

Managing Historic Cities and the Conservation of Historic Urban Landscapes – An Introduction

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Setting the Scene

With the current size and foreseen increase of the world’s population living in urban areas,¹ supplemented by insufficient policies to recognize and facilitate sustainable use of heritage assets, pressures on historic cities will continue to rise, making historic urban landscape conservation one of the most daunting tasks of our time. As a direct consequence, the time allocated at World Heritage Committee sessions to debating the impacts of contemporary development in or adjacent to World Heritage-designated cities has increased dramatically.

Ranging from traffic and tourism pressures, to high-rise constructions and inner city functional changes, the issues negatively impacting on the cultural-historic significance of urban World Heritage sites are numerous, often inter-related and increasing in complexity. Parallel to the rapid diffusion of economic globalization, there seems to be a tendency towards a concentration of urban regeneration and development projects in historic inner cities. Indeed, as Saskia Sassen has observed, “the downtowns of cities and key nodes in metropolitan areas receive massive investments in real estate and telecommunications, while low-income city areas and the older suburbs are starved for resources. [...] These trends are evident, with different levels of intensity, in a growing number of major cities in the developed world and increasingly in some of the developing countries that have been integrated into the global financial markets”.²

Increasingly these developments pose threats to the authenticity and integrity – structural or visual – of historic cities and their inherited urban landscapes, as expressed by local communities and specialized conservation groups such as ICOMOS. When the Outstanding Universal Value of World Heritage-designated cities or urban areas is jeopardized, the World Heritage Committee will intervene to express its concerns and demand a re-direction of proposed urban projects. In particular over the last several years the number as well as the intensity of debates at the annual sessions of the World Heritage Committee has increased significantly, suggesting an inadequate framework to address matters of contemporary development within historic urban contexts.

¹ While certain urban regions are witnessing an actual decline in population, such as in various parts of Europe for instance, overall the world’s urban population is increasing steadily with in particular China and India experiencing a phenomenal growth rate.

² Sassen, S., “Whose City Is It?”, in: *Sustainable Cities into the 21st Century*, University of Singapore Press, 1999, p.152.

Some recent figures are provided to illustrate the current crisis in urban conservation.³ At its 31st session in Christchurch, New Zealand (June/July 2007), the World Heritage Committee reviewed a total of eighty-four State of Conservation reports for cultural properties (on a total of 830 inscribed World Heritage sites at the time), prepared by the World Heritage Centre in collaboration with the Advisory Bodies ICOMOS, IUCN and ICCROM. Those reports that focused on potential harmful impacts of urban development and regeneration projects, including threats posed by infrastructure projects, contemporary architecture and tall buildings, numbered thirty-three: an alarming 39 percent of the cultural World Heritage sites reported to the Committee.⁴ (Other impacts included natural disasters, regional conflicts and lack of management capacity).

Clearly, traditional views towards development and conservation of World Heritage sites are shifting and responsible authorities –in both developed and less-developed countries and on all continents–, encounter difficulties in addressing the issue in mutually satisfactory ways. The reconciliation of development and conservation of protected sites needs a new and strong impetus, demanded by a multitude of stakeholders, with updated guidelines for local communities and decision-makers, including the World Heritage Committee, to assess potential impacts on site significance and integrity in a systematic and objective manner.

Therefore at its 29th session in July 2005 (in Durban, South Africa), the World Heritage Committee recommended “that the General Conference of UNESCO adopt a new Recommendation to complement and update the existing ones on the subject of conservation of historic urban landscapes, with special reference to the need to link contemporary architecture to the urban historic context” (Decision 29 COM 5D). The issue was not a new phenomenon indeed, but had been under debate in the urban conservation discipline for decades already. However, it is believed that the conditions under which urban projects are currently being developed have changed profoundly over the last one or two decades. This, supplemented by the fact that the last UNESCO

³ Presented by the author at the 5th International Seminar on “The Changing Role and Relevance of Urban Conservation Charters”, at CECI (*Centro de Estudos Avançados da Conservação Integrada*), 19 – 21 November 2007, Recife (Brazil).

