

**World Heritage Studies:  
An Interdisciplinary Bridge Between Architects and the Intangible  
World**

Dr. Yuan Ding  
Architecture and Urban Planning College  
Tongji University  
Zhongshan Bei 2 Road 1403  
200092 PR. China  
Email: dingyuandy@hotmail.com

**Abstract.** Although it's still controversial that the concept of World Heritage can foster a unique academic faculty within the education-system of modern architects, it's been commonly recognized that the educational framework of architecture and urban planning college should be enlarged with the help of the interdisciplinary exchange. The paper compared with a typical Architecture & Urban Planning school at Huazhong University of Science and Technology, one of the top 10 universities in China, and *World Heritage Studies* (WHS) program in the Faculty of Architecture at Cottbus University (BTU) in Germany, focusing on their framework-constructions of interdisciplinary exchange as well as the problems around the current architectural education. In the author's point of view, the emergence of the WHS, is a sign of a new direction to modern architects' education; moreover, it could be co-prosperous between this innovative program and the traditional architectural programs.

The German education is traditionally famous for her preciseness and conservation, but Brandenburg University of Technology (BTU)'s World Heritage Studies (WHS) is a unique and some innovative program in the Faculty of Architecture that combines scientific, technical, socio-economic, cultural, ecological and political objectives in order to help protect and conserve the heritage of mankind and thus to serve the goals of the UNESCO convention. It has been seen as a mirror to the developing Chinese architecture education.

## **BTU's New Program: World Heritage Studies**

Being the interdisciplinary program, WHS has been supported by the all the faculties of the university, about 30 chairs involved in: Construction and Planning Law\_ Construction and Architectural Design\_Building Structures and Structure Systems\_Building Materials and Chemistry \_History of Construction Technology\_Conservation \_Architectural Design / Environmental Design\_Building Economics\_Urban Construction and Design\_City Planning and Urban Design\_Design, Building Science and Spatial Organisation\_History of Architecture \_Theory of Architecture \_Intercultural Studies\_History of Art\_History of Technology\_Philosophy of Technology\_Water Protection\_General Ecology\_Air Chemistry and Air Protection\_Ecosystems and Environmental Informatics\_Environment and Social Sciences\_Environmental Geology\_Environmental Meteorology\_Environmental Planning\_Environmental Law\_National Economy I\_Economic and Industrial Sociology\_Business Administration, Marketing & Management of Innovation\_Business Education.

The structure of the WHS education can be divided into four parts: the basic knowledge, project studies, internship, thesis and defense.

The first part, basic knowledge is organized from four different modules. Module 1 is *Cultural Studies*, which includes the lectures of Introduction to Cultural Studies\_Ethnology and History of Religion\_Aesthetics and Theory of Art\_Knowledge for the Future\_Phenomenology of the Object\_Philosophy of Nature\_Theory of Architecture, City and Space\_Technology Assessment\_Technology and Environmental History\_World Heritage - Theory of Culture. Module 2, *Visual Arts, Architecture & Conservation*, which has lectures, such as Archaeology. Methods, Objectives and its Relevance for World Heritage\_Architecture\_Art History\_Conservation of Historical Monuments\_History of Urban Development and Conservation of Historic Cities\_Natural and Anthropogenic Risks to Cultural Heritage. Module 3 is *Basics for the Protection of Natural Heritage & Cultural landscapes*, and it includes the lectures: Computer Aided Methods in Landscape Ecology\_Conservation of Regional and Global Biodiversity\_Ecology of Habitats\_Environmental History\_Ethics and Ecology\_General Ecology\_Habitat Management by Animals\_Landscape Ecology\_ Strategies for the Protection of Natural Heritage Areas. Module 4 is *Management*, which brings the knowledge

on Civic Involvement in Planning Decision Processes\_Communication, Cooperation and Management of Conflicts\_Culture, Environment and International Politics\_Development of Tourism around World Heritage Sites\_Sociology\_Economic Sociology\_General Economy\_Group Mediation\_ Intercultural Management\_International Economic Relations\_Investments and Finance\_Management of World Heritage\_Marketing & Administration\_Museology\_Project Management of World Heritage Sites\_Promotion and Consulting of World Heritage\_Public Relations\_Regional History and the Preservation of Regional Heritage.

After the four basic modules' study, students must take two study projects as the second part of their study. It is very important that these two study projects, sometimes more than two according to the credits of the project, should come from at least two different modules, such as module 1, cultural studies, and module 2, architecture and conservation, therefore, students are forced to go deeper at least two different traditional fields to enrich their own background.

It is also mandatory that a six-week, or more, internship on related field have to be taken by students, such as working for UNESCO or ICOMOS. Naturally, the last step before graduation is thesis and defence. Every student must invite two supervisors from two different modules.

