

JOINING THE MAINSTREAM : A PRACTICAL APPROACH TO SAFEGUARDING CULTURAL HERITAGE IN A CHANGING WORLD

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Infrastructure Development in an Environmental Context

With the accelerated pace, volume and scale of development in all parts of the world, the imperative to document and conserve cultural heritage is stronger than ever before. In order to meet this challenge, new approaches are needed. Instead of being seen simply as custodians of the past, the individuals, organizations and institutions responsible for cultural heritage must become part of the modern construct for social and economic development and environmental management.

Public and private sector infrastructure development in the world is a multi-trillion dollar industry, expanding annually. To stay abreast of the phenomenal scale and growth of the global development industry, and the increasing complexity of the processes that drive it, the skills, techniques and methods employed in managing the resources involved must be continually transformed. Rapid strides in communication, transportation, and digital electronics aid in the creation of new constructs, processes and professions in fields such as finance, hydropower, agriculture, urban infrastructure, and transport. Concurrent progress is taking place in gauging and managing the effects of infrastructure development on populations and the natural environment.

As recently as 1970, the concept of 'environment' did not exist in most countries as an academic or professional subject. It emerged through pioneering work such as that of the World Commission on Environment and Development (the 'Brundtland Commission'), which introduced the concept of a holistic approach to the management of the planetary environment. The Commission's report to the United Nations in 1987, entitled *Our Common Future*, spoke of an environmental 'Global Commons', comprising a whole that is larger than the sum of the parts. Thus the environmentalist emerged as a recognized professional, with an integrated approach incorporating what had been a range of discrete specialized disciplines.

In the process, new methods and instruments were created to address the need for improved environmental management, including the development of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), which is characterized by a trend towards consciousness of context, and the adoption of multi-disciplinary approaches. The EIA, employed for individual development projects, has led to the addition of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), as an approach to mainstreaming environmental management into national and regional development planning and programmes, establishing the framework for future projects.

Both EIA and SEA focus on development initiatives that may affect the biophysical, social, cultural and economic conditions in a particular geographical area. Thus the investigation concentrates a variety of specialized disciplines and skills in a spatial approach. The task is to define the territorial area of inquiry, termed the area of project impact, and to collect, organize and analyze, as comprehensively as possible, information on human and natural conditions in the area. With this knowledge 'baseline', the projected effects of a development project, or projects, may be considered, and steps taken in project design and implementation to mitigate any anticipated negative effects.

A variety of technical tools are helpful in this spatial analysis, including geographic positioning systems (GPS), geographic information systems (GIS), and remote sensing (RS), and a host of other rapidly developing advances in information collection, organization, management, display and analysis. Detailed maps, surveys and inventories of spatially defined areas also are important resources.

Cultural Heritage as a Facet of Environment

How has cultural heritage management fared in this transition? Of all the elements constituting the environment, it has undoubtedly fared the worst. Despite increasing acknowledgement that cultural heritage is a key component of the resource base, and the nominal inclusion of cultural heritage in conventional EIA, the response by

Section : Vulnerabilities within the settings of monuments and sites:

understanding the threats and defining appropriate responses

Section : Identifier la vulnérabilité du cadre des monuments et des sites-Menaces et outils de prévention

cultural heritage professionals, on a global scale, has been limited and confined to an organized practice in a few nations, and advocacy by a small number of pioneering institutions. Indeed, far from having kept pace with the demands of modern life, authorities charged with management of cultural heritage, in their values, mandate, outlook, organizational arrangements, systems and procedures, have too often remained rooted in the antiquarian culture of the past. As a result, when efforts are made to include cultural heritage in the development planning and implementation processes, it is perceived frequently as an anachronistic add-on, with an anti-development agenda.

While infrastructure projects may result in the destruction or re - location of cultural heritage assets, the development process also offers significant opportunities for improvements in the identification and management of cultural resources. Realizing these opportunities requires two fundamental changes in conceptualization and action on the part of heritage institutions and professionals.

