Executive Summary

The overall aim of the project was to protect the former Courthouse in Apia, Samoa from demolition, to research its history and its current physical state, to prepare a plan for its protection, restoration and future use. Also, through publicly showing the steps of the process, the project aimed at raising awareness about the necessity and problematic current situation of heritage conservation in Samoa.

The project has achieved these points. Through a conservation plan that fully documents the Courthouse in its history and its current state; through an application for listing to the World Monuments Fund as submitted in February; through showing student and professional conservation work in an exhibition in Apia in August 2012, opened by the Prime Minister, Hon. Tuilaepa; and through many different channels of public reporting on the building by TV and radio stations in Samoa, Australia, NZ and Germany, the project has been able to both raise awareness of the situation of heritage and to create the fundament on which to build the restoration and re-use of the building.

The Prime Minister authorized, in writing, the Apia Courthouse Trust to search for funding for the building’s restoration, which means an overall approval of the ideas developed by Unitec staff and students, together with archifact Ltd. and the Apia Courthouse Trust. The next weeks and months will show how the funding and planning process for the building’s restoration and reuse can be successfully carried out.

Currently, the Courthouse is being occupied again. In the Cyclone that struck Samoa in mid-December 2012, the building suffered minor damage of one part of its roof cladding. This cladding was repaired, albeit only after several weeks. Now the building, which otherwise remained undamaged, has become the temporary home of the police band whose building on Ifi-Ifi Street was badly damaged in the Cyclone. This shows at once the well-built nature of the Courthouse as much as it strengthens the case for its restoration and future use.

Background

The demolition of the Fale Fono in Mulini’u, just outside Apia, in March 2012, has shown more strongly than before that there is an urgent need for the consideration of built heritage as part of Samoa’s history.

The Courthouse represents the changing history of the past century, better than most other buildings in Samoa. This is not at all always a joyful memory; Germany and New Zealand, alongside with Great Britain and the USA, have acted as invaders and have changed the course of history for the small country. But the Courthouse, as one of he few historic buildings now left in Samoa, represents this history over a course of 111 years, with the good and the bad sides, thus being in one word: heritage.
Designed and built in 1902, it opened in 1903 as a Courthouse for the German colonial administration in Samoa. Taken over by the New Zealand occupying forces in 1914 and used as their administration offices, it became the Samoan Government’s own District Courthouse and seat of the Prime Minister after the (re)-gaining of independence of Western Samoa in 1962. Having been in use without interruption until 2010, it was – and still is – a symbol of the political history of Samoa of over 100 years. In December 2012, it withstood the Cyclone Evan (as many other cyclones before), almost undamaged. The damage to the roof has already been repaired and, at present, the Courthouse is in use again, housing the Police Band that had been rendered ‘homeless’ after the Cyclone.

With the aim of modernizing the country, it has become apparent that at present both Samoa’s own traditional heritage of arts and crafts (boat building, house building etc.) and the ‘imported’ heritage in form of non-indigenous buildings is in danger of disappearing. Therefore, this project has also been directed at a higher aim, that of advocating the protection of heritage in general.

**Aims and Objectives**

In the application, the objectives were named as:

- **a)** A conservation plan that comprises of a recording of the history of the building and its fabric in its historical, social and environmental context; within this, specifically: Full sets of drawings – and preferably models – of the Courthouse in its present state and in a number of states during its history;
- **b)** An implementation plan that suggests alternatives for the restoration of the building;
- **c)** A business plan that, in conjunction with the conservation plan, suggests alternatives for a – financially sustainable – future use of the building.

“Elements of the conservation study together with historical material will be exhibited in order to foster the importance of heritage. The decisive characteristic of this project is that information is being made accessible while it is gathered and processed. This turns the traditional process of conservation planning inside out.

“Taking conservation and business plan as a basis, further applications are to be made to the German Government and other potential sponsors in order to secure funding for a full restoration of the building.”

**Methodology**

The chosen methods were:

1) measurement by 3d laser-scanner: Conservation practice archifact Ltd., with help by archaeologists Geometria Ltd., had measured the Courthouse in December 2011 with help of a 3d laser-scanner. This method was quick in terms of the recording process and very precise, but used a lot of time and expert labour to develop into architecturally usable drawings.