### **BTU's WHS vs. China's Architecture Education**

The program of WHS is coming from the concept of World Heritage. In 1972, UNESCO published the World Heritage Convention, which continued the route of the Athens Charter (1933) and the Venice Charter (1964), and opened the door for the latter Washington Charter (1987), etc. This Convention not only built the stable backyard for the new popular post-modernism in 1970s, but also created a proscenium for the latter concepts like cultural diversity and sustainable development. Nowadays, the convention has been signed by most of the countries in the world, and more and more peoples recognized its significance to present and future generations.

In 2004, some Chinese scholar have suggested to build the WHS program in the school of humanities and history. According to the current Chinese regulation on World Heritage Sites. However, in my opinion, it is better to follow the way of BTU and locate the WHS program under the structure of Architecture education. There are reasons

as follows:

First of all, although it's still controversial in China that the concept of World Heritage can foster a unique academic field in higher education system, it has been commonly recognized that the education of architecture and urban planning should be enlarged with the help of the interdisciplinary exchange, for architecture is not only seen as a discipline, but an area where different disciplines intersect in the study of the constructional aspects of society.

The Architecture & Urban Planning College in HUST, one of the top 10 universities in China, is a typical college of Chinese architecture education: it consisted in three parts: architecture, urban planning and art design. All of the three programs emphasize the practical skills but not the concepts. The dean of this college, Prof. Li once confirmed that the architecture education in HUST has a big problem: lack of the interdisciplinary exchange.

Besides, the architecture in China is coming to the node from the construction to the construction & conservation. It has been more than 10 years that the development rate of Chinese economy has been keeping around 10%. The high rate development shaped the *Fast food* model of Chinese architecture and urban design: people have no time to go deeper in the study of the context of buildings and cities. However, with the improvement of living conditions, people more and more recognized the significance of the heritage and pay attention to conservation. Therefore, it is natural that the architecture education will follow this change, emphasizing on the study of World Heritage.

Third, there is better basic structure in architecture school than that in humanities school. Many Chinese architecture schools have the courses on conservation, such as the lecture of *historic town and conservation*, which is edited by Prof. Ruan Yisan. The students get skills-training when they are in bachelor program, and this training will greatly help them accept some concepts like *world heritage* when they are in Master program. Thanks to many architects and experts on conservation, China has 31 world heritage sites and becomes the No.3 largest World heritage country in 20 years.

Moreover, the mainstream experts in conservation field, such as the president and the general secretary of ICOMOS, Mr. Michael Petzet, and Mr. Dino, are architects and urban planners. Therefore, it is easy to people with architecture backdrop to communicate with these international experts.

## **The Structure of WHS at Architectural School: Four Basic Modules but One Center**

Unfortunately, until now there is no Chinese program like BTU's WHS. The only professional program on conservation in China is the program in Wuhan Technology University: the City Renewing and Conservation. Yet, it is a PHD program in the faculty of Architecture and Urban planning.

Here the author would like to draw a rough picture for the potential WHS in Achitectural School:

Following the BTU's WHS structure, the planning WHS at Architectural School will consist on four modules' basic courses, too: Cultural Studies, Visual Arts and Conservation, Natural Heritage and Cultural Landscapes, and Management. Beyond the basic classes, two study projects will be organized for students. And then, after three-months practice, students will start to write their master thesis and make defenses finally.

However, comparing with BTU's WHS, the new version will pay much more attention to one center: architecture and urban planning. Not only all the theories and skills will be around this point, but also most of the students will be asked to graduate from architecture or urban planning program.

After the basic part, the two study projects will focus on the practical cases on heritage conservation. The study project could be a case study from all modules. Finally, students' thesis will be asked to focus on the field of architecture.

## **Conclusion**

Although it's still controversial that the concept of World Heritage can foster a unique academic faculty within the education-system of modern architects, it's been commonly recognized that the educational framework of architecture and urban planning college should be enlarged with the help of the interdisciplinary exchange. Once the universities, no matter in Germany or in China, could partly copy WHS program, depending on the traditional programs of Architecture and Urban Planning School, it could be co-prosperous between this innovative program and the traditional architectural programs.

## **References**

UNESCO, November 1972: Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage,

UNESCO, February 2005, WHC/05/2: Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention

Marie-Theres Albert (2001): *Global Society and Local Identity*

---

Hall, Stuart

1, The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity (1997)

2, Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities (1997)

3, Questions of Cultural Identity (1996)

Who need Identity?

4, Cultural Identity and Diaspora

5, Stuart Hall --- Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies(1996)

Part V, Diasporic Questions: Race, Ethnicity and Identity

## **Roland Robertson**

Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture (1992)

## **Websites**

[Http://www.whs.btu.de/](http://www.whs.btu.de/)

[Http://www.cnhan.org/](http://www.cnhan.org/)

---