MANAGING CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE RESOURCES: PART I – FROM CONCEPTS TO PRACTICE

H. Detlef Kammeier∗

Abstract

Part I of the paper is designed to provide a conceptual background to Part II which is on the practical requirements and the international experience in the broad and growing field of heritage management. The focus of the paper is on the approximately 300 “complex sites” (among 851 World Heritage sites), i.e. primarily on living cities and cultural landscapes.

All World Heritage Sites require management plans (as stipulated by international agreements defined by UNESCO and its World Heritage agencies). The principles of such plans must be understood, and they must be incorporated in the respective national and local legislation. Heritage management normally requires specific institutional and funding arrangements – both of which depend on special efforts that are neither easy to make institutionally nor easy to sustain financially, especially not in poor countries.

Key words: heritage management, heritage conservation, sustainable development, cultural heritage, natural resources, complex sites.

1. Introduction: Reflections on the context

In very general terms, the “heritage of mankind” can be conceived as a precious but fragile gift that comes with heavy conditions for its care. The gift is from previous generations to our present society (whose obligations in caring for that gift) and future generations (who, one would hope, receive that gift undamaged). It is also important to note that “heritage” is not given by the fact that places or buildings have existed for a long time but rather by definitions on the basis of contemporary criteria that keep changing.

The structure of the two parts of the paper reflects its dual intentions – Part I provides a broad review of current changes in the public appreciation and acceptance of heritage conservation (with an emphasis on Asia), as an increasingly broad and important subject; and Part II is related to management and implementation, presenting ideas for a specific management support tool.

Part I has three sections – (i) a broad conceptual introduction to the context of the current worldwide interest in heritage conservation, (ii) discussing heritage as a global responsibility, and (iii) translating that into a national and local management framework.

∗ Professor (emeritus) of Urban and Regional Planning; independent researcher and consultant in urban and regional development and environmental management, Bangkok (Thailand)
The overall focus is on the management of “complex” heritage sites (with or without World Heritage status), with a certain emphasis on developing and transitional countries. The term “complex sites” includes historic cities as much as cultural landscapes although it is almost overly ambitious to include all of this in a short paper.

In the World Heritage nomenclature, Cultural landscapes belong to the category of culture sites, but they obviously have elements of nature sites that are dominant in that other category. Vice versa, even pure nature sites normally include traces of human or cultural interaction. The latest category of protectable areas of very large extent and high complexity is perhaps that of “cultural routes” such as the Silk Road (through several Asian countries), or the Grand Canal in China which might become a World Heritage Site if the Chinese Government application is successful.

In Asian countries, dealing with heritage still amounts to a new way of thinking. It is still relatively new to look backward to the built and documented evidence of history for “inspiration”, rather than looking for modern economic development and radical changes in thinking, attitudes and policies. The broad reference to “human heritage” as a source of inspiration suggests to include both tangible and intangible resources, i.e. not only outstanding monuments, or the built environment, and cultural landscapes shaped by human interaction, but also the “memory of the world”. This term refers to an expression used by UNESCO for outstanding documents of art, science, and civilization that are inscribed in a growing list which was launched as late as in 2001. The register of outstanding documents of culture and science now contains 158 records of what is broadly referred to as “intangible heritage”.

1.1 Conservation, progress, and cultural diversity

Both tangible and intangible heritage have been defined in ever more detail by UNESCO, ICOMOS, and other international organizations over the past 40 years, providing the foundations for international codes such as the World Heritage List (of 1972), and much later, only since 2006, by the convention for the safeguarding of the intangible heritage (UNESCO, 2003). This is a very significant extension of the previously narrow focus on the material heritage resources, without adequately recognizing their immaterial aspects (Bernecker, 2006). It can be argued that the separation into “tangible” and “intangible” heritage is artificial because the physical evidence of human interaction with nature (buildings, towns, cultural landscapes) is based on “intangible” constructs of the mind, on societal power structures, and on human ingenuity, while most “intangible” features of heritage are closely linked with physical sites.

Perhaps the most important basic consideration in all heritage definitions is that – with very few exceptions – heritage is a product of human creativity, social conditions, or deliberate interaction with natural conditions and forces. The World Heritage List contains not only old monuments, historic cities, and cultural landscapes with centuries of human interaction, but also “modern classical” works of architecture (as in the most recent addition to the list – the Sydney Opera House which was completed in 1973).

