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#### ***Forward Together: A Culture-Nature Journey Towards More Effective Conservation in a Changing World***

November 13-14, 2018

The Presidio

San Francisco, California

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**Linking Nature and Culture Through Capacity Building:  
Lessons Learned and Challenges Ahead**

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**Abstract**

World Heritage Studies at the University of Tsukuba has the characteristic of being composed of faculty dedicated to both natural heritage and cultural heritage conservation. Profiting from this distinctive feature, the University of Tsukuba was the first to embark on a major activity to contribute to the World Heritage Capacity Building Programme focused on the new paradigm of linking nature and culture (2013-2014) and its follow-up activities, which also led to the creation of a UNESCO Chair on the theme. Gathering natural and cultural heritage practitioners and convening natural science and social studies and humanities, the UNESCO Chair on Nature-Culture Linkages at the University of Tsukuba has been holding capacity building workshops for Asia and the Pacific since 2016, in cooperation with ICCROM and IUCN, and with the support of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS. Themes focused under the umbrella of linking nature and culture are: Agricultural Landscapes (CBWNCL 2016), Sacred Landscapes (CBWNCL 2017), Disasters and Resilience (CBWNCL 2018) and Mixed Cultural and Natural Heritage (CBWNCL 2019). From these experiences, we have found that interdisciplinarity, language, diversity of legal frameworks and institutional systems bring about a myriad of misunderstandings and disagreements. However, in this diversity lies opportunity.

**Keywords**

Capacity building, World Heritage, Nature-Culture, Agricultural Landscapes, Sacred Landscapes, Disasters and Resilience

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## **Linking Nature and Culture through Capacity Building: Lessons Learned and Challenges Ahead**

### **The project**

Capacity Building is one of the Strategic Objectives or “4Cs” (Credibility, Conservation, Communication, and Capacity Building) that were first defined in the Budapest Declaration on the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention in 2002 (World Heritage Committee 2002), and which later became 5 with the addition of “Communities” during the World Heritage Committee Session held in 2007 in New Church, New Zealand. ICCROM and IUCN in collaboration with ICOMOS, the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, and other partners, such as UNESCO Category 2 Centres developed the World Heritage Capacity Building Strategy (WHCBS) (UNESCO 2011), adopted by the World Heritage Committee held in Paris in 2011, in order to tackle the global, regional and local needs concerning diverse themes related to the World Heritage system, such as nominations processes, Heritage Impact Assessments (HIA), Disasters Risk Management plans (DRM), and others. One of the themes addressed by the WHCBS was the development of linkages between natural heritage conservation and cultural heritage conservation practitioners. The need for exchange between the two sectors of practice became evident in the process of implementation of the World Heritage Convention, especially after the incorporation of cultural landscapes as a category for nomination to the World Heritage List (Taylor and Lennon 2011). Now, capacity building has become one of the most effective channels to disseminate the new paradigm that links the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, bringing together local communities and indigenous and local knowledge in order to devise innovative solutions to the safeguarding of heritage in the face of climate change, environmental degradation and biological and cultural diversity loss.

The UNESCO Chair on Nature-Culture Linkages in Heritage Conservation was officially established at the University of Tsukuba in July 2017, as a joint effort between the World Heritage Studies Programme and the Certificate Programme on Nature Conservation (CPNC). One year before, in 2016, the World Heritage Studies Programme, with the financial support of

the CPNC, launched a series of Capacity Building Workshops (CBWNCL) with the aim of bringing together natural heritage and cultural heritage practitioners to discuss their own case studies and share experiences under a theme that is relevant for both fields of practice. This initiative was a direct result of the discussions that took place in 2013-2014 by which the Advisory Bodies of the World Heritage Convention, as part of the WHCBS agreed that,

“(...) in sum, a major drive is under way to rethink the boundaries between nature and culture as:

- embedded and connected rather than isolated qualities;
- constituted relationally rather than unique and distinct properties;
- a dynamic web of processes rather than fixed elements;
- a field for experience sharing and mutual learning” (Larsen and Wijesuriya, 2015: 9).

Framed as a contribution to the WHCBS, this project started with Asia and the Pacific region as its scope, but soon expanded to consider a quota of participants from other regions. Graduate students from the University who come from a variety of countries and scientific disciplines to study in Japan, also benefit from this experience.