⁴ These were: Timbuktu (Mali); Old Town of Djenné (Mali); Historic Cairo (Egypt); Ancient Thebes with its Necropolis (Egypt); Qal’at al-Bahrain – Ancient Harbour and Capital of Dilmun (Bahrain); Archaeological Site of Volubilis (Morocco); Bahla Fort (Oman); Meidan Emam, Esfahan (Islamic Republic of Iran); The Ruins of the Buddhist Vihara at Paharpur (Bangladesh); Historic Ensemble of the Potala Palace, Lhasa (China); Old Town of Lijiang (China); The World Heritage Properties in Beijing (China); Historic Areas of Istanbul (Turkey); Tower of London (United Kingdom); Westminster Palace (United Kingdom); Old Bridge Area of the Old City of Mostar (Bosnia & Herzegovina); Historic Centre of Prague (Czech Republic); Historic Centre of Tallinn (Estonia); Old Town of Regensburg with Stadtamhof (Germany); Historic Centre of Riga (Latvia); Historic Centre of St. Petersburg and Related Groups of Monuments (Russian Federation); Historic Centre of the City of Salzburg (Austria); City of Graz – Historic Centre (Austria); Fertő/Neusiedlersee Cultural Landscape (Austria/Hungary); Cologne Cathedral (Germany); City of Vicenza and the Palladian Villas of the Veneto (Italy); Historic Centre of Sighisoara (Romania); Old Town of Avila with its Extra-Muros Churches (Spain); Old City of Salamanca (Spain); Liverpool – Maritime Mercantile City (United Kingdom); Colonial City of Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic); Luang Prabang (Laos) and Samarkand (Uzbekistan). Ref.: WHC.07/31.COM/7B.

Recommendation on the subject of urban conservation was established more than 30 years ago (i.e. the 1976 UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Role of Historic Areas), makes a review of current issues and ways to deal with them all the more pertinent.

Analysis of Key International Instruments

A corpus of standard setting documents, including Charters and Recommendations ('soft' laws), exists on the subject of historic cities and their broader setting. These have been useful to guide policies and practices worldwide, and often with good results (a brief discussion of a selection of key international instruments is provided in Annex 1). However, conditions have changed and historic cities are now subject to development pressures and challenges that were not present or fully recognized at the time of adoption of the last UNESCO Recommendation on urban sites in 1976, more than thirty years ago.

During its 27th session in Paris (2003) and after a heated debate on an urban development project at the Wien-Mitte train station in Vienna, the World Heritage Committee called for the organization of a symposium to discuss how to properly regulate the needs for modernization of historic urban environments, while at the same time preserving the values embedded in inherited urban landscapes, in particular of cities inscribed on the World Heritage List. In response, the World Heritage Centre organized the international conference 'World Heritage and Contemporary Architecture – Managing the Historic Urban Landscape' taking place in Vienna, Austria, in May 2005. At this conference the so-called "Vienna Memorandum" was adopted, a first outline of principles and guidelines that promoted an integrated and harmonious relationship between conservation and new urban developments in order to preserve the integrity of the historic urban landscape.

The Vienna Memorandum formed the basis for the 'Declaration on the Conservation of Historic Urban Landscapes', which was adopted by the 15th *General Assembly of States Parties to the World Heritage Convention* at UNESCO in October 2005 (Resolution 15 GA 7).⁵ It is important to note that the Vienna Memorandum is not a Charter, nor was it intended as a finalized document that could guide urban development and conservation for decades to come – it represented a consensus-product, established with involvement of various professional entities, to serve as a catalyst for opening up the debate.

The Vienna Memorandum is considered valuable as an historical record of its time documenting the progress in understanding and the state of the debate. It is a transitional document, which hints at a vision of human ecology and signals a change towards sustainable development and a broader concept of urban space suggested as a "landscape" – not so much the designed and evolved landscapes that are familiar to most conservation specialists, but rather associative landscapes or "landscapes of the imagination".⁶ Its importance lies in its ability to open a dialogue among a broad cross-section of the community and between the disciplines on the issue of contemporary development in historic cities. By using ritual and experience as starting points for

⁵ Available at: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/cities>

⁶ Main outcome of the Round Table organized by Christina Cameron, Canada Research Chair on Built Heritage, Université de Montréal on 9 March 2006; available at: <http://www.patrimoinebati.umontreal.ca>

understanding the significance of historic urban spaces, conservation practitioners will be forced to challenge the legacy of 20th century approaches. Dialogue is considered to be the main value of the Vienna Memorandum.