2) To combine student research and design work with professional conservation expertise and practice (archifact). This combination was chosen over a single route because it allowed to think in alternatives (the normal studio process) but ensured the professional and international standard of the overall work.

3) To develop built models of the Courthouse in three of its successive stages of completion/extension: in 1902, ca. 1912, and 2012. This was carried out by Alastair Storrie, in close discussion with other team members, particularly Adam Wild and the CI. To build models meant the need to understand the building phases and therefore led to intense ‘detective work’ with help of historic drawings and photographs, compared with the measurement of today’s state of the building.
3) Working closely with Malama Solomona and Daniel Hunt, the approach was to publish our ideas immediately when being developed: we produced a brochure used as promotional material, printed in Samoan, English and German, as well as postcards with heritage buildings in Samoa, in order to foster conversation on heritage issues. The exhibition in Samoa in August was another part of this approach: to publicly show work in progress for discussion. (The suggested weblog was not developed because of possible unsolicited use of archival and other sensitive material.)

Outcomes/findings

New knowledge

The establishment of new knowledge on the Courthouse has happened in increments and through various means:

- The measurement of the building meant a big step in understanding the fabric of the building as it stands today.
- The historic research previously undertaken by the CI has been the second backbone of the project. This research allowed the measured drawings to be interpreted in terms of the development of the building over its 110 years: particularly early drawings of the building and its intended (if not always executed) extensions from around 1907, have informed the various stages of the building’s growth, as we were able to verify.
- The students of the design studio, Adam Wild from archifact, and the team members, have all contributed with elements of ‘detective work’ of what the building was and is. Finding of long lost photographs, investigating minute detail of bracing and verandah elements, etc. have helped understand the many stages of the building’s development. This has led to the three models as tangible results of the research.

Tangible outcomes

Probably the politically most important outcome of the project is the letter of authorization, written by Hon. PM Tuilaepa to the Apia Courthouse Trust after the exhibition in Apia in August, giving the Trust authority to seek funding for a restoration of the Courthouse and thus agreeing to withhold any other development of it for the time being.

The most tangible outcome in written form is the conservation plan, authored by Adam Wild of archifact and the chief investigator. This ca. 140-pages document is documenting the building in detail, and gives recommendations as to what to preserve and how. (See attached doc.)

Closely linked to this result is the pending application to the World Monument Fund/World Bank for inclusion of the Courthouse in the World Monuments list, submitted by Adam Wild of archifact in February, 2013, as authorized by the Apia Courthouse Trust. (See attached doc.)

In terms of conservation and restoration of the building as well as with respect to a new use of the Courthouse, the Apia Courthouse Trust has signaled their agreement with the suggestions made by the research team for restoration and adaptive re-use. These suggestions are a direct result of the 1st yr Master design studio at Unitec and the working out of the conservation plan.

It has become clear for all participants in this project, be it on the Samoan or on the NZ side, that the Courthouse needs to become a place of general cultural significance, both for Samoans as for guests. This cultural function can only be successful if it is supported by economically sustainable and culturally sensitive business alongside it.

Raising awareness
Through the research team’s presence in Samoa in March and August, 2012, many conversations with interested parties were held, from Government Agencies to individuals in Samoa. In this sense, the fostering of a debate about heritage has been successful. One particular success is the following:

The research team was enabled to directly comment on and input into the development of a National Heritage Board in Samoa, via the Law Reform Commission set up by the Samoan Government. John Taliva’a, Adam Wild and the CI provided comments for inclusion in the discussion paper disseminated by the Law Reform Commission in April. During our stay in Apia in August, we were able to explain these comments to the Commission in person.

Through the exhibition of our work in the Courthouse in August, 2012, the aims of conservation and respect for heritage were clearly articulated in the Samoan public. The research team might have expected more direct and further reaching feedback from the public than was given. Rather, the question repeatedly asked was: “And what is your plan? And how much will it cost?”

Clearly one big success was the inclusion of WIBDI, the Women in Business Association, through Malama Solomona’s initiative. The group declared eagerness to occupy parts of a restored Courthouse in order to promote and sell their own products.

