



The Management of World Heritage Cities

Evolving Concepts, New Strategies

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Over the past three decades, countries across Asia have experienced unprecedented economic prosperity brought about by a strategy emphasizing capital investment in infrastructure and labour to promote urban renewal, heavy industry, agro-business and tourism. However this strategy ever has exacted a heavy toll on the environmental and cultural heritage resources of the countries of the region. While the damage to environmental resources has for some time been recognized, more recently it has been recognized that this strategy has also led to an alarming depletion of the common stock of “cultural capital.” Particularly threatened are the cultural assets which constitute our urban heritage – the cores of historic, but still vibrant, cities and towns.

Globalisation, and in particular urbanization, have made it obvious that it is necessary to urgently take concerted, strategic action on a worldwide basis to protect our world’s resources in a way which will assure that these basic resources will be sustainable over the longest possible term. This constitutes nothing less than a new conservation paradigm, integrating heritage conservation with development. Our heritage resources are no longer seen as quaint museum pieces or dilapidated, slightly scary old buildings. Instead we now realize that our built heritage of buildings, public spaces, gardens, homes, hospitals, theatres – even casinos – are all cultural *assets*, to be protected and developed, used and replenished as we build a future life incorporating the best of what we have learned from the past.

It is this exercise – to give heritage a life in the future of the city – that Macao is now engaged in its bid for World Heritage status.

INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The first step in this process is ensure that effective legal frameworks are set up for the protection of the cultural and environmental resources. As a model against which all national legislation is measured, there is the *1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*.

The World Heritage Convention has been adopted by all but 2 Asian states, and gives international protection to more than 160 of the region’s most well known and outstanding heritage properties.

Although the World Heritage Convention is universally accepted as an instrument to protect monumental heritage, the vernacular heritage – which is the heritage of the common people and of everyday life and which is at high risk of disappearing before the juggernaut of development, can also be protected following the principles and procedures set out in the World Heritage Convention.

Increasingly it is becoming understood that monuments form only a small part of the total heritage of a culture. Consider the enormous amount of accrued knowledge and skills which is held locally in heritage – in homes and shops, in traditional trades and arts, in rituals, festivals and the calendar of everyday life. All of this must be rescued from extinction if we mean to safeguard our cultural heritage.

Culture is the one resource which is uniformly distributed over the face of the globe. It is the only resource to which every woman and man has equal access. If we therefore waste, squander, even destroy, our local cultural resources, what hope is there for sustained, equitable economic and social development?

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View from Leal Senado Square c. 1830-35. Ink and sepia on paper (undated). Col. TB.
George Chinnery

For truly sustainable long-term economic and social development, we must turn our attention to issues of resource sustainability and public participation and empowerment. The conservation of society's cultural capital is therefore a matter of urgent concern for all who are concerned with human development.

This the essential message of the *Report of the World Commission on Culture and Development* and of the *Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development* which took place in Stockholm in 1998.

Since the Stockholm meeting, UNESCO has made a concerted effort to encourage governments to integrate heritage conservation into regional and national development planning.

At the same time, there has been a growing recognition that moveable and non-physical cultural properties and intangible cultural practices are an inextricable part of the heritage.

This has recently been reflected in the adoption by the UNESCO General Conference of the *2001 Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity*,

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and the call by UNESCO Member States for the drafting of an international instrument, modelled on the World Heritage Convention, which would protect the intangible cultural heritage of humankind.

Indeed, the World Heritage Convention itself has undergone a rather dramatic shift in its traditional orientation, with the adoption in 1992 of what has become known as the “global strategy” to encourage greater equity in the recognition, and hence protection, which the Convention extends to all cultures.

Since that time new categories of sites have been increasing added to the World Heritage List including: sites of commercial industrial heritage, including factories, railroads and canals; villages and towns remarkable for their domestic vernacular architecture; migration and pilgrimage routes, as well as rural cultural landscapes, showing the interaction between humans and nature and underscoring the fact that there is no fundamental distinction between the action needed to protect nature and the action needed to protect culture.