In response to the World Heritage Committee's request that the General Conference of UNESCO adopt a new Recommendation to complement and update the existing ones on the subject of conservation of historic urban landscapes, an international expert group under the lead of the World Heritage Centre analyzed and debated the most relevant standard-setting documents in view of their applicability to current cases of urban conservation and development. On the next page the analysis of some principle aspects of four key instruments is tabled, including those of the Vienna Memorandum.

The analysis and main discussions by the expert group concluded that new dynamics in architecture and urban development, including global/non-local processes, have brought about new challenges to urban heritage conservation and management, as especially experienced by the World Heritage Committee at its annual sessions. These require new approaches and a critical review of the standards and guidelines set three decades ago.

While the general principles of the 1976 Recommendation are still considered valid, this is not the case for the proposed policy and recommended strategies put forward in this document. The expert group therefore suggested to consider the 1976 UNESCO Recommendation as an important document of its time, but to complement it by a new Recommendation taking into consideration that over the last 30 years the concepts of historic urban area conservation have evolved, that policies are more articulated and tested, and that the vocabulary of the planning profession has changed.

In December 2007 these suggestions were included in an information report and sent to all three Advisory Bodies (ICOMOS, IUCN, ICCROM), as well as the partner organizations and institutions that formed part of the *ad hoc* Working Group on Historic Urban Landscapes for their formal comments and suggestions.⁷ All these organizations have responded positively by welcoming the current debate and reacting in favour of a process of working towards an updated Recommendation on the Conservation of Historic Urban Landscapes. In particular ICOMOS provided some key observations that further developed the concept of historic urban landscapes, as referring to '... the sensory perception of the urban system and its setting. A system of material components (urban layout, plot system, buildings, open spaces, trees and vegetation, urban furniture, etc.) and the relationships among them, which are the result of a process, conditioned by social, economical, political and cultural constraints over time. The concept [of *historic*

⁷ The *ad hoc* Working Group comprises individual experts on their own title, as well as representatives of the International Union of Architects (UIA), the International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA), the International Federation for Housing and Planning (IFHP), the Organization of World Heritage Cities (OWHC) and the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC), totaling 15 international professionals from different geo-cultural regions, disciplines, and organisations and research institutions.

urban landscapes] contributes to link tangible and intangible heritage components and to assess and understand the town or urban area as a process, rather than as an object'.⁸

⁸ A. Conti's Annex to: *ICOMOS' Observations on the Information Document by the World Heritage Centre on the Development of a revised UNESCO Recommendation on the Conservation of Historic Urban Landscapes* (5 Dec. 2007), ICOMOS, Paris, February 2008.