**Conclusions: Limits of the project**

It became clear during the course of the project that the establishment of the conservation plan alone was a major undertaking which took up considerable amounts of time and funding. Therefore, the implementation plan could only be established in sketch format. Nevertheless, the establishment of agreed aims between the research team and the Apia Courthouse Trust is an important achievement. This agreement was only reached in November, towards the end of the funding period. Therefore, the business plan could not be established as yet.

Also, it became clear that this project is far more than a simple restoration project: it is a very political issue, and even with members on the team that thoroughly knew local political practice, it was not always easy to move forwards.

It is clear that the Apia Courthouse Trust, now having been given authority by the Samoan PM to officially continue the project, needs to own and manage the project. Since this is a Samoan building, the project cannot be steered from New Zealand but needs to be looked after by its advocates in Samoa. The sharing/negotiation of the tasks at hand between Samoa and NZ is a complex process.

**Implications - Impact**

The application had stated that the project would...

1. ...enhance understanding of the necessity of heritage conservation.
2. ...provide the knowledge base to set a built precedent in Samoa for heritage conservation.
3. ...through its collaborative research/teaching practice, act as a precedent for the planned professional degree in conservation architecture at Unitec.

It has fulfilled all these three points:
1. The work was undertaken to raise awareness about the future of the Courthouse building in particular and (built) heritage in Samoa in general.
2. It was also undertaken to give those advocating heritage in Samoa instruments at hand to further pursue the project of saving the Courthouse from decay or demolition.
2. The project has indeed begun to do this but future work is essential – such as the firm establishment of a Heritage Board in Samoa and the listing of heritage buildings and places in Samoa, to be set up in cooperation with UNESCO.
3. The project has worked very well in this regard and has informed the way that Graeme McConchie and I have framed f.ex. the case study within the future PGDip of Building Conservation at Unitec.

Much more can and needs to be done. Some of further necessary and possible steps are:

1) to review and plan for the future the role that a restored Courthouse as a point of cultural significance has in Apia. With regards to this and related matters, a current master student in the Master of Architecture (Professional) has taken up the sustainable development of Beach Road in Apia as her Research Project.

2) Another design studio on the topic of the Courthouse is currently been run at Hochschule Wismar, in Germany, in order to continue and clarify our design achievements.

3) An important next step for the Apia Courthouse Trust is:
   - to commission a structural engineer to investigate the fabric of the Courthouse
   - to commission detailed planning for the restoration and adaptive re-use.
   For these tasks, funding needs to be applied for.

4) For the task of general protection of heritage.

Publications and dissemination

- Our research findings, together with outcomes of the Semester one studio project at Unitec, were presented in an exhibition in the Courthouse itself in early August 2012. This exhibition was a major event, opened by the Prime Minister, Hon. Tuilaepa. It was attended, amongst others, by the NZ High Commissioner, Nick Hurley; the Australian High Commissioner, Dr Stephen Henningham; the German Honorary Consul, Arne Schreiber; UNESCO representative in the Pacific, Akatsuki Takahashi; and other important guests. The exhibition material was donated to the Apia Courthouse Trust in order to provide them with arguments for the conservation of the Courthouse.

- For the gradshow at Unitec in November 2013, posters were reprinted and a second lot of models were made.

- Conservation plan, authored by Adam Wild of archifact and the chief investigator. This ca. 140-pages document is documenting the building in detail, and gives recommendations as to what to preserve and how. (See attached doc)

- Closely linked: pending application to the World Monument Fund/World Bank for inclusion of the Courthouse in the World Monuments list, submitted by Adam Wild of archifact in February, 2013. (See attached doc.)

- Various newspaper articles in Samoa (Samoa Observer etc.)
- TV screening (TV3, Samoa, and TVNZ)
- A radio interview with the chief investigator on ABC radio, Australia
- Invitation for CS to write an article in the German Journal “Denkmalpflege” (Conservation) on the Courthouse and issues of its cross-cultural nature. This article will be handed in for publication in early April 2013.

Appendices

Conservation plan / Application to World Monument Fund