What this means is that we are now operating within a new context – a new understanding of what constitutes our heritage – and that there is now the need for a very marked shift in the way we manage our cultural and natural resources for conservation and sustainable development.

This is an important consideration for all historic cities and towns aspiring to be included on the prestigious UNESCO World Heritage List.

It is most encouraging that we see this paradigm shift in heritage nominations being received from States Parties in the Asia-Pacific region, where in the past few years historic towns have dominated the region’s World Heritage nominations.

NEW TYPES OF HERITAGE BRING NEW MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES

The nomination of Macao to the UNESCO World Heritage List has been possible because of these changes in our global perception of what constitutes the most important parts of our common heritage. But it is not easy to conserve the heritage of a living, densely-populated, fast-developing urban

area such as Macao. The effort requires commitment, cooperation and a common vision shared by all stakeholders.

First of all, even more than the preservation of buildings, the preservation of the urban morphology and the revitalization of public space has become the most important conservation issue for developers, politicians, and the public alike. Without the preservation of the original structural skeleton of the town, the historic urban fabric will be unreadable and all other conservation efforts will be incomprehensible to the residents and visitors alike.

Urban sites include historic industrial and commercial properties which must also come under protection, for what is a city if it is not a place of production and exchange of factories and markets.

And then there is the archaeology of the city. Traces of the evolution and growth of the city are recorded in the land, but this record can be easily erased by thoughtless redevelopment. Historic coastlines and ancient ports can be obliterated by land reclamation. And everywhere the historic street-, sky- and sea-scapes which give character to our towns are blocked by ill-placed and poorly planned skyscrapers.

But how will we cope with all of these suddenly and vastly expanded conservation needs? Here is where politicians and planners need to learn new skills in community development and recognize that the survival of the evolved traditional patterns of use of a city provides the blueprint for an integrated conservation strategy. The city’s economic base, the inhabitants’ craft and other skills, the community’s social and religious calendar all articulate to make up the framework of heritage to preserve and on which to base future development.

With the conservation emphasis changing from monuments to living historic towns, there is a concomitant need to go beyond central administration of heritage toward engendering community stewardship in the care and careful use of cultural resources.

This paradigm shift in the approach to heritage conservation takes culture beyond the realm of a small elite to make it a matter of general concern of the population at large and a tool for promoting employment and small business opportunities based

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on the conservation and managed development of the heritage resources of a town or a neighbourhood.

Not only does the sustainable development of the heritage imply local action; cultural heritage conservation itself depends upon the commitment and involvement of local communities. Policy makers as well as heritage professionals – archaeologists, architects, conservators – must recognize that for conservation to be effectively implemented and socially acceptable, populations living in or near heritage sites must be given a leading role in the development of policy, as well as in the management of the heritage sites.

So where, in this new paradigm, is there a role for the conservation professional? For government regulatory agencies? To answer these questions, let's first look more carefully and critically at what community management of heritage resources entails.

COMMUNITY-BASED MANAGEMENT OF THE HERITAGE

The first thing to understand is that conservation policies need to promote local community stewardship of the heritage as well as provide socio-economic benefits for local communities.

So, the most fundamental thing which must be accomplished is to make a direct link between the safeguarding of the heritage and socio-economic development.

Last year the UNESCO Institute of Statistics issued a report on the trade in cultural goods and services over the past decade. This report makes it very clear that in spite of the widespread distribution of cultural resources and assets, cultural enterprises are very much underdeveloped throughout the Asia-Pacific region; cultural goods have limited circulation in our region; and cultural services are still, by-and-large, an elite preserve or marketed to the export sector through tourism.

There is therefore vast scope for the development of cultural enterprises, particularly in the poorest communities, where the fight against poverty will be won or lost. In fact, cultural enterprises are one of the very few economic sectors which have not yet been seriously tapped in the development effort.

Furthermore, cultural enterprises tend to be rural-based, favour women as producers, require relatively little capital investment, and generate high employment rates – all factors which make them an ideal development strategy for what today remain the poorer regions of development.

