

The Planning and Management of Responsible Urban Heritage Destinations in Asia

**Dealing with Asian urbanization
and tourism forces**

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Walter Jamieson and Richard Engelhardt
Editors

Introduction

Policies that promote large-scale urban redevelopment, coupled with a lack of regulation relating to urban development and a lack of heritage protection policies, have, since the end of the Second World War, resulted in the loss of a large proportion of the distinctive tangible heritage assets in Asian cities, including historic monuments, buildings and vernacular housing. With this loss of historic built environments, long-term inhabitants have also been displaced. Concurrently, the loss of traditional inhabitants from re-developed historic spaces has resulted in the disappearance of traditional expressions and practices of intangible urban culture, expressions that once gave each city its unique, recognizable cultural identity.

The loss of heritage can also be traced to the independence struggles in certain countries, including in Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, the Koreas, Pakistan, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam. This struggle later led to intentional removal of built heritage, as it was a reminder of their colonial past, and all of these countries embarked on building programmes very much influenced by ultramodern architecture, in order to showcase their new-found identity and sense of self. The post-Cultural Revolution building boom in China can be seen as a similar manifestation.

These heritage losses have created modern urban environments that are increasingly homogenous throughout Asia, and which lack the definable, recognizable cultural identities seen in Asia's traditional urban centres in the past. This distinctiveness of Asian cities was at the foundation of the strong feelings of identity and attachment that local inhabitants felt for their cities – emotions that provided for a culture of social solidarity, environmental protection and cultural stewardship. It was also this strong sense of unique identity that made Asian cities subjects of fascination and places of attraction for visitors for centuries.

Within the significant number of issues that must be addressed the planning, design and management of the rapidly-growing urban environment, heritage conservation and tourism development are two areas that have emerged as pivotal in terms of their influence on urban place-making policy and planning, as well as their overall impact on long-term urban sustainability. Hence, many forces are at work demanding that those responsible for the planning, design and management of urban areas in Asia develop more integrated, inclusive, responsible and resilient policies, strategies, practices and tools.

The adoption, in 2015, of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provided a revised context and refreshed global strategy within which the urban environment can be designed, planned and managed. Given that for the first time in the history of humankind, the majority of the population lives in cities, much interest is now focused on the development of urban areas. The SDGs identify a large number of urban-related programmes that impact on

heritage conservation and tourism development, most specifically within Goal 11 for Sustainable Cities and Communities, which emphasises the need to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, and recognizes the relevance of international standard-setting instruments directed at protecting urban heritage (United Nations, 2015). These instruments include the *Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL)*, which was adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in 2011 and which has since provided the foundation for the discussion of the linkages between heritage conservation and urban development (UNESCO, 2011). The HUL builds upon a number of previous international charters, including the *Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage* (UNESCO, 2003), the *International Cultural Tourism Charter* (ICOMOS, 1999), the *Charter for the Conservation of Historic Towns and Urban Areas* (ICOMOS, 1987) and, of course, the *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (UNESCO, 1972).

In 1975, the importance of the tourism industry as a key player in global development was recognized with the establishment of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). Acknowledging the systemic relationship between culture and tourism, and the fact that they are much dependent on each other as tools for development, in 2018 the UNWTO published a report titled *Tourism and Culture Synergies*.¹ The report observes that there is now a growing number of visitors who, based on a desire to experience and learn from heritage environments, are looking for a renewed and reinvigorated authenticity. Furthermore, after a century of urban redevelopment, there is a demand for renewed 'place making' to recover the unique past of each urban space. All this interest is very much welcomed but this demand places significant pressure on not only the heritage environment but also on the residents of heritage areas. Many heritage environments are now experiencing visitation levels beyond their capacities, resulting in what has been identified as 'overtourism'.

While in the past there always seemed to be an inherent choice to be made between economic growth and urban area heritage conservation, there is now growing evidence, at least in theory, that this choice is no longer valid. This is due in part to the reality that cultural heritage conservation is an indivisible part of human rights, as stated in the 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Importantly, it is now widely recognised that a single-minded pursuit of growth for growth's sake, measured in percentage increases in GDP or percentage increases of visitor arrivals, is not sustainable. Certainly, these GDP or visitor arrival measures are not sufficient to assess the achievement of overall social goals such as elimination of poverty, freedom from hunger, health and longevity, universal education, gender equity and stabilization of population growth.

