

has to weigh many considerations. However, having bishops with the final authority might be an advantage, if their professional limitations ensure their use of consultants before final decisions are made. The cooperation between the consultants and the dioceses has become closer and many initiatives have been introduced to extend the relations.

Frequently, informal meetings are arranged by the National Museum. During these sessions, problems are discussed and information is exchanged between the church authorities, project-leading architects and the consultants. Moreover, most of the dioceses organize what is called *konsulentrunder* – consulting tours. Together with the diocese administration and the royal architects,⁴ experts from the National Museum visit a chosen number of parish churches. The choice of churches is dependent on an actual practical problem related to general maintenance or greater heritage issues, and most often is treated as an initial discussion of projects that local communities wish to implement. The establishment of good dialogue before a project is finalized makes the administrative process easier because the arguments can be discussed thoroughly before decisions are made.

The National Museum also participates in meetings held at the initiative of church councils who wish to present ideas and to know in advance what can be, and what cannot be, accepted from a heritage preservation point of view. It is often a challenge to meet with church councils who no longer just accept arguments, but most often are educated people who are equal partners in exchanging points of view (Brajer, 2007). It is important to sustain the feeling of ownership and support the requests as far as possible in order to maintain local enthusiasm.

The role of consultants is to identify the historical, artistic and socio-cultural significance of the specific church and its furniture and decoration. It is not their purpose to fight against any change, but to select their ‘battles’ with care, and to ensure that any change, maintenance or preservation is done with quality. Change is the nature of the church, and therefore preservation has to be adapted to this process, which implies making choices.

In Denmark, the everyday preservation of cultural heritage is actually left in the hands of church councils. In spite of the risk of neglecting their responsibility, experience shows that the communication between users, advisers and authorities is generally working very well. First of all, because exchanges of ideas are based on respect for each other’s point of view and all parties involved want to arrive at an agreement and are willing to make compromises. In this process, it is important to be open-minded, respect the role of the Church in a modern society and accept criticism from an often very knowledgeable community.

The greatest threat, however, is when lack of funding limits initiatives and less attention is focused on preservation, which becomes