But, you might ask, what does this all have to do with the conservation of archaeological sites or old buildings, or with community management of the heritage?

To be effective in the fight against poverty, the availability and use of cultural resources must be as widespread as possible. Cultural enterprises, however, depend on the existence of cultural resources for their development. Therefore we must ensure that each community's heritage of physical and non-physical cultural resources is protected, safeguarded and even enhanced. Heritage conservation therefore cannot be limited to an elite activity restricted to few selected sites, art forms, or individuals.

Heritage conservation must be broad-based and anchored in the institutions of the local community. Only through community stewardship of the heritage, can it be ensured that the heritage will be protected everywhere, and that its protection will be sustained over the long-term. The sustained, universal stewardship of the heritage is a pre-requisite for culture as the basis for development. This goal may seem utopian, but I think not. If we make the analogy again with the environmental movement, we see that such a paradigm shift in public attitude and action can be effected in a relatively short period of 10-20 years. But to succeed in this, we have to make it an explicit goal with a concrete and well-defined action plan.

For example,

- We need to bring about a complete 180-degree mind shift in the tourism industry. Instead of conceptualizing the industry's relationship with culture as a relationship between merchant and product, the fundamental purpose of the tourism industry needs to be realigned so that tourism becomes the *agent* for the safeguarding and development of the world's – and a community's – cultural assets.
- We need to address the development of cultural enterprises in a serious manner so that cultural enterprises constitute a significant portion of a community's economic activity. We can achieve

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this by encouraging their rapid expansion through small business incubators which have been used so successfully to support the development of software and ICT businesses.

- We need to make full use of our historic built stock, adapting it for reuse, rather than throwing away the considerable investment made in our cities by our forebears and replacing it with ever more expensive and expendable substitutes.

And to ensure that our actions do not harm heritage resources and therefore prejudice their future use,

- We need to conduct cultural impact assessments before embarking on any development project, and to make mandatory mitigating measures if these are found to be necessary to protect the affected cultural resources, both physical and intangible.

Obviously, to achieve such an ambitious agenda it is not possible to rely solely on the economic force of grass-roots capitalism. Not all of our goals, in fact, are economic ones.

Given the fact that cultural resources are a common public good, their safeguarding is an ethical imperative as well as an economic imperative. Therefore providing accurate public information about the existence and condition of cultural resources, and assuring universal access to cultural knowledge and skills is a management issue of the highest political, social and ethical priority.

So is the matter of providing effective mechanisms for resolving conflict between stakeholders and interest groups with regard to access to and the use of heritage and other cultural resources.

In addition to mobilizing traditional institutions for heritage conservation, such as temple trusts, we also need to examine the possibility that old institutions need to be transformed or new social institutions created to address the new and urgent needs for heritage conservation at the community level.

STRUCTURING AN EFFECTIVE AND TECHNICALLY-CORRECT GRASS-ROOTS APPROACH

In the Asia-Pacific region, UNESCO has been assisting our partners, both governmental and non-governmental to meet these new heritage management challenges of the 21st century.

Because we firmly believe that heritage conservation, if it is to be successful, must be anchored in the community, and because we see that this has become the weakest link in the chain of conservation, UNESCO has put considerable effort into developing the capacity of local government and community based institutions to successfully manage their heritage resources for both conservation and development.

We call this programme LEAP which is short for “Integrated community development and culture heritage preservation in through local effort.” In this programme, local communities are encouraged to “leap” forward into the 21st century using their local cultural assets as a springboard through a process whereby local actors are encouraged to assume an active stewardship over the heritage and are empowered develop that heritage in a responsible, profitable and sustainable manner.

The programme does not intend to replace existing professional and institutional efforts at heritage conservation. The LEAP programme aims to complement and extend those efforts by moving heritage conservation beyond the exclusive sphere of a high technology, elite specialization to become the concern – indeed the responsibility – of every man, woman and child. In other words, we want to transform heritage conservation into a grass-roots movement which will return the heritage to the communities which created it and which rely on this heritage as the foundation for their future development.