“Protecting the past for the future” is a time-honoured phrase that encapsulates the role of the present generation in dealing with the inherited past in its many forms, i.e. safeguarding its undamaged existence for the next generations. This principle would apply to all conceivable forms of “heritage”, i.e., including the global environment with those pristine geological and marine resources that have so far escaped human destruction.
As a point of departure for the discussion in this paper, it may be stated that dealing with heritage resources requires deliberate consideration, action, and management. This would have to include a deep understanding of values, public awareness, development of skills, public and private investments, and careful utilization. All this can only happen in a political climate of environmental sustainability and regard for cultural development, without economic or societal stagnation. This would also include a positive recognition of the principle of cultural diversity which is one of the fundamental points in the work of UNESCO and other UN agencies looking after heritage protection and safeguarding.

The Beijing Forum in November 2007 included a panel on “human heritage”, with the programmatic motto, “heritage management contributing real inspiration for “the progress of civilization”. The motto seems to indicate a way of thinking which must still be rather new (and perhaps not universally accepted) in China, where the two directions that are being reconciled here used to indicate two radically different directions. Concerns about heritage used to be an affair of minority groups in the population or an intellectual pursuit of a narrow intellectual elite. This has often been coupled with tourism development although this in itself is a controversial direction. On the other hand, the modern society’s striving for the progress of civilization (as previously defined in China) would rarely include a truly respectful attitude towards heritage values.

1.2 Nature protection and the role of indigenous peoples

The discussion of sustainable development which has now included the recognition of cultural heritage takes a different direction when it comes to the role, and the rights, of indigenous peoples who are typically living in nature reserves that have been left untouched by modern civilization. Over the past two decades, two global movements have brought the issues concerning indigenous peoples to greater public attention.

(1) One movement is the continuous human rights activism of international organizations and the ceaseless efforts of indigenous peoples themselves supported by a number of NGOs, which brought to light the reality of ethnocide, the oppression and discrimination of indigenous groups all over the world.

(2) The other movement is focused on environmental issues – the vulnerability of nature and its fragile equilibrium, global warming and climate change, excessive logging in tropical forests, overexploitation of natural resources and the destruction of ecosystems, man-made catastrophes like hazardous mining activities and frequent oil pollutions, and purely natural catastrophes, such as the tsunami which hit South Asia in December 2004.

These events triggered a new perception of nature and an increasing interest in indigenous and tribal societies that have a strong attachment to their land and live in apparent harmony with their environment. Indigenous peoples are more and more perceived as an element of fertile nostalgia, a longing for things that cannot be found in conditions of modernity, particularly in those countries that call themselves “advanced”. The rapid decrease in biological and cultural diversity has led to the interest of scientists and environmentalists in the unique ways in which indigenous peoples perceive, use, and manage their natural resources. For environmental protection, indigenous peoples have now been discovered as useful partners due to their ingenious traditional knowledge systems, even though this kind of sympathetic view is not shared by many governments.

In a recent overview article on the subject, Fleischhauer and Kammeier (2007) express the cautiously optimistic view that there is hope in sight, despite the long established incompatibility of international laws and the restricted role indigenous
people are commonly allowed to play in managing natural resources. The subject matter is very complex, cutting across the realms of international law, natural science, cultural sciences, social anthropology, and – “heritage management”, as an emerging field which is not quite as established as a branch of scientific knowledge, while it would need official recognition just like other specializations in heritage management.

1.3 Heritage conservation – a truly global movement?

The growing movement in conservation all over the world may be interpreted as a counter movement to unreflected faith in Progress, which may however only be true for the post-industrial countries of the West. This implies a deliberate attempt at stopping or slowing down the course of continuous change in history, or at least, creating enclaves (the heritage sites) where the wheel of history seems to have been turned back. The underlying motivation and rationale for conservation is that the speed of change in recent decades has been much faster than in the past; thus there are serious threats, losses to the finite heritage resources (natural and cultural); and that broad sectors of society are worried by vanishing cultural identity which is being eroded and substituted by the levelling effects of economic and cultural globalization.