Comparative Analysis of Key Charters and Recommendations

	1968	1976	1987	2005
	RECOMMENDATION CONCERNING THE PRESERVATION OF CULTURAL PROPERTY ENDANGERED BY PUBLIC OR PRIVATE WORKS	NAIROBI RECOMMENDATION CONCERNING THE SAFEGUARDING AND CONTEMPORARY ROLE OF HISTORIC AREAS	WASHINGTON CHARTER FOR THE CONSERVATION OF HISTORIC TOWNS AND URBAN AREAS	VIENNA MEMORANDUM ON WORLD HERITAGE AND CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE – MANAGING THE HISTORIC URBAN LANDSCAPE
DEFINITIONS	<p>a) Immovable: Archeological, historic and scientific sites including groups of traditional structures, <u>historic quarters</u> in urban or rural built up area and ethnological structures</p> <p>b) Movable: (not relevant here)</p>	<p><u>Historic and architectural areas</u>: group of buildings, structures and open spaces in an urban or rural environment, the cohesion and value of which are recognised from the archaeological, architectural, prehistoric, historic, aesthetic or sociocultural point of view.</p> <p>Environment: Natural or man-made setting which influences the static or dynamic way these areas are <u>perceived</u> or which is <u>directly linked</u> to them in space or social, economic or cultural ties.</p>	<p><u>Historic urban areas</u>, large and small, including cities, towns and historic centres or quarters together with their <u>natural and man-made environments</u>.</p>	<p><u>Historic urban landscape</u> goes beyond the notions of historic centres, ensembles, surroundings to include the <u>broader territorial and landscape context</u>. Composed of character-defining elements: land use and patterns, spatial organisation, visual relationships, topography and soils, vegetation and all elements of the technical infrastructures.</p>
GENERAL PRINCIPLES	<p>a) Preservation of the entire site or structure from the effects of private or public works</p> <p>b) <u>Salvage or rescue</u> of the property if the area is to be transformed, including preservation and removal of the property</p>	<p>a) Historic areas and its <u>surroundings</u> to be considered in their totality as a coherent whole whose balance and specific nature depend on the parts of which it is composed.</p> <p>b) Elements to be preserved include human activities, buildings, spatial organisation and their surroundings</p>	<p>a) Conservation should be integral part of <u>coherent policies</u> of economic and social development and of urban and regional planning.</p> <p>b) Qualities to be preserved include urban patterns, relationships between buildings and open spaces, formal appearance of buildings, relationship with surrounding setting and functions.</p>	<p>a) <u>Continuous change</u> acknowledged as part of city's tradition: response to development dynamics should facilitate changes and growth while respecting inherited townscape and its landscape as well as historic city's authenticity and integrity.</p> <p>b) Enhancing quality of life and production efficiency help strengthening identity and social cohesion.</p>
IDENTIFIED THREATS	<p>a) Urban expansion and renewal projects removing structures <u>around scheduled monuments</u>.</p> <p>b) Injudicious modifications to <u>individual buildings</u></p> <p>c) Dams, highways, bridges, cleaning and levelling of land, mining, quarrying, etc...</p>	<p>a) Newly developed areas that could ruin the environment and character of <u>adjoining historic areas</u></p> <p>b) <u>Disfigurement of historic areas</u> caused by infrastructures, pollution and environmental damage</p> <p>c) Speculation which compromises the interests of the community as a whole.</p>	<p>a) <u>Physical degradation and destruction</u> caused by urban development that follows industrialisation.</p> <p>b) Uncontrolled Traffic and parking, construction of motorways inside historic towns, natural disasters, pollution and vibration.</p>	<p>Socio-economic changes and growth that would not respect historic cities authenticity and integrity as well as their inherited townscape and landscape.</p>
PROPOSED POLICY AND RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES	<p>a) Enact and maintain legislative measures necessary to ensure the <u>preservation or salvage</u> of endangered cultural properties</p> <p>b) Ensure adequate <u>public budgets</u> for such preservation or salvage</p> <p>c) Encourage such preservation thru favourable tax rates, grants, loans, etc...</p> <p>d) Entrust responsibility for the preservation to appropriate official bodies at national and local levels.</p> <p>e) Provide advice to the population and develop educational programmes</p>	<p>a) Prepare detailed surveys of historic areas and their surroundings including architectural, social, economic, cultural and technical data.</p> <p>b) Establish appropriate plans and documents defining the areas and items to be protected, standards to be observed, conditions governing new constructions, etc...</p> <p>c) Draw up <u>priorities for the allocation of public funds</u></p> <p>d) Protection and restoration should be accompanied by <u>social and economic revitalization policy</u> in order to avoid any brake in the social fabric</p>	<p>a) Conservation plans must address all relevant factors including history, architecture, sociology and economics and should ensure <u>harmonious relationship</u> between the historic urban area and the town as a whole.</p> <p>b) New functions and activities should be compatible with the character of the historic area.</p> <p>c) Special educational and training programmes should be established.</p>	<p>a) Planning process in historic urban landscapes requires a thorough formulation of <u>opportunities and risks</u> in order to guarantee a well-balanced development.</p> <p>b) <u>Contemporary architecture</u> should be complementary to the values of the historic urban landscape and should not compromise the historic nature of the city.</p> <p>c) <u>Economic developments</u> should be bound to the goals of long term heritage preservation.</p>