The basic objective of strategies to empower local communities in heritage conservation is to ensure participation of the indigenous populations and local communities living within or adjacent to heritage sites in the management and conservation of their sites in a manner that provides them with economic and social benefits, while safeguarding the site and maintaining social and cultural traditions. This calls for the preservation of heritage as a development activity that brings economic opportunities, helps to alleviate poverty, creates jobs, and generates income based on traditional technologies and know-how.

- The first objective therefore is to empower individuals and local communities as a whole to understand and advocate the long-term conservation of the heritage in their communities.

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For this purpose, traditional community leaders are mobilized and traditional consensus-building mechanisms are used within the community to arrive at a shared vision and a common goal.

- The second objective of empowerment is to enable the local communities to play a leading role in actual hands-on conservation and preservation work, such as monitoring the condition of the site or taking part in preventive conservation and on-going maintenance and restoration projects.
- The third part of the empowerment equation is to develop the means through which local communities can benefit financially from the enhanced conservation of the heritage while at the same time maintaining their social and spiritual traditions intact.

Activities here involve a wide-variety of income-generating and self-employment opportunities, such as giving support to the expansion and mass-marketing of traditional handicraft industries.

The strategic approach used in the implementation of UNESCO's regional programme to integrate heritage conservation into community development involves initiating a variety of community participatory activities which act as the catalyst for local community interest groups to assess the unique characteristics, strengths and economic potential of the elements making up their physical as well as intangible cultural heritage, and then to design a community action plan to self-develop these elements in a way which is both profitable and sustainable. Activities vary from site to site, depending upon circumstance and need, and are continually evolving.

However, we have identified an emerging pattern to this strategy and have modeled this into a framework which we call the *LEAP 10 Step Action Programme*.

STEP 1 The first step in the process is to encourage activities which engender a stewardship ethic and community participation in historic conservation.

These include developing the technique of "envisioning" among the communities as a means to self-identify their needs and expectations of the future and of how heritage might contribute to community development.

Hands-on workshops have also been found useful to familiarize everyone with the practical problems of conservation and simple solutions to these

problems. These workshops are then followed-up with on-site inspection of heritage sites where workshop participants identify for themselves maintenance and conservation issues and are asked to brainstorm together to come up with possible and practical solutions to these problems.

STEP 2 The next programme activity involves the mobilization of the local government departments around the use of heritage conservation for development.

Site managers and local leaders are encouraged to develop zoning and environmental management plans for both preservation and development of heritage sites.

This includes training in the use of basic site management tools, such as survey maps and computer-aided geographical and data information systems. This empowerment of the legitimate local authorities, who are typically ignored in the conservation process, is an all-important step to ensure that heritage conservation will truly be imbedded in local politics and community development plans.

STEP 3 The identification of pilot projects within the community is the next step. This is done on the basis of community-based participatory research work to identify the locally significant sites and heritage properties for protection and possibly, adaptive re-use.

This step includes training in assessing the economic potential of heritage properties and proposals for their uses and support to local organizations for demonstration projects in adaptive re-use.

STEP 4 Because they have disappeared in many places, research, development and training in low-cost, traditionally-appropriate and historically-accurate techniques for building maintenance is a key part of most LEAP projects.

Easy-to-use, fully-illustrated heritage homeowners' manuals and accompanying videos are prepared for each location to communicate appropriate repair techniques and to maintain standards throughout the community.

The manuals are written, illustrated and produced locally in cooperation with traditional experts, the community schools and local construction contractors.

The techniques explained in the manuals are demonstrated through a series of hands-on on-site workshops for building owners and for local contractors

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in order to implicate them too in the process of heritage conservation and to reassure them that conservation work can also be a profitable business. This training is conducted emphasizing the appropriateness, economy and ease of using traditional materials, as well as dealing with issues of supply and stockpile of traditional materials.

STEP 5 A return to traditional materials necessitates a re-invigoration of and economic support for traditional building and associated trades in the local community to produce those materials which are necessary for the authentic restoration and maintenance of historic buildings.

