application of buffer zones, but they are *means* and not *ends*. Researchers and practitioners alike who will be looking at this document with bated breath have flagged a number of questions which have been raised from without¹⁰ and formulated within the experts' meeting:

⁸ Khan, Andrea, Editor; Site Matters; Study areas, sites and the geographic approach to public action; Peter Marcuse

⁹ Operational guidelines, paragraph 106

¹⁰ Leticia M. Leitao, PhD candidate, unpublished thesis

- do buffer zones, not considered part of the world heritage properties, diminish the protection where in fact it is most needed;
- the concept of buffer zone is not very well understood at the local level;
- national legislation, in many cases, still focus on individual monuments;
- core zone and buffer zone tend to be managed by different authorities diminishing the relationship between the two and minimizing its importance;
- most of the pressures are located on the fringes of the world heritage areas, where legal mechanisms are weaker or non-existing;
- limited human and financial resources for cultural heritage protection;
- the division between core and buffer zone further isolates and differentiates the HUL from the remaining urban context as it accentuates the differences between historic urban fabrics from other fabrics perceived as insignificant from the heritage point of view often resulting in polarization of “living museum” or tourism theme parks;
- a single area of protection that includes the necessary extension to ensure the effective protection of the outstanding universal value;
- our texts and case-law refer to the buffer zone as an element of added protection. Is this considered as part of the nomination?



The properties, that we so endear, need love and constant attention. The genetic structures of these sites, like individual beings, are shaped by their environment - it is the classic synthesis of nature and nurture. This approach was initiated in 2000 by the MAB urban forum and the application of essentially natural attributes in the cultural context is innovative and should be pursued¹¹. Here in order to preserve the core area, the buffer and transition zones are planned according to sustainable development criteria adding value to the core itself.

The World Heritage Convention offers a comprehensive system of protection for properties with outstanding universal value where listing is like the tip of the iceberg hiding another four-fifths of actions for the conservation of heritage. It is a single element in the mosaic identifying the properties to be protected and not an end in itself.

We encourage the active participation of the World Heritage buff, one of our foremost stakeholders, as an important asset in the process of the buffer zone evaluation and its relevance to the protection of heritage.

Professor Michael Turner
UNESCO Chair in Urban Design and Conservation Studies
Jerusalem, 15 August 2008

¹¹See the relevant website: <http://www.unesco.org/mab/ecosyst/urban.shtml>