The first is a departure from the traditional primary focus on a site or monument, and then as a secondary concern, on its landscape or townscape surroundings. A reorientation is needed wherein the definition of a terrestrial area, or landscape, is the primary step, followed by identification and analysis of the cultural heritage located in the area. The heritage resources are then considered within the context of the geographical area's historical and contemporary biophysical and demographic characteristics. The traditional and spatial approaches are by no means mutually exclusive. Both are valid and important, and they can co - exist. However, to ignore the importance of the spatial approach, is to forfeit opportunities for the identification, documentation, protection, conservation and use of cultural heritage resources: opportunities afforded through participation in the development process. An advantage of the spatial approach is that during the development process, it provides a vehicle to identify and document cultural heritage resources, and thus to greatly expand the inventory and knowledge base. Moreover, this approach places cultural heritage resources in their environmental, social and economic context, thus enabling an understanding of important factors for their conservation, maintenance and use.

A second major change required is that of a holistic, inter - disciplinary perspective, first within the cultural heritage field itself, and then in the broader context of the various facets of environment, including the biophysical, social and economic. The cultural heritage field is comprised of separate academic disciplines such as architecture,

archaeology, materials conservation, with each further fragmented into sub - specialties. While the quantity of information to be mastered in each of the cultural heritage disciplines requires such specialization, there is also a need for generalists with a broad knowledge of all the heritage disciplines. Such practitioners should be able to read a landscape based on an understanding of the history and culture of an area. They are needed to determine the types of cultural heritage resources present in a specific geographic area where development is being considered, and to conduct an initial survey in order to establish the need for relevant cultural heritage specialists who are prepared to provide more detailed attention to the heritage assets.

It is thus necessary to expand the dialogue among cultural heritage professionals in all disciplines and to prepare generalists for effective, timely participation in the development process. Additionally, cultural heritage professionals should seek to work collaboratively with environmentalists, and to influence infrastructure development proponents by acting in a timely and constructive manner to facilitate the identification, documentation, protection and economic use of cultural resources within areas under development. Finally, it is essential to consult with inhabitants in areas slated for development projects, as part of the process of identifying and determining the significance of local cultural heritage resources, as well as with the public at large to mobilize support for the protection of heritage assets.

National governments, non - governmental organizations, academic institutions and individual cultural heritage professionals throughout the world are at different stages in this process of conceptual reorientation and readiness to manage cultural heritage in the development process. Effective strategies and approaches will vary from country to country depending on many circumstances, including political, economic, cultural and social conditions.

Understanding the Development Process

Participation in the development process also requires that cultural heritage professionals gain an understanding of infrastructure planning and construction issues. They must systematically seek information about infrastructure projects in all stages of preparation and implementation, at national, provincial and local levels. Timely attention to the identification and protection of cultural heritage resources likely to be affected by development projects requires involvement by cultural heritage proponents, and other interested parties, including the public, at the very early

Section : Vulnerabilities within the settings of monuments and sites:
understanding the threats and defining appropriate responses

Section : Identifier la vulnérabilité du cadre des monuments et des sites-Menaces et outils de prévention

conceptual stages of project identification and formulation, and continuing throughout the planning, implementation and operational phases.

Knowledge of infrastructure projects in the planning stage should allow cultural heritage proponents to identify the geographical areas to be affected, to consult relevant existing inventories of cultural resources in these areas, and to conduct necessary investigations intended to discover previously unrecorded resources. Close attention to the project planning and preparation phases will enable cultural resource professionals to ensure that due attention is given to the effects of a project on cultural heritage resources within and proximate to a project's area of impact.

Development projects may involve a range of participants: national and local governments; private property owners; lending institutions (including international, regional and national banks); grant-making institutions (both governmental and non-governmental); private corporations; and combinations of these entities. Collaboration on projects by the various participants usually necessitates reconciling the objectives and motivations of each, as well as their laws, regulations and policies. Increasingly, it also involves public consultation, as well as provisions for environmental management and arrangements for the social and economic welfare of populations affected by projects.