The scope of conservation has been broadened considerably, linking the formerly unconnected fields of cultural conservation and urban development, although this is still not the case yet in many countries. The emerging global conservation movement has also been fused with the global environmental movement (since the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro), and, since the second UN Habitat congress of 1996 in Istanbul, this has been operationalized for cities in the well known Local Agenda 21. It is interesting to note that in some countries, the newly developed environmental legislation is easier to use for urban conservation (dealing with one of the categories of complex sites) than the older urban planning legislation.

Despite its growth all over the world, the conservation movement may just be a Western and distinctly post-industrial agenda, which originated in the 1960s and 70s when the post-war economic boom (which had been utterly disrespectful to historic city centres throughout Europe) came to a halt.

For the poorer pre-industrial (or industrializing) ‘developing world’ the principal question arises whether the new import of ‘Western’ conservation thinking is relevant (and affordable) at all, as it would compete with the much more pressing problems of poverty, health, education, social injustice and inequality. Similarly, in the so-called transition countries, conservation objectives would compete head-on with national economic development aims. Both in transition countries and industrializing countries the big question is, as it has been in the more affluent societies of the West, whether it is possible at all to link such issues in a coherent framework for what may be called urban development that is respectful to history and cultural identity.

2. World Heritage as a global responsibility

The World Heritage Convention of 1972 remains the only international legal instrument for the protection of both cultural and natural heritage. The relative emphasis on culture and nature has changed since the time when the first World Heritage sites were nominated in the late 1970s. More and more natural sites have been recognized, and some of them are classified as mixed cultural and natural sites. This also reflects the trend of converging views of the factors and mechanisms of ‘sustainable development’, as social and cultural concerns have become part of the sustainability agenda.
The World Heritage List is not the most important reference for the protection of nature resources and their management, including the burning issue of according the indigenous groups due recognition of their contributions towards sustainable development. It is also true that within most countries, the nationally protected cultural heritage is at least as important to look after as the globally recognized World Heritage sites. (An important example of regionally recognized sites is Europa Nostra, its organization, and its awards.)

The status of World Heritage Site has become a ‘trade mark’ which lends itself to marketing for the site itself and the host city or region, and even the whole country. Having recognized the economic attraction of heritage, many poor countries are eager to add the coveted label to their cultural or natural assets. This may have dire consequences as mass tourism is anathema to the protection and preservation of fragile cultural or natural resources.

There are currently 851 World Heritage Sites (as of July 2007 when the newest 24 sites were confirmed by the WH Commission meeting in New Zealand), and it can be expected that the list reaches the “magic number” of 1,000 in a few years. There are thus concerns about inflationary numbers, and biased treatment of developing countries that are clearly “under-represented”. “Cultural” sites are far better represented by the World Heritage Convention than natural ones. The numbers are: 660 cultural, 166 natural and 25 mixed sites.

Both advisory organizations to the World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS (2004) and IUCN (2004) were asked to make concrete proposals for a more balanced list both in terms of cultural/natural sites and in terms of global distribution. In fact, UNESCO has been trying since 1994 to work towards a more balanced, more representative, and more credible World Heritage List. Even though these movements are encouraging, it would seem to be a long way until we have a truly balanced and credible list.

A radical idea would be to limit inscriptions on the WH List to say, 20 years, with the possibility of extending the time for another such period, subject to periodic critical reviews. This would be a highly unpopular and thus politically untenable move, especially with the “losers” but it would help achieving considerable progress towards a more balanced, more representative and more credible list where the exalted World Heritage status is clearly met by outstandingly competent and exemplary management.

3. Translating the global responsibility into locally based management

Heritage care, in conjunction with tourism management, has turned into some kind of global industry – at least as far its implications in global tourism are concerned. This development is not bad as such, but it raises some principal questions as to the protection and management of the heritage resources. Heritage conservation and tourism promotion have principally different objectives that are quite often diametrically opposed although both obviously draw on the same resources.

Many of these questions can only be discussed in a meaningful way, when an analytical research framework (for example, on cultural diversity, or the relative importance of cultural and natural phenomena) is matched with a well-documented knowledge of the existing World Heritage Sites, their characteristics, and their history of getting on to, and being on, the WH List. Comparative evaluation and maintenance of heritage sites with similar characteristics would help the community “owning” heritage site and its “site managers” in developing the necessary knowledge for dealing with the challenges of good conservation work. Answering such questions would benefit from an
appropriate computer-based documentation of the rich material that has accumulated over the years. An innovative approach to a computerized searchable database is described in Part II, the sequel to this paper.

