Safeguarding the Historic Urban Landscape – a UNESCO Initiative

Ron van Oers (PhD)

UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Paris

42nd ISoCaRP Congress, Istanbul, Sept. 2006
Vienna (Austria)
World Heritage, 2001
“Wien-Mitte” Project Site, 2002
Adapted Proposal, 2005
Cologne (Germany)
Lack of Impact Assessment on Visual Integrity of the Property
Removal from Danger List in July 2006
due to Revision of Plans
Tower of London (UK),
World Heritage 1988
London Plan,
several high-rise constructions
240 World Heritage Cities
350+ World Heritage sites in urban areas
830 World Heritage Sites
Challenges to Historic Urban Landscapes

Graz (Austria), World Heritage 1999
Kathmandu (Nepal)
Beijing (China), Imperial Palaces of Ming & Qing World Heritage 1987
National Grand Theater Beijing, 2007
Draft Decision: 27 COM 7 (b) 43

Boundary of the Imperial City proposed by Municipality

No WH buffer zone for site

WH core zone

Nanchizi

Item 7B: SOC World Heritage Sites
Zabid (Yemen)
Lhasa (China) Ensemble of Potala Palace World Heritage 1994
Rationale for Investing in Cultural Heritage

Culture recognized as an Engine for Growth and Sustainable Development
General Benefits of Cultural Heritage

- Culture is part of City’s **Competitive Edge** and determinant of **Quality of Life**
- Reinforcing **Identity & Self-Awareness**
- Providing for **Social Cohesion & Stability**
- Enhancing **Resilience & Creativity**
- **Urban agglomerations** are becoming concentrations of **high value-added service activities** (music, theatre, motion pictures, book publishing, visual arts, broadcasting)
Economic Benefits of Cultural Heritage

- **Latin America** (IDB): Quito (Ecuador); Panama Viejo; Salvador de Bahia (Brazil)
- **France & Laos**: Luang Prabang
- **South Africa**: 7 World Heritage sites
Economic Benefits of Cultural Heritage

- Campeche, Mexico: statistics since inscription in 1999

- Investment = expenditure with potential long-term benefits: **Urban Heritage Conservation** = extremely profitable in context of long-term analysis
How to properly Regulate Urban Development & Regeneration?

Taj Mahal (India)
World Heritage, 1983
States Parties Responsibilities

- Signing of World Heritage Convention (1972) “recognizing that identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations belongs primarily to that State” (Art. 4);
- “To ensure that effective measures are taken for the protection, conservation and presentation of heritage” (Art. 5);
- Nominations by States on voluntary basis
- Highest level of national protection with management plans and resources
Cultural Heritage Conservation

- From Monuments to Living Cities and Cultural Landscapes
- From Restoration to Management of Change and Regeneration
- From Mono-Disciplinary to Integrative and Participatory
A Work-in-Progress: The Vienna Memorandum

Sustainable conservation of historic cities:

Integrated approach linking contemporary architecture, urban development and integrity of heritage assets, including landscape setting

1. Basis for Adoption of a Declaration on the Conservation of Historic Urban Landscapes
The Future Process

• Working Definition for the concept of “historic urban landscape”
• Address Pertinent Issues (“historic city”? authenticity? urban landscapes = CL? buffer zones?)
• Study into Limits of Acceptable Change
• Recognition & Inclusion of Intangible Heritage and Cultural Diversity
The Future Process

- Regional Consultations for expert input as regards Themes & Local Cultural Context
- Development UNESCO Recommendation ("soft-law") for GC adoption in 2009
- Partnerships with Development Agencies
- General Guidelines to be translated and adapted to local contexts
- Capacity Building Programmes
For the Next Generation

St. Lucia, Pitons Management Area, 2004