A development project generally evolves through a sequence of procedures. First is the conceptual phase, including identification of a project, its objectives, characteristics and area of impact. This is followed by the preliminary design stage, and then a feasibility study. Projects undergo a screening during which a determination is made regarding the presumed level of effect on the environment, including the biophysical, social and cultural heritage. For projects likely to have a significant environmental impact, an EIA may be necessary, which includes consultation with stakeholders, including individuals and groups with a stake or interest in the project and its impact. Where advisable, an Environmental Management Plan is formulated, based on the findings of the EIA and other pertinent information. This may include provisions for safeguarding cultural heritage resources, and for management of unanticipated chance finds of cultural objects during the construction phase of a project. The final design of a project is then achieved, and financing is secured prior to the construction phase. Following completion of a project, an evaluation may be undertaken to assess the quality of the process and its outcome, and to enumerate lessons learned. The operational phase of a project, or duration of its use, may continue for many years.

Clearly, cultural heritage professionals should follow these phases of development projects. Watchfulness and participation are advisable throughout the project cycle. The EIA is a particularly important stage for involvement, as it provides a role for cultural heritage experts and proponents. However, in many instances, this role is unfulfilled, resulting in both a lost opportunity for safeguarding cultural resources and in an EIA weakened by the lack attention to the cultural heritage component.

Cultural Heritage in Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

The environmental movement has spawned national legislation and regulations for EIA in nearly all nations of the world, often with encouragement, financial and technical assistance from bilateral and multilateral development institutions. The United States National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA), passed in 1969, was one of the first and most comprehensive laws, and has served as a model for legislation in numerous countries. Although the impetus came originally from the biophysical disciplines, the definition of environment has included social and cultural heritage components as well. Regional directives regarding EIA, such as those by the European Union, and policies of multilateral development agencies, including the World Bank, include cultural heritage as a component of EIA.

In addition to the obvious reasons for considering cultural heritage together with biophysical and social facets of environment as part of a holistic, spatial approach, there are other benefits. Since social and biophysical changes may affect cultural resources, an understanding of the nature and extent of these changes is required if impacts on cultural heritage are to be adequately predicted. For example, the cultural heritage member of an EIA team for an irrigation project may plan to focus on the immediate project area. However, a hydrologist on the team may determine that the project will cause a change in the water table, thereby affecting cultural monuments located some distance outside the project area, and initially not considered as at risk. The area of impact on cultural resources, and consequently, of investigation under the EIA, would have to be expanded.

Additionally, research into intangible cultural heritage and cultural sites or structures in contemporary use is usually best conducted within the socio-economic and demographic field investigations. A comprehensive, coordinated study minimizes inconvenience to local people and social or anthropological field workers will likely have the necessary local language capability and skills needed for effective

research and analysis.

Cultural Heritage in Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

An EIA is conducted as a project-specific investigation and analysis, and as such has its limitations. A growing recognition of the need for a more strategic and comprehensive approach to assessing the impact of development on the environment has resulted in SEA, a concept and process that are still evolving. With SEA, the intent is to assess the environmental impact on the larger scale of plans or programmes, in which numerous specific projects eventually may be included. Hence, SEA has been used in the creation of master plans on a national or regional scale within countries, as well as plans that involve development in two or more contiguous countries. Plans may involve general development or construction in specific sectors, such as transport, agriculture, or coastal management.

Guidelines for SEA tend to follow the basic concept of EIA, and directives such as those issued by the European Union include cultural heritage as a component of the environment. SEA offers comprehensive advantages for the protection and management of cultural heritage, as it focuses on master planning and on the administrative framework for environmental assessment and management. In many countries, a major obstacle to cultural heritage protection has been the marginalization of the governmental agencies with responsibility for culture. They often are not involved in national, regional and local decision - making regarding development projects. It is crucial, then, that cultural heritage authorities and proponents pay close attention to the evolution of SEA in their respective countries and regions, and claim their rightful place in the SEA process.