The Historic Urban Landscape Initiative (HUL)

With the support from the States Parties to the World Heritage Convention, the World Heritage Committee, the Advisory Bodies and the various professional organizations, the World Heritage Centre has started a process of regional consultation meetings to receive expert input on concepts, definitions and approaches to historic urban landscapes as potential content material for a new UNESCO Recommendation.

To date three regional expert meetings have been organized by the Centre and its partners, in Jerusalem (June 2006), Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation (January 2007) and Olinda, Brazil (November 2007), in addition to two planning meetings held at UNESCO Headquarters (in September 2006 and November 2008). In general, all three meetings resulted in a broad support for the ongoing review process concerning approaches and tools for historic urban landscape conservation, in which the 2005 Vienna Memorandum was widely recognized as a useful basis and work-in-progress.

The general debate at these meetings included key issues that have profoundly changed the discipline and practice of urban heritage conservation. Among the most prominent are:

1) The importance of landscape, as a stratification of previous and current urban dynamics, with an interplay between the natural and built environment.

Previously handled by ‘zoning’, the emphasis today is on continuity – of relationships, values and management. The adoption of a holistic approach in heritage conservation has meant an increase in the complexity of processes to identify significance and protect values –in addition to artefacts–, the proper understanding of which is only starting to emerge. But already it has become clear that the traditional notion of groups of buildings, historic ensembles or inner cities, identifying them as separate entities within a larger whole, is not sufficient anymore to protect their characteristics and qualities against fragmentation, degeneration and, eventually, loss of significance. A landscape approach, where all is layered and inter-related –and thus integrity becomes a key consideration–, seems more appropriate to deal with the management of change in complex historic urban environments.

2) The role of contemporary architecture, previously considered as ‘contextualisation of new buildings’.

The role of contemporary architecture today appears to be more related to city marketing strategies, than the making of urban space. In particular the surge in iconic buildings as *the* cultural expression of dynamic cities is worrisome, because many of them are deliberately juxtaposed with historic monuments or ensembles in order to attract attention and create what is believed to be an image of progress.⁹ Charles Jencks explains that the concept of the iconic building has had a long and continuous history, and is therefore nothing new. However, he signals that with the emergence of today’s iconic architecture we witness “the empty circularity of its meaning, its appearance as pure sign with only media significance”.¹⁰ The debate over the desirability of occasional iconic buildings as necessary new additions to our more traditional skylines is legitimate, but the issue at hand is more pressing. Increasingly

⁹ See also: Van Oers, R., “Preventing the Goose with the Golden Eggs from catching Bird Flu”, in: *Cities between Integration and Disintegration: Opportunities and Challenges*, ISoCaRP Review 02, Sitges 2006 – available at: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/cities>.

¹⁰ Jencks, Ch., *The Iconic Building – The Power of Enigma*, Frances Lincoln Ltd, London 2005, p.68.

politicians, administrators and investors consider this type of architecture a fine substitute for yesterday's styles, while forgetting that when exceptions to the rule become the rule, this will have serious consequences for in particular the functioning of the city. In Jencks' wording: "urban decorum, common decency, shared streets, and collective transport are necessary for the city to work. That's why there are building codes".¹¹ Respect for the inherited townscape therefore, when designing new interventions, is more than just nostalgia and ensures that monuments, historic ensembles and districts "work" – and continue working together as a whole.

3) The economics and changing role of cities, with an emphasis on the non-local processes, such as tourism and urban development, with outside actors of change. In their role as drivers of regional growth and development more and more cities need to capture international capital and companies that are shifting around the globe in search of a locale to make a profit – but that have little knowledge of, or care for, local significance and values. The ensuing balancing act that municipal authorities have to perform to interest international investors and at the same time safeguard local values is often a mission impossible. However, even in this unfair game historic cities have leverage in offering their heritage as unique selling point (USP), in return for which they can demand concessions as regards overall planning scheme or architectural solution chosen for the urban project to mitigate impacts on the historic environment. It is in this negotiation process that there's a strong need for clarity and certainty offered through new, internationally accepted guidelines.

