UNESCO’s Historic Urban Landscape Initiative (HUL)

Ron VAN OERS, PhD
r.vanoers@unesco.org

Items of Presentation

• Introduction: Historic Cities and the World Heritage Convention
• Urban Conservation Challenges
• Current Issues in the Debate
• The Historic Urban Landscape approach

Stone Town, Zanzibar
Introduction

- The 1972 World Heritage Convention: 38 years of Global Conservation Doctrine
- 186 States Parties: near-Universal Adherence (193 UNESCO Member States)
- Periodic Reporting and Monitoring System
- Annual World Heritage Committee meeting: International Platform for Engagement & Cooperation
- Increase of Politics in Heritage and Emergence of Global Phenomena

260 World Heritage Cities
350 World Heritage sites in urban areas
911 World Heritage Sites (2010)
Vienna (Austria)
World Heritage, 2001

“Wien-Mitte” Project Site, 2002
View from Schönbrunn Palace, Vienna

New Project 2005: Henke & Schreieck Arch.
Potala Palace in Lhasa, Tibet

Traditional neighborhood, Lhasa
Traditional Architecture of Mali

Timbuktu, Mali (2006)
The Current Context

Since early 1970s Market Liberalization, Decentralization & Privatization have created:

New Challenges to Established Urban Conservation Approaches:
1. Evolution of Role of Heritage in Society
2. Appropriation of Heritage by Local Communities
3. Growing Acceptance of Heritage as Public Commodity with Economic Value for Profit Making
Urban Conservation Evolution

- From Monuments and Archaeological Sites to Living Cities and Cultural Landscapes
- From Restoration to Urban Regeneration and Managing Processes of Change
- From Mono-Disciplinary to Integrative and Participatory Planning
- From Protection of Buildings to Preservation of Values

Current Issues in the Debate

- SETTING: old & new urban pressures
- CONTEXT: loss of tradition & continuity
- Developments happen OUTSIDE Conservation Areas
- INSIDE: Limits of Acceptable Change?
- Discipline has NO TOOLS for Objective & Scientific Assessment – INCONSISTENCY
- VALUES-Based Conservation Management
The Concept of Value

- In the cultural context, value is defined as the social-cultural association of qualities to things or places
- Values can be seen as constructs and results of learning processes
- Values evolve over time

Outstanding Universal Value

- OUV characterizing cultural heritage should be interpreted as an outstanding response to issues of universal nature common to or addressed by all human cultures (Amsterdam, 1998)
- In relation to culture this is reflected in human creativity and resulting in cultural diversity (UNESCO, 2005)
- Definition and application of OUV are made by people and will be subject to evolution over time (changing values) (Kazan, 2007)
Meaning of a Place

• **Why** was this place developed originally?
• **What** spiritual/cultural meanings/perceptions were associated with the place over time?

• **What** is the principal story and how is this expressed in the property?

*Bamiyan Valley*
**Historic Urban Landscape: A Management Approach**

- Recognition of dynamic nature of living cities (vs. static “groups of buildings”): entry **Management of CHANGE**
- Landscape approach: layering of significances & values
- Broadened perception: **toolkit** expansion
- Broadening of **OUV** and **Context (genius loci)** as guiding principles
- Follow **morphologies & typologies**
- Socio-Economic, Visual and Heritage **Impact Assessments**

**Robust Toolkit**

- **Regulatory**: South Africa’s National Heritage Resources Act, 1999 + Cape Town Cultural Heritage Strategy, 2005
- **Community Engagement**: Viet Nam SEA + CDS; German Steering Committee
- **Technical**: merger of Management Plan & Business Plan Uganda Wildlife Authority Cultural & Heritage Impact Assessments
- **Financial**: US Historic Preservation Tax Credits; Dutch City Renewal Program
HUL Action Plan

- Surveys and mapping of city’s natural, cultural and human **resources**
- Reach **consensus** (participatory planning, stakeholder consultations) what values to protect + attributes that carry the **values**
- **Assess vulnerability** to socio-economic stresses and impacts of climate change
- Develop a **City Development Strategy**
- **Prioritize actions** for conservation **and** development
- Partnerships + management frameworks

UNESCO Urban Program

- Development of Partnerships: WB, EIB, IDB, ASD, UNHabitat, UNDP, OECD, OMA
- 4 pilots to test-run HUL approach: Baku - Sana’a – Stone Town – George Town
- Participation in Medinas 2030 (EIB, WB)
- Development of Islamic Cities Program
- Guidebook *Investing in Historic Cities*: methodology & best practices for heritage preservation and urban regeneration