Cultural Heritage: an After - thought in Development Planning

In several countries where EIA is well - entrenched, specific legislation, guidelines and administrative provisions for implementing the cultural heritage component of EIA ensure attention to the subject. However, as EIA has been introduced into countries throughout the world, responsibility for its implementation was placed within ministries of environment, and cultural heritage professionals were rarely involved. Indeed, in many countries, the cultural authorities are unaware of the fact that EIA includes a cultural heritage component. The scope of

work for EIAs is defined by terms of reference, or instructions, that usually are written by persons with no knowledge of the heritage field, and the consultants who conduct EIAs, as well as the officials who review them, are generally unaware of cultural heritage issues. Even in countries where cultural heritage assets are major economic resources, the authorities with responsibility for managing these resources may not be involved in decision - making regarding development. Instead, they tend to be reactive, entering late in the process, pleading for the protection of threatened cultural resources, and thus viewed as obstructing progress.

Three problems may be cited to explain the limited constructive participation of cultural heritage professionals in EIA and the development process. First, is the existing gap between environment and cultural heritage; second, the practice of EIA; and third, the framework and practice of cultural heritage management in many countries.

The gap between environment and cultural heritage is conceptual, historical, institutional and professional. Whereas EIA legislation and practice, fall under the purview of biophysical environmental authorities and are supervised by environmentalists, cultural heritage management is carried out under laws, institutions and academic professionals within a framework which may have been established prior to, and completely apart from, environmental concerns. In some instances, the legal provisions for heritage management date from periods of colonial occupation, and hark back to 19th century perceptions of cultural heritage, with a priority on the identification, registration and protection of major monuments and sites. It is interesting to note, however, that international and regional standards for cultural heritage conservation, management and use, such as those issued during the past three decades by UNESCO, ICOMOS and the Council of Europe, have some perspectives and provisions in common with EIA. These include the spatial approach to analysis and planning, and the concept of landscape, as well as the practices of consultation and involvement with local populations in the identification, valuation and management of cultural heritage. Nonetheless, it is the rare case where these cultural heritage standards and guidelines, even when they are adopted by specific countries, have served to stimulate close collaboration between the national cultural and environmental authorities.

Lacking established working relationships with cultural heritage proponents, those responsible for EIA are unlikely to have access to existing information on the historical and

Section : Vulnerabilities within the settings of monuments and sites:
understanding the threats and defining appropriate responses

Section : Identifier la vulnérabilité du cadre des monuments et des sites-Menaces et outils de prévention

cultural context of areas under investigation, nor to inventories, maps and other sources of information on cultural heritage resources. Moreover, information on the location and significance of cultural heritage resources may be spotty, due to a lack of survey work in a specific area. Or cultural heritage resources important to local populations may be unknown in the absence of previous consultation with them, and due to the reliance by cultural authorities on national registers of prominent sites and monuments as a management tool. The responsibility for conducting EIAs is generally awarded to consultants through a competitive bidding process wherein cost is an issue, and if the terms of reference for an EIA do not emphasize the cultural component, and reviewers do not require adequate treatment of the subject, it may be slighted, or even omitted.

Cultural heritage professionals are not in a position to insist on adequate attention to their subject in EIAs if they are unaware that these assessments are being conducted. In addition, if cultural heritage is to be represented by a member of an inter - disciplinary EIA team, the cultural participant must be enough of a generalist to recognize, at least in the initial survey, all of the various types of cultural heritage in a the geographical area under consideration. Specialized academic training tends not to equip cultural heritage professionals with the necessary base of general knowledge for this role, nor with an adequate understanding of the investigation techniques needed for a spatial or landscape - oriented approach.