Apart from the practices associated with the annual nominations and the annual review of the existing sites, heritage management (and with it, management capability) has become a prominent issue. The institutional framework, negotiation and mediation among stakeholders, and proper regular monitoring of the existing sites have moved to centre stage in the international discussion. Management plans are now required as part of the nomination and inscription procedures, and it may be expected that all sites that do not have a management plan now (and that is the majority!) will need to have one in a few years. The Operational Guidelines for implementing the World Heritage Convention contain increasingly detailed regulations on this, there are many different guidelines for planners and managers, so the need for exchanging information on best practices as well as appropriate training is on the rise (for example, Rodwell, 2002; or Stovel, 2004).

3.1 Management plans for World Heritage Sites

All World Heritage Sites now require management plans and full-time professional “site managers” (as stipulated by international agreements defined by UNESCO and its World Heritage agencies). The principles of such plans must be understood, and they must be incorporated in the respective national and local legislation. Heritage management normally requires specific institutional and funding arrangements – both of which require special efforts that are neither easy to make institutionally nor easy to sustain financially. In poor countries, another problematic dimension of living historical environments is the discrepancy between the specific demands of heritage sites and the poverty in institutional and financing terms. The same applies to transition countries where the new framework of market-orientation planning needs to be developed for all kinds of public-sector planning.

Considering the growing stock of World Heritage Sites, it will be necessary to distinguish types of sites – ranging from single buildings and monuments to large areas. It will be useful to define such “sites” by multiple criteria of complexity to find the best-fit types of management. In this paper, the focus is on the approximately 300 “complex sites” among the World Heritage Sites all over the world.

Approximately 170 are historic cities (or major parts of cities), where interests of both heritage protection and modern development need to be considered even though they are often opposed. Similarly, the protected nature areas with World Heritage status, and especially the 130 designated “cultural landscapes”, constitute places where heritage protection interests and present or future utilization are in competition. In these types of “complex sites”, the principally different goals of protection and development need to be reconciled, and, more often than not, this includes efforts for the revitalization of historic city centres, or carefully balanced concessions for utilizing natural heritage areas for tourism or energy generation.

Perhaps the most well-known general criterion for World Heritage listing is the “outstanding universal value”. This is contradictory in itself because by definition, all heritage is culture-specific, hence “universal values” might be very difficult to define. Two other key terms that have given rise to long discussions among heritage specialists are “authenticity” (especially with its possible different interpretation in Asia as compared with the earlier Eurocentric meaning) and “integrity”. Both terms have been proposed in an innovative way as qualifying criteria for World Heritage nominations as well as management (Stovel, 2007). Stovel’s inspiring discussion of the complexities of
authenticity and integrity and their practical use leads to most interesting alternative approaches to dealing with World Heritage resources. The framework for assessing heritage qualities contain the following criteria:

- Wholeness
- Intactness
- Material genuineness
- Genuineness of organization of space and form
- Continuity of function
- Continuity of setting

Stovel’s article demonstrates the use of such criteria with regard to archaeological sites, historic towns, architectural monuments and complexes, and cultural landscapes.

Similar criteria have been applied in selecting projects that show best practices in a programme that was initiated by UNESCO Bangkok, the Asia-Pacific awards for private initiatives in heritage conservation. The results of the first five years of inviting proposals and giving awards have just been published in a beautiful book (UNESCO / Engelhardt, 2007). Privately sponsored and competently executed conservation projects are perhaps the most effective promotion of broad based heritage management.

3.2 The real potential of indigenous peoples in safeguarding nature reserves

IUCN, the advisory body of the UN on matters of nature protection (with or without World Heritage status) has classified some 68,000 protected areas into specific management categories (Fleischhauer and Kammeier, 2007). Much of the lands designated as ‘national protected areas’ was, and still is, owned, occupied or inhabited by indigenous peoples. 84% of the national parks in Latin America are inhabited by indigenous peoples and 90% of protected areas in Europe are seasonally used by pastoral people grazing their flocks. 30% of those areas are permanently inhabited most of them being located in Northern and Western Europe. Only recently it was conceded that those traditional stakeholder groups constitute a hitherto underestimated potential for sustainable development and management in most of the IUCN Categories.

