An International Conference to explore approaches to the preservation of urban built heritage, with a focus on Melbourne

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The Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) in China
Integrating Culture and Heritage into City Planning and Development
Chinese cities are facing a cultural crisis in the context of globalisation. Contemporary city planning policies have little, if anything, to do with the traditions and values of Chinese society as expressed through historic cities, which have their roots in oriental philosophy and the concept of an 'integration of nature and man'. The urbanisation process in China has taken on a scale unprecedented in human history, meaning numerous towns and cities are now facing development pressures that impact directly on local heritage and threaten to erase character and identity, which often have been built up over centuries. How the drive towards urbanisation and the need for urban upgrading and development can be reconciled with the preservation of local identity and historic character is one of the key questions facing China and much of Asia today.

A city's identity resides in its inherited past, as well as in its present condition. It comprises the multitude of meanings expressed through its built fabric, historic and contemporary, as well as traditions and attitudes that have been deposited over time by successions of resident communities. Local communities in the present are inspired by it and continue that tradition in their collective way of living and individual performances.[1] Daniel Bell and Avner de-Shalit put similar arguments forward in support of world cities, which "invest thought, time, and money in protecting their unique ethos and preserving it through policies of design and architecture and through the way people use the cities and interact with them".[2] Kevin Lynch, more than half a century ago, used the same arguments to promote the 'imageability' of a city in his now classic *The Image of the City*.[3] The key message is that the city's character and identity, and its broader sense of place, should inform management of the city, including policy-making and enforcement directed towards both the conservation of key resources (among which its urban heritage) and the planning and design of new extensions and infill.

This, however, is by no means broadly understood, not even in the case of World Heritage-designated places and cities. In light of an ever-increasing number of cases, where development or regeneration projects were considered a threat to the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) or integrity of sites registered on the World Heritage List, the World Heritage Committee expressed a need for the establishment of new guidelines and tools to properly assess urban development schemes and contemporary architectural interventions in an historic context. From 2005 to 2011, UNESCO conducted a series of expert meetings and consultation workshops, under the umbrella of the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) initiative, with the aim of reviewing and updating existing guidelines for urban conservation. This process was successfully concluded on 10 November 2011 with the adoption of the *Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape* by UNESCO's General Conference. This new policy instrument is available at http://www.historicurbanlandscapes.com.

The HUL is an updated heritage management approach based on the recognition and identification of a layering and interconnection of values – natural and cultural, tangible and intangible, international as well as local – present in *any* city. It is also based on the need to integrate different disciplines for the analysis and planning of the urban conservation process, as well as to connect it to the planning and development of the contemporary city. To facilitate this integration, a six-step HUL Action Plan was elaborated, which was included in UNESCO's General Conference Resolution. It suggests the following set of actions:

While stressing the need to take account of the singularity of the context of each historic city and urban settlement, which will result in a different approach to its management, nevertheless six critical steps can be identified for Member States to consider when implementing the historic urban landscape approach. They would include the following:

[1] Ron Van Oers, 'The Way Forward: An Agenda for Reconnecting the City', in: Francesco Bandarin and Ron Van Oers, *Reconnecting the City: The Historic Urban Landscape Approach and the Future of Urban Heritage.* Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014: 318.

[2] Daniel Bell and Avner de-Shalit, *The Spirit of Cities: Why the Identity of a City Matters in a Global Age*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2012: 5.

[3] Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1960.

1. Undertake comprehensive surveys and mapping of the city's natural, cultural and human resources (such as water catchment areas, green spaces, monuments and sites, view sheds, local communities with their living cultural traditions);
2. Reach consensus using participatory planning and stakeholder consultations on what values to protect and to transmit to future generations and to determine the attributes that carry these values;
3. Assess vulnerability of these attributes to socio-economic stresses, as well as impacts of climate change;
4. With these in hand, and only then, develop a city development strategy (CDS) or a city conservation strategy (CCS) to integrate urban heritage values and their vulnerability status into a wider framework of city development, the overlay of which will indicate (a) strictly no-go areas; (b) sensitive areas that require careful attention to planning, design and implementation; and (c) opportunities for development (among which high-rise constructions);
5. Prioritise policies and actions for conservation and development;
6. Establish the appropriate partnerships and local management frameworks for each of the identified projects for conservation and development in the CDS/CCS, as well as to develop mechanisms for the coordination of the various activities between different actors, both public and private.[4]