As regards the specific recommendations resulting from the regional meetings,¹² the following were particularly noteworthy:

- a) The Jerusalem Meeting called for:
 - a process of cultural mapping as a tool for the identification of the *genius loci* of historic areas in their wider setting;
 - enhanced impact assessments covering not only environmental issues, but also visual, cultural and social aspects.
- b) The Saint Petersburg Meeting emphasized the need for:
 - further reflection on the links between cultural landscapes, as defined in the *Operational Guidelines*, and (historic) urban landscapes;
 - an integrated approach to urban planning and heritage conservation to accommodate urban development and investment, which are accelerating for instance in large parts of Central and Eastern Europe at the moment.
- c) At the Olinda Meeting, significant discussion took place on:
 - a broadening of the understanding of historic cities through a revision of the *Operational Guidelines* by including the notion of "sites" as an additional category for nomination of historic cities, which would facilitate a more holistic approach to heritage conservation as compared to "groups of buildings" currently;
 - research and development on a robust toolkit for urban conservation;
 - responding to social discrepancies and environmental sustainability in

¹¹ Idem, p. 17.

¹² The reports of these regional meetings are available at: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/cities>

urban areas, particularly in relation to the Latin American context.

Towards a New Framework for Managing Historic Cities

The previous paragraph contains only a selection of recommendations put forward, but from these already the emergence of a new paradigm in historic cities conservation can be observed. Slowly it seems we're moving away from 19th and early 20th century concepts derived from the rather static approach to monuments preservation (i.e. the "do-no-harm" posture), while still honouring the influence they've had on our current thinking in urban conservation, towards more dynamic processes in which the safeguarding of cultural significance is playing a key role.

Cultural significance is defined as "aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations. [It] is synonymous with heritage significance and cultural heritage value [which] may change as a result of the continuing history of the place [while] understanding of cultural significance may change as a result of new information".¹³ Meaning that artefacts and spaces, also through their uses, are imbued with qualities and values, which need to be defined – and re-defined, by each generation– in order to arrive at sustainable interventions that protect and possibly enhance these values to groups of individuals, communities, and society at large.

The world in general is moving towards increasing complexity and also this approach is progressively more complex, which can be regarded as just a reflection of a global reality. However, with increasing complexity comes a need for clearer guidance, as Susan Macdonald has observed: "Guidelines help provide certainty. [...] those places where there is common understanding about the place are usually those that have the best systems in place for cherishing and retaining those values and also manage change the most successfully. Where there is common understanding, guidelines are probably less important".¹⁴ As has already been pointed out, the contentious debates at the annual sessions of the World Heritage Committee indicate that there's less and less common understanding about what qualities to protect and how to retain the values embedded in historic cities.

Therefore the World Heritage Committee at its 32nd session in Québec City, Canada in 2008 (Decision 32 COM 7.2), as well as the General Assembly of States Parties to the World Heritage Convention (Resolution 16 GA 11), expressed their further support for the Historic Urban Landscape approach. Decision 32 COM 7.2 proposed a review of the relevant sections of the *Operational Guidelines* with a view to broadening the categories under which historic cities can be inscribed, thus facilitating a more holistic approach to historic cities management in due course. It also reiterated Decision 29 COM 5D by recommending that the General Conference of UNESCO regulate the conservation of historic urban landscapes at the international level in the form of a new UNESCO Recommendation.

The Vienna Memorandum put forward a working definition of the 'historic urban landscape' as "ensembles of any group of buildings, structures and open spaces, in

¹³ Article 1 of ICOMOS Australia's Burra Charter; see: <http://www.icomos.org/australia/burra.html>.