These businesses often still exist but in rump form, because of drop-off in the demand for their products as they were replaced by modern industrial materials. With support and a surer flow of orders, these businesses can once again be made to flourish locally and, taking advantage of modern transportation infrastructure, many can even develop into successful local suppliers of construction materials.

STEP 6 Not everyone in the community can be or wants to be a builder, and in any case, buildings are dead shells without activities taking place within them, so a sixth LEAP programme action is to promote and offer training to enhance traditional artisanal skills among the local community and also to promote the continuation and development of intangible cultural activities and performing arts which have potential market-appeal and can be developed into professions which offer full and part-time employment to members of the community.

STEP 7 Virtually every community with which we have worked identifies tourism as one way to develop the heritage as an economic resource. This is an important way to integrate young adults into the heritage conservation efforts through developing employment opportunities where they serve as the interpreters of the local heritage.

In order that the local communities can develop a tourism which is special and therefore attractive to visitors, while at the same time respectful of local culture and profitable for local residents, a seventh LEAP action is to provide training for and promotion of community-based, tourism-industry related occupations grounded in the accurate interpretation of the unique local culture, history and the environment.

As tourism and other business develop, there is the demand for additional training at the local level.

STEP 8 An eighth LEAP action assists in curriculum development for both formal and non-formal education in local history, heritage conservation and small business management skills in the culture industries. Here is another area in which collaboration with other actors in the education sector as well as with local business promotion associations such as Rotary, Lions and Chambers of Commerce has proven successful and has scope for much further development.

STEP 9 There is also the need to set up revolving loans and low-interest credit schemes for conservation, maintenance and business development. Sometimes this can be achieved through the establishment of local community market cooperatives. Other times, agriculture or rural development banks will loan to modernize traditional industries which have market potential.

Financing business development is an action that is beyond the scope of UNESCO, but within the framework of the LEAP programme, small business incubators are being established. In these small business incubators individuals and groups who are interested in developing a culture-based enterprise are helped to identify the financing opportunities available to them and taught how successfully to get access to and take advantage of these opportunities.

STEP 10 Finally, in order to learn from one another's experiences, a final LEAP action is to link communities and individuals together through practical seminars, a newsletter, and an email discussion groups for the exchange of technical and other relevant information.

Once a year a workshop is held for all LEAP site project managers, hosted by one of the local communities participating in the programme. The subject matter of the workshop is selected by the managers themselves.

The strategy of this programme is to create activities which are *sustainable* – sustainable so that they bring lasting economic benefits to the communities which engage in them and which do not, therefore, require continued assistance and financial support from outside sources.

The results of these activities must also be *replicable*. The aim is to engender kinds of strategies and activities which, with site-specific modifications,

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can be applied elsewhere. In doing so, a roster of potential activities can be developed for communities to use which can both foster the safeguarding of their traditional heritage, while improving their economic circumstances.

Finally, the strategies and activities developed by this project should result in a *multiplier-effect*. It is intended that national authorities will see the value of promoting community-based activities with regard to the preservation and safeguarding of their traditional heritage, and in doing so, embed these strategies into their national policy.

SUSTAINING PROFESSIONAL ON-SITE MANAGEMENT

Whether the sites in question are vernacular villages, historic urban cores, industrial sites or cultural landscapes they all are facing the same problem – how to assure that the conservation of the heritage of their homeland is a *sustainable* long-term undertaking.

This is essentially a management issue and so it is instructive to analyse the management problems which have been encountered while attempting to promote the LEAP strategy.

Sites have been found to share the common problems of:

- Integrating conservation concepts into the local community's already-established plans for development which often have been drawn up with help from external development agencies. This is one area where much more teamwork between the heritage conservation and economic development agencies is needed. UNESCO is currently working with the World Bank to develop guidelines for conducting culture impact assessment to be implemented as part of the planning process for infrastructure development and other major construction.
- Translating heritage conservation into economic benefits which compete successfully with contending interests. Here the establishment of small business incubators and easily-accessed micro-credit schemes will be essential.
- Sustaining the political leadership and enthusiasm responsible for seeing projects through to fruition. As the turnover in the elected political leadership tends to be rather too fast for results in heritage

conservation to be seen and appreciated easily, it is essential that traditional community leaders be implicated in the process from its earliest stages and be active participants in conservation projects.