Indigenous communities often have complex practices for the sustainable management of their land, even though they are different from those of western science. So indigenous practices have proven to be successful, they can produce similar results as Western approaches, they can be inexpensive, and, through religious or spiritual prescriptions, can sometimes be enforced more effectively.

There are large gaps between international policy and local realities. Perhaps most significant are the gaps between the best intended, but highly sophisticated and eurocentric international documents and recommended guidelines, and the national, regional and local conditions at the implementation level.

This is due to the fact that the instruments created by the UN to protect the rights of indigenous peoples are not ratified by many states and are not incorporated into the states’ practice yet. Because many states fear their sovereignty undermined, the core provision of human rights, the right to self-determination is not yet accorded to groups which differ from the mainstream society. For many governments sovereignty, political and economical issues are still paramount over conservation. Often narrow self-interests of states (in particular of those that are cash-strapped) prevent the recognition of international standards. Violation of human rights, discrimination, unrecognized
customary laws and scarce local participation are still reality. Even legally binding conventions are only as strong as the countries that signed them want them to be.

The status of indigenous peoples in nation-states differs greatly. In North-European liberal democracies indigenous peoples enjoy relative autonomy; in North-America, Australia and New Zealand they have recently booked some striking successes concerning their territorial claims, for instance the Native Title Act in Australia in 1993. Even if these governments pursue an assimilative policy, indigenous peoples like the Scandinavian Saami, the Inuit, the American Indians, the Aborigines and the Maori have citizens status within those states, in contrast to Southeast Asian countries, which tend to marginalize, deny and even persecute their indigenous peoples and do not even accord citizenship status to them. Indigenous peoples enjoy their full rights only in self-governing territories, such as Greenland/Denmark and Nunavut/Canada, and in the new independent states like Timor and Papua New Guinea.

Most indigenous peoples reject the political organization of a nation-state and its values (like centralized authority, monopoly of the legitimate use of power, emphasis on science, rationality, capitalism). In contrast, indigenous peoples emphasize ideologically opposite values of particularism, spirituality, and dominance of family and elders. The primary form of organization of indigenous peoples used to be tribal or kinship ties. Their decentralized political structures are often linked in confederations and have overlapping spheres of territorial control and are conflicting with the nation-state regulations.

### 3.3 Shared responsibilities, especially in financing cultural heritage

It is not difficult to imagine that “heritage management” implies global concerns (about the loss of cultural resources), and global initiatives (such as the World Heritage List and its continuous management), but – more importantly – this presupposes the existence or the creation of many different forms of responsibility, from the somewhat abstract global one down to very personal attitudes and duties. This includes very heavy responsibilities both in terms of creating and providing the professional capability that is needed, and in terms of financial obligations, at the national, regional, local, including the personal level.

Table 1 shows how many different agencies are (or perhaps better, ought to be) involved in taking responsibility for cultural and natural heritage sites and resources. The principal roles and interests differ considerably across the levels, from the global one to the local and individual-personal one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels: From global to local</th>
<th>Public bodies’ principal roles</th>
<th>Partners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Global:</strong> UNESCO WHC (supported by ICOMOS, ICCROM, IUCN, et al)</td>
<td>Guidelines, promotion of best practices, comparative monitoring, limited seed funding</td>
<td>Global NGO and special interest groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>National:</strong> “State parties” (federal / national, state)</td>
<td>Policies, guidelines, best practices, monitoring</td>
<td>Professional groups, city associations, foundations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reconciling WH guidelines and national legislation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Funding support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Sharing the responsibility for cultural (and natural) heritage
Managing common resources would imply shared responsibilities for financing the upkeep, repair, and restoration of sites. It would also have to include shared financial responsibilities for research and technical assistance, especially for poorer countries and regions. UNESCO and its WHC do play this role to some extent even though the financial resources for research and technical assistance are severely limited.

Table 2 shows the many possible forms of financing heritage resources and their management. The table does not reflect the conditions in any particular country, but some of the details in the table are based on the framework for private-public partnerships in heritage financing as established in Germany.

