

# Evolution of Culture in Urban Regeneration: Sustainable urban development strategies and safeguarding of Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage

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## Abstract

This paper reviews evolution of culture in urban regeneration. Following a brief assessment of strategies the paper studies safeguarding and conservation policies of Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage which may be used as a powerful tool for urban development. The paper examines UNESCO recommendation on sustainable urban development and conservation, Safeguarding of Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage and focuses on Historic, Community, Culture and Design in Urban Development. The paper ends with a reflection on the impact of Culture on Economic Development of urban cities and offers recommendations for dialogue, social inclusion and Culture of Peace in urban space.

**Key words: Culture, Urban Space, Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage, Safeguarding, Conservation, Community Heritage, Design, Economy, Culture of Peace and Sustainable Development**

## Evolution of Culture in Urban Space

Every city has a distinctive feeling of its own and culture has its significance in urban space. When we study the evolution of culture in urban cities, we find that urban culture fosters democracy and represents interaction between communities focusing on history and peoples that occur in urban space. Culture is experienced, accumulated and rooted in the community and the activities, traditions of public life through the ages. Urban culture<sup>1</sup> is a process that takes place in daily life. Urban culture is basically built upon heritage and diversity of cultural expressions between different groups. In this regard diversity of neighborhoods and people can help to create a unique urban identity. Urban culture represents built environment, visual icons such as museums, temples, palaces, opera houses or simply streets and neighborhoods, which may be identified as symbol of identity of the existence of culture in urban space. Therefore culture has become an important field of investigation in relation to the development process of urban cities and regions in the post-industrial society. In order to create a unique and vibrant urban environment, heritage and culture can truly be a powerful asset. Culture is the strong representation of the past and keeps it alive in the present. The evolution of culture in the urban space endows cultural identity and expresses diversity of cultures, peoples and beliefs that coexisted that coexisted in urban setting. The evolution of culture in urban space also provides a clear picture about investment of cities in cultural facilities and preservation of their historical heritage for urban development.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, evolution of culture in urban space can be considered as a driving power for dialogue, social cohesion and ultimate peace.

## Sustainable Urban Development and Safeguarding Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage

The particular physical aspect of a city, as well as specific traditions present in urban settings and constitute intangible and tangible culture and cultural heritage. When we talk about sustainable development, we find the important role of tangible and intangible cultural heritage for urban regeneration as well as development. The urban heritage, including tangible and intangible components, constitutes a prominent role in enhancing urban development. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has given special emphasis on culture and urban development. Some of the findings may be seen through the approaches, i.e. 'A New International Instrument: the proposed UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) Comments by ICOMOS (2010)'; 'Global Report on Culture and Sustainable Urban Development'; 'Shanghai Declaration on Urban Futures and Human and Ecosystem Wellbeing'; 'Culture: a driver and an enabler of sustainable development Thematic Think Piece UNESCO'; 'UNESCO Statement - ECOSOC Integration Segment on Sustainable Urbanization Building on an integrated approach for smart, creative sustainable cities'; and 'Partnerships for World Heritage Cities Culture as a Vector for Sustainable Urban Development' (2002); etc. According to the "Global Report on Culture and Sustainable Urban Development" of UNESCO "The starting point for the development of sustainable urban development strategies is the conservation and safeguarding of tangible and intangible heritage. Without an effective safeguarding action, the legacy of the past can rapidly be lost, as it is happening in many urban contexts characterized by intensive and rapid development processes, with the loss of connection between communities and the built environment in which they live. Promoting the regeneration of downtowns and the conservation and adaptive reuse of their cultural heritage assets can improve the liveability and living conditions for poor communities. Culture-led redevelopment of urban areas and public spaces helps to preserve the social fabric, improve economic returns and increase competitiveness, giving impetus to a diversity of intangible cultural heritage practices as well as other creative expressions, thereby creating sustainable urban spaces. In addition, a vibrant urban life can differentiate a city from competing locations, branding it nationally and internationally, thus helping it attract investments. The cultural and creative industries, as well as heritage-based urban revitalization and sustainable tourism, are powerful economic sectors that can generate green employment, stimulate local development and foster creativity. Cultural infrastructure, such as museums and other cultural facilities, should be used as civic spaces for dialogue

and social inclusion, helping to reduce violence and foster cohesion and promote a culture of peace as well as economic development for cities. Finally, the proper understanding of traditional cultural practices can be a powerful tool to enhance resilience of cities facing threats linked to natural phenomena and climate change.”<sup>3</sup> UNESCO’s recommendation on conservation and safeguarding of tangible and intangible heritage is based on the study of intensive and rapid development processes of urban space, connection between communities and the built environment, heritage-based urban revitalization, sustainable tourism, economic growth and culture of peace.

### Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Urban Development Strategies:

All civilizations, some of them are prestigious, that existed throughout the continent have left many legacies and immortal gift to the modern world.

Collectively the rich diversity of the cultural heritage contributes a unique wealth to world heritage.

Study of this heritage makes it possible to better understand the past on which a vibrant and peaceful society can be formed. Heritage is divided into two categories, i.e. Tangible and Intangible.<sup>4</sup>

Tangible heritage represents itself in a material form, like archaeology, art objects, monuments, landscapes, historical sites and heritage compounds. Intangible heritage represents the cultural wealth of a given society, such as knowledge system, symbolic representation of historical facts, values and beliefs. One of the important components of Intangible Cultural Heritage made up all immaterial manifestations of culture and represents the living heritage of humanity as well as diversity of cultural expressions. Intangible cultural heritage is a living heritage. Intangible and Tangible cultural heritage is closely associated and the integral unification of these two aspects can present the greatness of any culture in its unique form.

Tangible and Intangible cultural heritage plays an important role for urban cultural practices both traditional and contemporary. It has also contributed for globalization process, economic growth and promotion of sustainable tourism.

### Challenges to Preservation and Safeguarding the Urban Heritage: An Assessment-

Conservation and safeguarding of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage in the urban space is more effective when linked to cultural heritage tourism and innovative economic production.<sup>5</sup> But Preservation and safeguarding of the urban heritage has also several challenges. Following are some of the issues-

- Urbanization and rapid growth of cities creates threat to the existence of the heritage, identity of communities and the integrity of urban fabric.
- Urban ethnic spaces and distinctive communities have become the points of friction where modern ethnic conflicts and violence have materialized.

- Implementation of global economic process, innovations, information technology and sustainable planning, design and building practices badly leads to unsustainable cities.
- Loss of historic and artistically significant buildings to deterioration and the ravages of real estate development
- Unsustainable Human settlements and challenges to urban environment.
- Lack of market demand for preserved buildings
- Unplanned infrastructure, uncontrolled tourism urban densification which impact the physical integrity of monuments, archaeological sites and urban layout.
- Urban cultural practices, globalization and identity crisis of tangible and intangible cultural heritage.
- Discontinuity between tangible and intangible cultural heritage and cultural expressions

These are some of the critical threats and challenges to preservation and safeguarding of the urban heritage.

### Action Plan Development for Safeguarding the Tangible and Intangible cultural heritage and urban development:

As per discussions, both the aspects of culture; i.e. Tangible and Intangible play an important role for urban development. Therefore, this heritage should be preserved for better understanding of lifestyle as well as city development.<sup>6</sup> Following are some of the action plans which may be considered in this regard-

- Safeguarding of public-good component of urban heritage, i.e. socio-cultural values, historic, artistic, educational and sustainable preservation process
- Urban historic settlements and important economic initiatives, which can contribute to conservation of the cultural heritage and community development
- Historic preservation of urban heritage, larger rehabilitation process, effective conservation strategy and urban development.
- Implementation of innovative information technology and sustainable planning, design and building practices.
- Preservation and safeguarding the urban heritage through collaborative efforts of federal government and the citizens, which will make the heritage coherent and relevant
- Urban heritage conservation strategies, sustainable development and action oriented quality of human environment.
- Community engagement, capacity building, research, information, communication and international collaboration with a goal of historical and cultural continuity for creative evolution of culture in urban development.