¹⁴ Macdonald, S., "The Real Thing: Authenticity, Heritage Significance & Conservation", in: *The Double Dimension: Heritage and Innovation*, The Royal Australian Institute of Architects, August 2004, p.37.

their natural and ecological context, including archaeological and paleontological sites, constituting human settlements in an urban environment over a relevant period of time, the cohesion and value of which are recognized from the archaeological, architectural, prehistoric, historic, scientific, aesthetic, socio-cultural or ecological point of view”.¹⁵ While this working definition helped focus attention on character-defining elements in the urban scene, that include land uses and patterns, spatial organization, visual relationships, topography and vegetation, among others, it was nevertheless seen by many as not essentially different from more traditional definitions of the city – i.e. the onus was still very much on the physical attributes, instead of encompassing the full notion of an urban system.

Over the course of the last three years, with many ICOMOS discussion groups in several parts of the world,¹⁶ lots has been said about the definition of historic urban landscape – and, no doubt, lots more will be said in the near future. After all, this was precisely one of the aims of the HUL initiative. For the moment the following definition is what constitutes the state of the debate, which was captured at the Expert Planning Meeting that took place at UNESCO Headquarters in November 2008:

Historic Urban Landscape is a mindset, an understanding of the city, or parts of the city, as an outcome of natural, cultural and socio-economic processes that construct it spatially, temporally, and experientially. It is as much about buildings and spaces, as about rituals and values that people bring into the city. This concept encompasses layers of symbolic significance, intangible heritage, perception of values, and interconnections between the composite elements of the historic urban landscape, as well as local knowledge including building practices and management of natural resources. Its usefulness resides in the notion that it incorporates a capacity for change.

Whilst this definition is more encompassing and highly inclusive, arguably the key that makes all the difference is to be found in the tail end: the acceptance of CHANGE as an inherent part of the urban condition. And this has perhaps been the biggest hurdle on the path to progress in the urban conservation discipline over the last decade, as in particular the conservation community found this difficult to accept vis-à-vis their core ideology to preserve monuments and sites as unchanged as possible, or otherwise was not able to reach a consensus on *how much* change would be permitted. As we will see in the presented papers, almost all contributors refer to this key aspect in the process and some provide for very practical answers indeed.

After all, many have argued that “cities are more than buildings and places where people simply survive. They are cradles of social and economic activity, where the very diversity of interactions creates new initiatives, new ideas and new energy. Cities have to be re-created as attractive places where those people with choice will want to live and work and where they will enjoy leisure and cultural pursuits”.¹⁷ Finally, it seems, this notion will find its place in urban conservation policy and strategies,

¹⁵ UNESCO, *Vienna Memorandum on World Heritage and Contemporary Architecture – Managing the Historic Urban Landscape*, World Heritage Centre, Paris, 20 May 2005.

¹⁶ Coordinated by G. Araoz, then Secretary-General of US-ICOMOS, currently President of ICOMOS.

¹⁷ Roberts, P. and H. Sykes (ed.), *Urban Regeneration – A Handbook*, Sage Publications, London 2000, *op.cit.* p.158.

which contrary to the fears of preservationists, will help pave the way for improved conservation and management of historic cities.

Conclusion

In April 2009 UNESCO's Executive Board took the decision to recommend to UNESCO's General Conference, taking place in October 2009, to adopt a Resolution that will request the development of a new Recommendation on the Conservation of Historic Urban Landscapes. It should be emphasized that this proposed new standard-setting instrument would not be specific to World Heritage cities, but broadened to all historic cities. If the General Conference adopts such a Resolution, over 2010 a series of texts will be drafted, which will draw upon the definitions and approaches developed in the context of the HUL initiative and include most of the proposals put forward in this paper. The final draft text would then be presented to the spring session of UNESCO's Executive Board in 2011, for adoption by UNESCO's General Conference at its 36th session in autumn 2011.

With two more years to go, consultations at the international level will be of the utmost importance to ensure that the development and adoption of the new Recommendation receives the proper attention and political backing. At the same time, it illustrates that the interim development of the Vienna Memorandum in 2005 was needed to bridge this time of crisis and open up new avenues of thinking, until new guidelines have been negotiated and approved in 2011.