The CBWNCLs have been proposed as experimental workshops where new concepts and methodologies for the training of heritage practitioners can be explored (Ishizawa, Inaba, and Yoshida, 2017a). It considers the World Heritage Convention as its overarching framework, but it deals with sites not listed and protected at different levels and under different governance systems. Particularly, this project is interested in learning from community-based conservation and indigenous and local management systems that do not divide between culture and nature. Furthermore, through these workshops, the needs for the professionals of the region, specifically in terms of expertise and training, are expected to be clarified.

The workshops have been conceived as a series of four. Each workshop focuses on a specific theme that is related to both nature conservation and cultural heritage conservation and uses

Japanese World Heritage (and other) sites as examples of where to look at the inextricability between natural and cultural values. The workshops focus on the examination of landscapes that are protected under diverse national legal instruments, and also recognized with international level designations. Besides World Heritage sites, the CBWNCLs look at Biosphere Reserves, Ramsar sites, or places under the GIAHS and the Satoyama Initiative programs.

The first workshop dealt with “Agricultural Landscapes”. Fourteen heritage practitioners from twelve countries gathered for the CBWNCL 2016: Australia, Bangladesh, China, Colombia, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, and Turkey. We looked at cases such as the rice terraces of the Philippines Cordillera, the Hani Terraces in China, the Coffee Cultural Landscape in Colombia, Katzchendonga National Park in India, among others.



**Figure 1.** Harvesting rice in the Shiroyone Senmida, Noto Peninsula, CBWNCL 2016 © Jessica Brown.

In Japan, we visited the Noto Peninsula (see Figure 1), declared a GIAHS area and also working with the Satoyama Initiative. As World Heritage, we visited the Historical Villages of Shirakawa-go and Gokayama, inscribed as cultural landscape in 1995, under criteria (iv) and (v). The second workshop gathered researchers and professionals around the topic of “Sacred Landscapes”. Sixteen participants joined the CBWNCL 2017 coming from twelve countries: Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, France, Kyrgyzstan, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Papua and New Guinea, Philippines, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam. We had the chance to listen to experiences in the Tasmanian World Heritage Area in Australia, Kedarnath National Park in India, the Laponian Area in Sweden, among others. During this workshop, we visited the Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes of the Kii Mountain Range (see Figure 2), inscribed in the World Heritage List in 2004 as a cultural landscape, under criteria (ii), (iii), (iv) and (vi).



**Figure 2.** Accompanying the prayer of Shugendo priests in the Kii Mountains, CBWNCL 2017 © Maya Ishizawa.

The third workshop dealt with Disasters and Resilience, and fifteen participants from diverse institutions in thirteen countries took part of the CBNWCL 2018: Australia, Bangladesh, Chile, China, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Philippines, Russia, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, USA (Hawaii). Participants shared their work in places such as Pulicat Lagoon in India, Kahoolawe Island in Hawaii, Lamu Old Town in Kenya, the Great Blue Mountains in Australia, among others. The field trip consisted in visits to the Tohoku Region, affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami of March 2011 (see Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** Listening to a tsunami story-teller, Minami-Sanriku Town, CBNWCL 2018 © Maya Ishizawa

The visits focused on three sites: Hiraizumi – Temple, Gardens and Archaeological Sites representing the Buddhist Pure Land, inscribed in the World Heritage List under criteria (ii) and (vi) in the aftermath of the disaster in 2011; the Sanriku (Fukko) Reconstruction National Park, created also in the aftermath of the disaster, as a network of natural protected areas; and

Matsushima, landscape protected under Japanese law as a Place of Scenic Beauty, where coastal villages had to be relocated and concrete walls were built next to the sea. So far, fourteen graduate students from the University of Tsukuba, registered in the CPNC, and coming from eleven different countries – Antigua & Barbuda, Australia, Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Jamaica, Japan, Liberia, Peru, Sudan and Uganda - have participated as observers.

The fourth workshop will address Mixed Cultural and Natural Heritage and will look at examples of sites which natural and cultural values may be recognized at local or national levels but not necessarily at international levels. Moreover, we will address questions that have arisen in relation to the reduced number of Mixed Cultural and Natural Heritage sites inscribed in the World Heritage List, and the complexities and problems raised by this type of nominations. Furthermore, we will revise the challenges caused by the potential use of criterion (vii) in World Heritage nominations.