As becomes clear from the above, the six-step Historic Urban Landscape Action Plan stands out for its simplicity: it was drafted in such a manner that it could appeal to local governments and city councils in different parts of the world, including those with only limited resources and institutional experience. Further to this, it is crucial to understand how different actors and stakeholders are involved in use of the city and how an integration of a variety of professional disciplines and practices can be achieved. With an increase in complexity, an expanding circle of stakeholders, and a wider divergence of interests, urban heritage management is also concerned with orchestrating processes, guiding people and interest groups, understanding different viewpoints, letting them be heard and making them practicable for broader audiences.

On 12 and 13 October 2012 an international Expert Meeting was organised by the World Heritage Institute of Training and Research for the Asia and the Pacific Region (WHITRAP) in Shanghai to discuss the implementation of the new UNESCO *Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape* and subsequent application of the HUL approach in China and the wider Asia-Pacific region. Key issues that guided the discussion included the proper interpretation of Historic Urban Landscape in Chinese and the Asia-Pacific context; the main objectives of the HUL approach; and the required toolkit for application of the HUL approach at the local level. From January 2013 WHITRAP has fostered a series of strategic partnerships and cooperation frameworks for HUL implementation in Pilot Cities across the region. HUL Pilot Cities have been established, through local initiatives and in partnership with WHITRAP in Shanghai, in India (Varanasi, Hyderabad and Ajmer-Pushkar), Pakistan (Rawalpindi), Australia (Ballarat) and China (Shanghai, Hangzhou, Suzhou, Dujiangyan, Tongli), while initiatives in Canada (Edmonton), Fiji (Levuka), Indonesia (Jakarta), Tanzania (Zanzibar) and Ecuador (Cuenca) are underway.

One of the HUL Pilot Projects, the Hongkou river area, is located in downtown Shanghai, which is under severe pressure of redevelopment. Some of Shanghai's former character can be understood through this area, as it retains elements of the city's working port that features warehouses, factory sites and *lilong*.[5] Urban renewal has already taken place in the surroundings, with high-rise residential blocks gradually replacing the *lilong*. Some blocks with more formal architectural and monumental qualities have been preserved and renovated to house new functions (such as offices, a cinema). The HUL Pilot Project site involves a cluster of eight remaining *lilong* situated along the Hongkou river, which are threatened by demolition and urban renewal. The city government is interested in an alternative plan, though only if such plan can demonstrate how to finance a rehabilitation of the area. In cooperation with the University of Pennsylvania in the USA, a cost-benefit analysis has been undertaken that not only looked at the economic aspects, but included environmental, social and cultural aspects as well.

Cities have been and are still the engines of economic development and wealth and it is essential to recognise their immense potential to contribute to individual and social welfare, health, culture, as well as to the conservation and sustainability of biodiversity. Culture, defined as "the set of distinctive spiritual and material, intellectual and emotional features of a society or a social group", is a dynamic force for change. For UNESCO, the cultural dimension of development underlies the protection and promotion of cultural diversity in different forms, in particular through initiatives to safeguard tangible and intangible heritage and to protect cultural property against looting and illicit trafficking or by offering diversified cultural goods and services. Furthermore, a diversified and mainstreamed cultural approach can help respond to contemporary challenges, from poverty eradication to issues of resource management, safeguarding biodiversity and climate change. It is for these reasons that the HUL approach seeks to build bridges and aims to demonstrate the benefits of a cultural approach to urban development.

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[4] UNESCO, 2011. General Conference Resolution [2011] 36 GC/41 Historic Urban Landscape, Paris: 1.

[5] Lilong are characteristic Shanghainese low-rise high-density housing complexes from the beginning of the 20th century.