## Impact of Culture on the Economic Development of Cities and the role of Cultural Industries and Sustainable Tourism:

Culture plays an important role for economic growth of urban areas and cultural industries and sustainable tourism are considered as key ingredient of post-industrial, information-intensive economic activity. The culture oriented economic development of urban cities includes symbolic and creative elements into any aspect of the urban economy focusing on globalizing markets.<sup>7</sup> In the present scenario, we find that cities spend more and more in cultural programs and infrastructure projects, which are supposed to be the drivers of sustainable urban development. We can see that in today's knowledge economy, market and culture are linked and the economic benefits of tangible and intangible heritage may be seen through cultural industries. In a creative city, we find encouragement of urban environment to conceive new cultural products and processes through Architecture; Art and antiques; Crafts; Design; Designer fashion; Film and music; Performing arts; Publishing and visual arts, etc. A cultural and creative industry focuses on creation, production, distribution and consumption of goods, services and activities that have cultural content and artistic importance. Sustainable tourism<sup>8</sup> is also considered a key ingredient for economy development of urban space. Sustainable tourism has a significant impact on a city's infrastructure, natural resources, social and cultural environment. Sustainable tourism enhances effective sustainability planning, maximum economic benefit to community; respect socio-cultural heritage and conserve tangible and intangible cultural heritage and traditional values, which is also means to urban development.

## Culture and Sustainable Urban Development

Tangible and Intangible Culture is a key element for sustainable urban development, which includes cultural identity, creativity, heritage, and diversity of cultural expressions. When we talk about sustainable development of urban cities, we find that culture can build the bridge between urban regeneration and development. According to the "Global Report on Culture and Sustainable Urban Development" published by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) - "In the recent decades, cities have become prominent actors in the promotion of sustainable development policies. Today, more than half of the world's population lives in an urban environment and it is expected that the exponential population growth and urbanization of the world will mean that 70% of humanity will live in cities in 30 years. Cities already play a major role within the broader international development framework: this will increase in the future as a large number of metropolises and of intermediate cities are developing at an unprecedented rate. Xxxxxx. Culture is a key tool for promoting sustainable urban development, by preserving urban, environmental and cultural identity, attracting activities and visitors, fostering the development of the creative economy and of the quality of life." Urban culture represents multiplicity of dialogues, which is also the outcome that emerges from the process of dialogue and exchange between communities. Effective institutional coordination mechanism, development of comprehensive statistical frameworks, implementation of evidence based analysis and capacity building are some of the important areas to study the instrumental and constructive role of culture in sustainable development of urban cities.

## Notes and References

1. "Today, we need a more sophisticated understanding of the democratic process in order to identify, and provide for, the needs and desires of all in the diverse mosaic of our urban cultures." See for details, Thompson, Catherine Ward (2002) *Urban Open Space in the 21st century*, Landscape and Urban Planning 60, Elsevier.
2. "The network focused thus on the relationship between culture and urban regeneration, through the analysis of culture and its impact on social cohesion, economic development and physical regeneration, and by exploring an integrated approach that combined all three." For details, see, *Culture and Urban Regeneration: The Role of Cultural activities & Creative Industries in the Regeneration of European Cities*, URBACT Cultural Network, 2006, p.7
3. *Global Report on Culture and Sustainable Urban Development*, published by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
4. "Heritage can be divided into two main categories. On the one hand, there is a heritage that presents itself in a material, tangible form : archaeology, art, movable objects, architecture and landscape. On the other hand, another form of heritage exists, which arouses the interest of the international community xxxxxxxx : it is referred to as "Intangible Cultural heritage". Barillet, Christian & et al., *Cultural Heritage and Local Development*, published by CRATERRE-ENSAG/ Convention France-UNESCO.
5. "Conservation efforts are being increasingly employed in developing countries, as they are home to about one-half of the world's designated natural and cultural heritage sites." Monory, Jose & Jianzhong, *Fostering Culturally Rich Communities*, Shanghai Manual- A Guide for Sustainable Urban Development in the 21st Century.
6. Guzman, P.C., Pereira Roders, A.R., Colenbrander, B.J.F. (2014) *Bridging the gap between urban development and cultural heritage protection*. IAIA14 Conference Proceedings: Impact Assessment for Social and Economic Development.
7. "The importance of culture as an engine of urban development can be fully gauged by considering its role in regenerating cities. In the last few years, interest in the cultural industries as an economic force of its own has grown. Borg, Jan van der & Russo, Antonio Paolo (2005) *The Impacts of Culture on the Economic Development of Cities*. European Institute for Comparative Urban Research, p. 19
8. Gospodini, Aspa (2001) *Urban Design, Urban Space Morphology, Urban Tourism: An Emerging New Paradigm Concerning Their Relationship*, *European Planning Studies*, Vol.9, No.7, pp. 925-934.