- Meeting the accelerating demand for technical advice and professional assistance. At each LEAP site there is the need for continual briefing and training workshops for other government departments and for other communities who are not yet involved in the process but would like to be.

This now brings us back to the need to re-invent and augment the role of the heritage conservation professional, and to dramatically increase the amount of professional services which can be provided to meet the growing demand for technical and managerial expertise at the grass-roots level.

There are four key, interlocking issues:

- increase in the quantity and timeliness of professional service available,
- upgrading of the quality of expertise provided,
- better grass-roots penetration of the conservation professional, and
- ability of the profession to affect the policy planning process.

UNESCO-ICCROM ASIAN INSTITUTE FOR CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT

Recently, in November 2001, UNESCO and ICCROM, at the request of the World Heritage Committee, jointly convened meeting of heritage professionals from across the Asian region to discuss how best to address these issues.

It was decided that UNESCO would establish and ICCROM would provide technical guidance to a regional network of universities and other heritage training institutions to conduct research and offer training in conservation management of heritage resources. To be supported by the establishment of UNESCO Chairs in Culture Resource Management at each participating institution, the new network will be known as the *Asian Academy for Conservation Management of Cultural Heritage*.

This new "virtual" academy will have a variety of functions, all aimed at upgrading the professional capacity for culture heritage conservation and management in the Asian region.

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- Each participating institution which is also a degree-granting institution such as a university, will offer a post-graduate degree(s) in one field of conservation management. Students from other participating institutions will be able to cross-register.

In addition to formal post-graduate degrees, the institutions will jointly offer extra-mural diploma courses for in-service professionals in various fields of conservation and management. These courses of study will be available on-line as well as through other modes of distance education.

- Both the degree and diploma programmes will be augmented by field schools, organized by the participating institutions on a rotational basis, and located at either inscribed or tentative list World Heritage sites.
- The field schools will be linked to on-going research projects conducted by individual faculty members of one of the Academy's participating institutions, or by a research consortium from several institutions.
- Another activity of the Academy will be the conduct of short certificate courses in specific conservation techniques (such as for, example, the use of lime mortar and plaster). These will be aimed at working professionals such as building contractors, contract archaeologists, etc.
- The Academy will also license individuals as competent to conduct certain forms of cultural work such as the conduct of cultural impact assessments; or visitor interpretation. These may be linked to specific localities or sites.
- There will be seminars for professionals in fields related to heritage conservation, such as urban planners, to update them on the state-of-the-art of the conservation profession.

- Special short intensive seminars for decision-makers – targeting especially mayors of World Heritage towns and such persons.
- There will also be a publications programme attached to the Academy and an extensive website.
- The UNESCO Chair holders seated in each participating institution will constitute the Board of Directors of the Academy and will set its curriculum and research agenda.

The focus of the new networked Academy which UNESCO and ICCROM are now putting into place will be on both individual professional training and institutional capacity building.

We foresee that the Academy will play a key role in establishing and monitoring regional standards of best conservation practice, as well as in research and teaching.

The Academy network is now in the formation process. The building blocks of the network are UNESCO Chairs in Culture Resource Management, which UNESCO is establishing at major universities around the Asian region, including here in Macao at the Institute for Tourism, as well as others in China at Southeast University, Tsinghua University and the University of Hong Kong.

These universities will be the frontline of the Academy, delivering instruction, developing curricula and guiding research.

The most basic guideline is that we must act from a basic understanding that historic preservation is a process linking the past to the future, linking conservation to development. This will be the key to success in Macao's valiant and admirable effort to preserve the unique multi-cultural heritage of this community. For it is not monuments and building that ultimately embody our heritage. Our heritage is an accumulation of memories of how best to do things to make our lives as happy, as prosperous, as comfortable, as *cultural* as they can be. Keep these memories alive and culture will thrive. **RC**