Integrating Cultural Heritage into the Development Process

Fortunately, these problems can be addressed, and the circumstances remedied; in fact, some strides already have been made. The UNESCO World Heritage Committee recognized early in the implementation of the Convention that a category for 'mixed' cultural and natural sites was needed, and more recently, a category was established for cultural landscapes, which are now quite well - represented on the World Heritage List. The increasing attention to 'buffer zones' around cultural heritage sites is evidence of the recognition that biophysical and social conditions have an impact on the conservation of sites. And as mentioned above, some of the recent international and regional standards for heritage protection and management have features in common with EIA.

But it remains a challenge in most countries, to bridge the gap between environmentalists, including those involved in EIA and SEA on one hand, and cultural heritage authorities

and proponents, on the other. Building collaboration requires an increased awareness by both groups, and the recognition of common objectives and mutual benefits. Documenting good practice in the coverage of cultural heritage in EIA and SEA at professional meetings, in publications, and on the Internet, and forming multi - disciplinary professional networks are some potential corrective strategies. New approaches to training cultural heritage practitioners are needed, especially in regard to the requirements and process of EIA and the importance of SEA.

The necessity for improving the cultural heritage component of EIA, and more generally, for stimulating participation of cultural heritage professionals in the development process, stimulated two recent initiatives by the World Bank. The first is a Physical Cultural Resources Safeguard Policy Handbook, which provides guidance on complying with the Bank's mandatory safeguard policy for physical cultural resources, a policy that applies to projects financed in whole or in part by the Bank. This Handbook fills a wide-spread need on the part of development project proponents, environmental and cultural authorities, and EIA practitioners, for guidance on the cultural heritage component of EIA. It also may be used for training professionals from the cultural heritage and environment fields, in both individual and group settings. The Handbook contains general guidance on safeguarding physical cultural resources in development projects, intended for the various categories of participants in the process, including: financing agencies, national governments, EIA teams, and EIA reviewers. Also included are instructions for conducting cultural heritage impact assessments in cases where there is no EIA, or when the subject has been omitted from a completed EIA. Specific guidance is provided for several types of projects, including: hydroelectric power, roads, urban development, and cultural heritage conservation, as well as for the management of 'chance finds' discovered during the implementation of a project.

The second initiative of the World Bank is a compendium of Physical Cultural Resources Country Profiles, currently being created as a source of information on cultural heritage and EIA in countries that borrow from the Bank. Devised to enable improved coverage of cultural heritage in the EIA and SEA, these County Profiles include information on both environment and cultural heritage for each client country of the Bank. The Profiles are accessible on a website, and include the following categories for each country: geographical, historical and socio - cultural notes; types of physical cultural resources; internationally - recognized

Section : Vulnerabilities within the settings of monuments and sites:
understanding the threats and defining appropriate responses

Section : Identifier la vulnérabilité du cadre des monuments et des sites-Menaces et outils de prévention

cultural sites; cultural and environmental institutions; national laws and regulations governing cultural heritage, environment and EIA; international and regional conventions on cultural and environment; inventories of physical cultural resources; geospatial data and maps; sources of information and expertise (individuals and firms in the disciplines of cultural heritage); recent developments in cultural heritage management; and notes on capacity for management of physical cultural resources. A Maintenance Manual provides instructions for up - dating the Profiles. As an initial step in consolidating information at a national level, on cultural heritage resources, management and experts in the component disciplines, the Country Profiles should also be useful in bridging the knowledge gap between the cultural and environmental fields.

There is an urgent need to orient cultural heritage authorities and professionals throughout the world to the opportunities afforded by systematically tracking infrastructure development projects, and by collaborating with counterparts in the environmental field, including EIA practitioners, in their respective countries. Cultural heritage proponents should become aware of project development issues and the project cycle. They should be familiar with EIA and SEA, and they should take responsibility for ensuring that the cultural heritage component is adequately addressed in all EIAs and SEAs. These processes, and the infrastructure development enterprise in general offer significant untapped opportunities that cultural heritage professionals and proponents can no longer ignore. Accordingly, academic curricula and training programs in cultural heritage should stress multi - disciplinary approaches and spatial analysis and should acquaint practitioners with technical tools and skills for survey and analysis, and management.