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## Challenges in Conserving and Managing Heritage in Asian Urban Areas

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### Introduction

This chapter builds on the ethical setting presented in Chapter 1. It discusses the challenges facing residents in Asian urban areas and provides an overview of the context in which urban planning, design and management in Asia occurs. Based on this analysis, the chapter then examines the problematic nature of the interface between heritage conservation and the planning, design and management of urban areas, including the impact of tourism in heritage environments. This discussion will provide the context for the case studies and examples that follow in Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

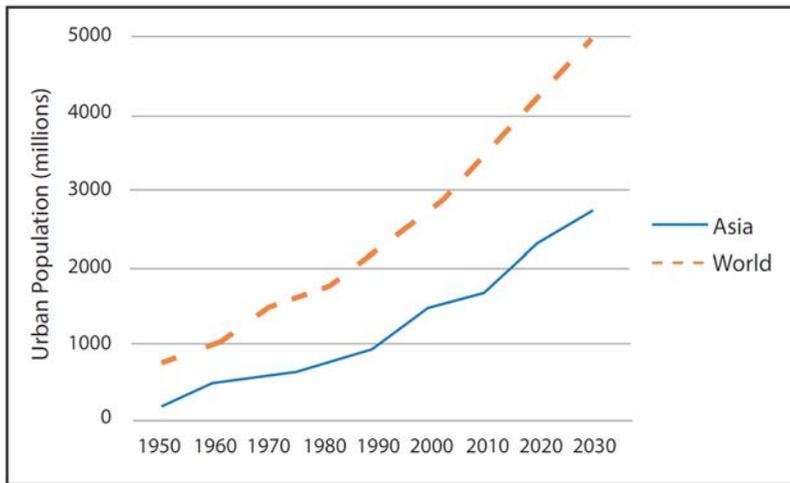
The chapter is organised around key ideas as seen in Figure 2.1.



**Figure 2.1:** Organisational framework

## The state of Asian urban areas

Urban areas in Asia vary in size and include metropolitan areas, regional towns and large cities, as well as portions of cities, such as historic districts. They also differ in terms of geography, economic conditions, political systems and cultural and social systems. Given these differences, it is difficult to generalise about them. However, Asian urban areas have certain similarities, one of which is that their populations are growing at unparalleled rates (see Figure 2.2). Also, the populations of these fast-growing and rapidly-expanding urban areas are demanding infrastructure development at a pace that is often far beyond local economic, financial and human capacities. Such urban areas often have poorly-developed urban management structures and weak decision-making systems, however. Furthermore, these cities have planning and governance approaches that are neither comprehensive nor robust enough to deal with the growth and complexity of the urban situation. In the very largest cities, the limits of liveability have been reached and they are unsustainable in their current form.



**Figure 2.2:** Growth in urban population and projections (Source: Adapted from Johnson et al, 2013)

In many Asian cities the percentage of the population living below the locally-acknowledged poverty line is as high as 40% (Jamieson, 2009). Measuring poverty in urban areas is more complex than simply using the traditional US\$1 a day baseline, however. While some urban residents may have higher incomes, the lack of basic services and the high cost of rent, transport, healthcare, education and other essentials make living conditions difficult and make it impossible for many residents to make ends meet. Most urban slum dwellers do not have access to clean water, sanitation, social services, decent housing, schooling or steady jobs, and live trapped in situations that contribute to poor levels of health and well-being. As well as limited access to social services, they lack basic rights, are