### **The opportunity**

From the outset, the workshops benefitted from the work being developed by our partners, the Advisory Bodies of the World Heritage Convention, ICCROM, IUCN, ICOMOS and its secretariat, the UNESCO World Heritage Centre. We are learning from and exchanging with capacity building initiatives such as the People-Centred Approaches to Conservation of Nature-Culture (ICCROM), Linking Nature and Culture (World Heritage Leadership Programme of IUCN/ICCROM/Norway), Connecting Practice (IUCN/ICOMOS), Right-based Approaches to Conservation (IUCN), the Nature/Culture and Culture/Nature Journeys (IUCN and ICOMOS), and the World Heritage Leadership Programme, thanks to a close collaboration and direct inputs from key members of these initiatives as guest speakers and resource persons in the CBWNCLs. Their contribution has been fundamental for the success of this project. In exchange, our work is also contributing to ongoing research and development of these activities.

More concretely, the project profits from the synergy created by three aspects. First, the Japanese conservation system provides an interesting framework to discuss and learn about the possible

connections between the nature conservation and the cultural heritage conservation practice. Even though the responsibilities over natural heritage and cultural heritage are clearly divided, there are categories of protection where both nature and culture become interrelated. The Ministry of the Environment is in charge of the protection of nature, and the Agency for Cultural Affairs is in charge of the protection cultural heritage, and each institution implements the laws corresponding to their mandates. Cultural landscapes, natural monuments, places of scenic beauty, and intangible cultural properties are categories described in the Law for the Protection of Cultural Property (1950), and they show interrelations between cultural and natural values. On the other hand, national parks include private and public land, as well as areas that are not strictly “pure nature”, but occupied, sometimes by temples and shrines.

Therefore, the Japanese system and Japanese sites bring opportunities to look at these interrelations, following a legal system that even though institutionally retains the divide, conceptually and at the level of practice, do not follow such a strict divide in the understanding of the values of landscapes.

Second, the World Heritage Studies Programme at the University of Tsukuba is composed of faculty dedicated to a diversity of disciplines, such as architecture conservation, archaeological and architectural heritage management, landscape planning, eco-tourism, natural heritage conservation, biodiversity studies, community development, and art history. This allows graduate students, researchers and professors to work under interdisciplinary conditions, being able to share knowledge on both sides of the practice: natural and cultural heritage.

Thirdly, the CPNC was created as a joint venture between the Life and Environmental Sciences Department and the World Heritage Studies Programme in 2014, funded by a private endowment. This programme focuses on raising awareness in nature conservation, and especially in recognizing and promoting the role of people in this endeavor. It gives graduate students opportunities to pursue a combination of theoretical experiences in classrooms, and practical experiences in the field, especially in Japanese natural and rural areas. In addition, it promotes

capacity building by supporting professional internships in institutions in charge of the conservation of nature, including IUCN in Switzerland. The UNESCO Chair on Nature-Culture Linkages is supported by the CPNC fund.

The combination of an exemplary national conservation system, the possibility for exchange between researchers, practitioners and students from a diverse range of disciplines dedicated to the conservation of nature and culture, and the support of the CPNC provided the opportunity to engage with the international nature-culture initiatives and made it possible to host these workshops. This gave us the chance to create a platform for exchange and sharing of the diversity of systems and case studies from the region by creating the UNESCO Chair.

### **Methods applied**

The workshops are organized in four modules. The first is dedicated to an international symposium. The second is a theoretical module composed of lectures by renowned experts in the field and presentations from participants' case studies. The third module consists of visits to Japanese sites, where we encounter local authorities and members of the communities who explain how conservation is implemented at local levels. Finally, the fourth module is dedicated to reflection on the theory and practice, and participants have the chance to work in interdisciplinary groups to develop an analysis and proposal for the sites visited, where we focus on the mapping of interrelated cultural and natural values, and identify lessons learned and recommendations.

During the course, we have proposed to work in interdisciplinary groups, combining participants from different cultural and national backgrounds, and from different disciplinary backgrounds, working either on natural heritage conservation or cultural heritage. The exchange is focused on case studies, where each participant presents a landscape where interlinkages between cultural and natural values are evident, and where the current conservation system is limiting the understanding of the site as an interaction between culture, nature and people.

The recruiting process is based on a public call for applications. The groups of participants are very diverse and come from different positions in relation to the heritage site they represent: either researchers, local heritage practitioners, national civil servants or technical experts working in national institutions in charge of the conservation of heritage. In addition, we intend to include local people and indigenous peoples (to their site) who work in grass roots movements, such as NGOs, or in research and local government institutions. Our interest lies in learning from indigenous and local views on heritage, and understanding the different perceptions using a transdisciplinary approach. Nevertheless, we find that it is sometimes difficult for indigenous or local people to attend the course due to language limitations, since our workshops are held in English.