In many other countries, especially in poorer countries, privately owned heritage does not receive any financial assistance at all, even though it may be subjected to strict protection regulations, while leaving the heritage property owners (for example, a small traditional community or an individual) to their own devices as to upkeep, repair, and funding. So the overview in Table 2 constitutes something like a dream scenario for the long-term future of urban cultural heritage management in most countries, and definitely in all developing or transition countries. There, the development of the field of multi-stakeholder heritage management is only at the beginning, as the necessary contributions of the private sector are neither strong enough nor properly regulated.

This is most unfortunate, because especially in the fast growing developing countries, traditions are breaking away under the onslaught of globalization and economic growth. The global change does seriously affect heritage resources, and their traditional maintenance, through community action, is under heavy threat.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property ownership</th>
<th>Cost categories</th>
<th>Form of funding</th>
<th>Sources of funding</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Streets Open spaces</td>
<td>Acquisition</td>
<td>Capital investment</td>
<td>Specific national grant</td>
<td>Legal tool for acquisition right of “first refusal” of local authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Major renovation, repairs</td>
<td></td>
<td>Annual budget of agency in charge of heritage sites</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plots/Buildings</td>
<td>New infrastructure construction</td>
<td>Capital investment</td>
<td>Federal, state, municipal co-funding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Full fledged co-financing of public and private-sector agencies at all levels
| Maintenance | Recurrent expenses (of respective public agency) | - Revenues from renting property  
- Entrance fees  
- Surcharges on hotel room rates | Entrance fees for foreign tourists, e.g. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Private sector</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Owner-occupied Plots/Buildings | Land acquisition | - Private investment  
- Special low-interest loans  
- No charges for public infrastructure improvements | - Preferential tax arrangements for conservation areas (for a fixed period of time) | After the end of the conservation programme (20-25 years), normal charges for infrastructure improvements |
| Construction | - Private funding  
- Low-interest loans  
- Public subsidies  
- Tax deduction | - National funds earmarked for conservation areas  
- Preferential tax arrangements for conservation and environmental projects | |
| Maintenance | - Private tax holidays or reduced tax | - Preferential tax arrangements within 15-20 years after construction | |
| Rented property | Rental payments | - Public subsidies for needy residents | |

3.4 What exactly is a “management plan” for a WHS?

The World Heritage Centre has issued guidelines for preparing and maintaining management plans for heritage sites. The main emphasis here is on management rather than physical design (of in-fill structures, or restoration works, e.g.). First of all, this aims at establishing clear institutional arrangements for “site management” – which in fact seems to be one of the most difficult things to do.

The reason for this is that “complex heritage sites” (as defined in this paper) are inevitably part of existing jurisdictions with overlapping patterns of property ownership, local administration, or state responsibilities for designated “monuments”. However, in most cases, those monuments only constitute part of the “site” while large parts of the site, especially the “buffer zones” (refer to the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention) usually are outside the “protected monument zone” (which may in fact be the same as the “core zone”, or whatever other term is used for such special areas).

Institutional arrangements would thus have to negotiate the existing distribution of responsibilities for infrastructure provision and maintenance, construction and maintenance in public and private buildings, and the distribution of financing of public and privately owned projects. Many of the existing patterns will have to be maintained, but some may have to be modified to meet the overriding objective of protecting and safeguarding the heritage resources (including appropriately defined buffer zones!). In
other words, “management plans” must place considerable emphasis on the actual implementation of the institutional arrangements, including finance.

The “management plan” is not necessarily a single document that would have been designed from scratch, but it may well be a “linker and lead document” which draws on the existing, but updated, plans and regulations pertaining to the heritage site in question. In a sense, such a linker and lead document would become the first volume in a multi-volume document to be used for the management of the site. It would be necessary to provide a complete inventory of the amendments of existing regulations and plans, apart from copies of all regulations and plans themselves.

It should be obvious that the goal of heritage safeguarding needs to be incorporated in the procedures for building and planning permits in or near the “heritage sites” as such. This would require carrying out specific impact assessment studies similar to those that have been developed and used for the protection of the environment.