The intent of this book is to provide a framework for understanding urban heritage area conservation and tourism within the larger urban development context. The book examines various facets of urban heritage area conservation,

1 *Tourism and Culture Synergies*, Madrid, UNWTO, 2018

including heritage area policies, the conditions that enable heritage conservation, and planning and management responses, taking into account the broader context. This book presents and analyzes 48 case studies and examples of actual urban heritage conservation initiatives and identifies the necessary elements for an integrated and responsible approach to planning, managing and developing a policy and planning framework where heritage conservation and tourism development are essential elements of overall sustainable and responsible urban development. This publication does not seek to repeat the work of other authors and experts dealing with Asian urban areas but rather to establish the context and interface at which heritage conservation management and tourism development planning meet and merge.

The book is designed for those involved in the process of planning, managing and designing cities, developing tourism and protecting heritage resources. It presents a reality check on the state of urban heritage conservation and tourism management in Asia today.

The book is organized around eight chapters.

Chapter 1 provides a conceptual and theoretical framework for responsible urban development, with a focus on heritage and tourism. The following chapters build on this ethical setting.

Chapter 2 explores the challenges arising in the conservation and management of heritage areas in Asian cities, given the complexity of these urban areas. The analysis identifies the forces working on urban areas as well as the realities of maintaining and enhancing such areas, including those that attract large numbers of tourists.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 offer case examples and studies that illustrate the Asian situation through diverse examples of practice in the region, representing a cross-section of issues related to heritage conservation and tourism development, as well as analytic approaches and planning, policy and design responses.

Chapter 6 focuses on a well-developed and structured urban management initiative in George Town Malaysia. The case study indicates how knowledge-based planning provides a basis for sustainable development in a number of ways, including (a) protection of heritage integrity as a common good; (b) ensuring equitable access to the city's resources, including cultural resources; (c) regulation of speculation in the property market; (d) regulation of carrying capacity limits; (e) avoiding inefficient public sector (taxpayer) investment in over-building of unnecessary and destructive infrastructure; (f) reinvestment of profits for community good (job creation, etc.); and (g) protection of livelihoods essential to the city's identity.

Chapter 7 examines Bangkok's Creative District, which has placed an emphasis on mobilizing community resources, maintaining essential tangible and intangible heritage resources and seeking investment in community infrastructure. This approach is determining a new future for an area that is quickly evolving.

The case study examines the opportunities that come with the adoption of planning mechanisms that aim to safeguard community assets while providing a level playing field and stable platform for investment that encourages the private sector to be creative and, in so doing, promotes the extension of the community's cultural continuum through expansion of authentic liveable cultural heritage experiences.

Chapter 8 recognizes that the planning, design and management of urban areas is a highly complex process requiring the participation, alignment and engagement of a wide range of stakeholders, including experts on both heritage conservation and tourism development. It is a particular challenge in the Asian context where many urban planners, policy-makers and designers do not necessarily view tourism development or heritage conservation as major components within their overall mandate, in spite of the obvious contributions both sectors give to urban place-making, with the result that either or both heritage and tourism are pushed onto the sidelines of the planning process. This chapter argues that an integrated approach to tourism and heritage conservation management is essential to sustainability.

There could not be a more appropriate time for a publication that addresses these issues with an interdisciplinary perspective. While a number of studies have dealt with these areas as independent vectors of urban management, few studies within the Asian context and within holistic urban development planning paradigms have looked at the relationship between policies to promote tourism and those that protect heritage assets. The challenge is to move the discussion to how to responsibly plan, design and manage the rate and nature of urban change to ensure success and respect carrying capacities. This will be accomplished by integrating policies on urban heritage area conservation, enabling conditions and planning and management practice responses, taking into account the larger institutional, development and economic and social environment. Throughout the book there will be a reference to the larger policy and planning context but always from the perspective of urban heritage area conservation.

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Dr. Richard A. Engelhardt, educated at Yale and Harvard universities, has advanced degrees in anthropology, history and archaeology. Since the 1980s, he has spearheaded heritage conservation efforts throughout Asia, serving in academia and with the United Nations. In 1990, he inaugurated the UNESCO Field Office in Cambodia and initiated the International Safeguarding Campaign for Angkor, in recognition of which King Norodom Sihanouk awarded him the title *Commandeur de l'Ordre Royal du Cambodge*. From 1994 to 2008, he was UNESCO Regional Advisor for Culture in Asia and the Pacific, and from 2008 to 2010, the UNESCO Senior Advisor for Culture. Between 2010 and 2015 he was Visiting Research Professor of Architecture Conservation at the University of Hong Kong. He is now concurrently Honorary Professor of Architecture at Southeast University, Nanjing; Honorary Professor in Architecture and Urban Planning at Tongji University, Shanghai; and UNESCO Chair Professor of the Conservation of Historic Towns and Urban Centres at the National College of Art in Pakistan. Professor Engelhardt is a Member of the Committee of Honour of the International Network for Traditional Buildings, Architecture and Urbanism (INTBAU), and was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Global Heritage Fund.

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