As a post-workshop task, we prepare proceedings from the participants' presentations during the workshop, where they can reflect on the lessons learned that can be applied to their case studies. Also, participants can revisit their presentations and sites using the lessons learned during their Japanese experience.

### **Lessons learned**

After three workshops we have found that the nature-culture divide is strong at institutional levels, but not necessarily at local and community levels.

Diversity benefits this process not only in terms of cultural backgrounds of participants, but also in terms of their disciplinary/academic backgrounds, and their positions or roles in the heritage sites. We try to bring together people from Asia-Pacific, and beyond, including social scientists, architects, archaeologists and natural scientists, and site managers, researchers, officers, NGO members, graduate students, etc. We have found that language barriers exist also at the disciplinary/professional level, and that it is important that the message of the nature-culture linkages goes through all these levels, and therefore, some common grounds and terms are needed.

For each workshop we are developing proceedings, where, besides reporting the symposium discussions and the results of the workshops, we collect the case studies presented by the participants and pass them through an international peer-review process and publish them in the Journal of the World Heritage Studies Programme of the University of Tsukuba. Currently we have published two proceedings, on “Agricultural Landscapes” and “Sacred Landscapes”, which collect more than 20 case studies of Asia-Pacific, Africa, Latin America and Europe (Ishizawa, Inaba, and Yoshida 2017b, 2018). It is foreseen to publish our third Proceedings in 2019 on the topic of Disasters and Resilience.

At the core of the workshops is the idea of learning from differences and diversity. However, differences and diversity bring the main challenges for the development of the workshops. Different levels of intercultural competence and interdisciplinary experiences may become a barrier for the establishment of group dynamics. Since we have to reflect in groups for the final module of the workshops, the task requires openness to learn from each others’ experiences, cultures and perspectives on the same places and issues. These differences in backgrounds, experience and practice are also reflected in the post-workshop process when the process of peer-reviewing can have very different results between academics and non-academic participants. Nevertheless, we consider that these challenges as part of the capacity building process, and they may contribute to the enhancement of participants’ intercultural competence, interdisciplinary work and writing skills.

### **Next steps**

Currently, this project has two next steps. One is to hold the fourth and final workshop of the series that will deal with Mixed Cultural and Natural Heritage, where we will look at the challenges of nominating sites as holding Outstanding Universal Value for both cultural and natural criteria, the challenges of managing cultural and natural values in sites, and to better understand how to look at Mixed sites from a nature-culture approach. The second step after finishing all four experimental workshops is to evaluate the experiences, collect the lessons learned and assess the viability of creating a manual for the region and beyond.

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## Biographical Notes

**Maya Ishizawa** works as a researcher in the World Heritage Studies Programme at the University of Tsukuba where she coordinates the activities of the UNESCO Chair on Nature-Culture Linkages in Heritage Conservation. She has been trained as an architect in Peru, and after earning a Master of Media and Governance from Keio University, in Japan, she completed a Ph.D. in Heritage Studies at BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg, in Germany focused on the conservation of cultural landscapes. Currently engaged in the training of cultural and natural heritage practitioners in Asia and the Pacific, she looks to developing a comprehensive approach to heritage conservation.

**Nobuko Inaba** has been trained as a conservation architect and architectural historian. She received her doctoral degree from the Tokyo Institute of Technology. She gained practical knowledge and experience on heritage policy-development and management while serving in the Japanese government's Agency for Cultural Affairs and its affiliated research institute from 1991 to 2008, including the period from 2000 to 2002 while she worked for ICCROM seconded by Japan. In April 2008, she took up her current position as a professor of World Heritage Studies at the University of Tsukuba.

**Masahito Yoshida** is Chair and Professor at the World Heritage Studies Programme, and the UNESCO Chairholder on Nature-Culture Linkages in Heritage Conservation at the University of Tsukuba. He is a member of the Natural Heritage Specialist Group and Protected Landscapes Specialist Group of the World Commission on Protected Areas of IUCN. He has been involved in conservation of endangered species from introduction of new invasive alien species as a member of the Scientific Council of Ogasawara Islands World Natural Heritage Site. He is also a member of a local organization in charge of the management of Satoyama landscape in Chiba Prefecture.