Such “cultural impact assessment” methods and techniques are already available but in practice, they have not been used very much. Otherwise, the often observed blatant violations of the interests of even very important heritage sites would not have happened. The Cologne Cathedral (Germany) is such a case – where high-rise buildings were to be erected at a relatively close distance, creating a case of completely unwanted visual intrusion. The most recent controversy around the proposed bridge across the river Elbe in Dresden (one of the newest WHS) is a similar case in point. The World Heritage Centre can only react on some of these cases by placing a site on the “red list” (World Heritage Sites in Danger), as a measure to alert the public conscience in the localities concerned.

Even though it has been a requirement since 2002 for newly nominated World Heritage Sites to have an approved management plan, and for older ones to prepare such plans, it is amazing to see how many sites are as yet without management plans. In addition, it is also amazing how difficult it is to obtain copies of such plans, because quite obviously, good examples would be the most important source of learning for those “site managers” and their consultants who are beginning to draft management plans. The plans written for the WHS in the UK and in Australia are the laudable exceptions, while many other sites, including those in rich Western countries (such as Germany) have not been able to catch up with their management obligations. It is therefore not surprising to see the dearth of management plans in poorer countries, where the professional capabilities are as limited as the financial resources.

In a research study that was carried out with a group of World Heritage students at BTU Cottbus (Germany) in 2005, we tried to find and compile good examples, after having defined what a “good management plan” is supposed to be. It was sobering to see how few management plans exist to date. So the students working on the project were in a pioneering role, trying to develop a flexible methodology which is supposed to be applicable to various types of heritage sites. In the meantime, the World Heritage website has added a number of exemplary case studies of management plans (see current version of the WHS website). This is very encouraging. The study project focused on “complex” sites, i.e., above all, historic cities and cultural landscapes. It also included some of the pure nature sites but that was not the main emphasis.

3.5 Developing a support tool for heritage management

Any heritage planner or manager meeting the challenge of drafting a site management plan would probably be looking for good examples, in parallel with the preparatory works for the job at hand. Given the very different characteristics of any of
the more than 800 WHS, it would be necessary to look for those sites that are similar the one at hand, because only a good example of a plan for a relevant site would be useful, and not any plan. In addition, any of such newly established management plans and their management agencies would benefit from working relationships and exchanges with similar sites and their agencies. To some extent, this exists (as documented by the WHC in its website), but – so the author’s own experience – there are far too few such exchange arrangements among comparable sites and their agencies.

This is the point of departure for developing the management tool that is described in Part II of the paper. The tool would provide based access to an internet database to facilitate all kinds of management arrangements ranging from the structuring of a management plan being set up to organizing functional partnerships among similar heritage sites.

4. Conclusions

Compared with a period of twenty or thirty years ago (or forty years ago, when the Venice Charter was launched), the “conservation world” of 2008 has become more varied in its demonstrated experiences of how to deal with heritage and its creative maintenance. We do seem to have answers to most of the hard questions, as to how to “protect the past for the future”, but it is also clear that we face enormous challenges. The advances in applied conservation theory and management are concentrated in affluent countries. Hence the most serious threats, but also some of the greatest opportunities, lie in the poorer countries. They do require and deserve much greater international efforts to support their national ambitions of managing their heritage resources adequately, despite the threats of global economic demands and growing international tourism industries.

Examples of providing this kind of assistance are:

- Better integration of broad conservation policies in main-stream international economic support programmes that are focused on infrastructure loans and environmental management (World Bank, EU Technical and Financial Aid, Asian Development Bank, and other players);
- Developing realistic, adapted, and affordable urban conservation approaches – balancing the principle of “protection of the past” with that of “supporting future development”; in this respect, the international exchange of heritage management experiences suggested in this paper is indispensable;
- The same can be said for natural sites where the interests and rights of indigenous groups must be recognized and utilized. There is a long way to go although some progress has already been made.

All this provides a broad scope for targeted exchange of experiences and regional training programmes to be integrated in the agendas of international agencies dealing with environmental and urban management, administrative decentralization (often associated with the concepts of “governance”), and infrastructure provision.

References

Beijing Forum 2007, an annual international congress organized by the Chinese Government since 2004; the 2007 event was under the title of The Harmony of Civilizations and Prosperity for All. [online] URL: www.beijingforum.org/en/


