Conservation and Rehabilitation of Urban Heritage in Developing Countries

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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses rehabilitation and conservation of old inner-city areas and historic monuments in the cities of the developing world which have so far received very little attention in urban development policy. The need for urban rehabilitation and adaptive re-use is discussed with reference to a number of cases, i.e. Cairo, Tunis, Sana’a, Aleppo, Delhi, Bombay, Bhaktapur, Galle, Penang, Singapore, Shanghai, Beijing, Quito, Cartagena, Rio de Janeiro and Havana. A delineation of the concept is provided, and some key aspects of rehabilitation are discussed. The paper concludes with considerations on the need for area rehabilitation and revitalisation approaches which maintain the typical urban tissue and essential qualities of the historic areas and of the life of the communities residing there, but which can also adapt the physical structures and activities to some of the present day requirements. In terms of monuments, it is stressed that these need to be seen as part of conservation areas, and that their sustainability and revitalisation will be most feasible if they are integrated into new concepts of use.

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WHAT IS URBAN HERITAGE?

When we want to define “urban heritage”, what comes to the mind of most urban planners and managers are usually “monuments”, i.e. churches, temples, all sorts of religious buildings, palaces, castles, fortresses, historic city walls and gates and other types of institutional buildings (e.g. of education, science, administration, or other social purposes). This understanding often excludes historic residential areas and historic city centres which equally represent the urban heritage. In addition, there may even be non-tangible elements of urban heritage, such as customs and beliefs, which play a role for the articulation of space use and the built environment.

Due to the existence of international cultural organisations, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) and the International Commission on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and a good number of local conservation groups, monuments have at least a “lobby” and are
in a somewhat more favourable situation than historic residential areas. The above organisations and interest groups seem to yield some success in their efforts to achieve greater interest for the course of preservation and conservation of old monuments of historic value.

However, seldom is a cross-reference made between urban heritage and sustainability. The recent concern for sustainability and the "brown agenda" of urban environmental development has completely excluded urban heritage from the sustainability discussion.² The built environment and built expressions of culture, of military, economic and religious powers and forces as part of the national heritage deserve to be included in this perspective, and urban heritage should attain the status of a preservable asset which can benefit the present and the future of cities. Such an asset is not only limited to cultural perspectives, but could become an economic asset with good potential for economic exploitation, for instance through tourism, for culturally-based image building of local economic development or the promotion of corporate enterprises.

THE SITUATION OF OLD HOUSING STOCK AND HISTORIC CENTRES

During the past 40–50 years, the attention of most governments in the developing world (and of most international agencies) has been focused on the problems of new settlements, built through authorised and non-authorised (informal) processes. Typically, most of these housing areas grew rapidly and were characterised by overcrowding, lack of infrastructure, poor-quality construction, bad sites, and so forth. Quantitatively, these housing areas usually overwhelmed the pre-existing city. By the 1970s, the vast majority of the housing stock in most large cities in the developing world was less than 25 years old. The older housing stock was, therefore, considered insignificant in terms of the scale of the housing problem.

At the same time, the desire for "modernisation" by governments and top decision-makers in most developing countries often led them to believe that only new and "modern" housing was worthwhile. Anything old or in a traditional style was considered of little value and was torn down or, at best, ignored.³ Older housing, normally concentrated in the inner parts of the city, was often in a state of physical deterioration, overcrowded and lacking in services. It was easy to label such areas as "slums", to be removed at the earliest convenient opportunity.

In addition, because of the rapid growth in the size of most cities in the developing world and the rapid transformation of their city economics, the whole spatial pattern of land uses and activities began to change. Inner cities became valuable for land uses other than housing, and economic pressures led to further elimination of the older housing stock.

For all of these reasons, most cities in the developing world have paid — and continue to pay — very little attention to their older housing areas. As a result, these areas continue generally to decline, with their physical, social and economic functions disrupted and their present potential contribution to the city's overall housing stock under-utilised.

Yet these areas are more significant and more important than is commonly realised. Almost all cities, even fast-growing ones, have an older housing stock. Most large cities today have grown from a core which has existed for centuries, even if only on a small scale. In some cities, this older core is large and well-defined with a physically substantial housing stock. Occasionally, as in Shanghai⁴ or Bombay,⁵ the older housing stock is quantitatively very important, constituting a large percentage of the housing units. In other cities, for instance Jakarta or Cartagena, the number of the residences of the colonial elite is smaller, and restricted mainly to "European" quarters built during the colonial era, with the "native" quarters being predominantly of smaller and less-permanent construction.

But almost everywhere this older core exists. And almost everywhere the historic
city centre represents a unique historical link with the past, a physical manifestation of the social and cultural traditions which have developed to give the modern city and society its meaning and character. This role is gradually being appreciated, although so far only on a limited scale.

Equally, many cities now realise that it is often counter-productive to remove large areas of existing old housing stock, given the tremendous housing demand which exists and the clear inability of existing institutions (and finance) to provide new housing on the scale desired. Instead, it is important to utilise these housing units, even if, at present, they are in poor condition.

However, even if there are such changes in attitude, it is not always clear what should be done. After so many years of hostility or indifference, what should be the new approaches toward older housing areas? What strategies should be adopted? What can be done?

THE SITUATION OF MONUMENTS

Most old cities have some monuments which represent the religious, military, political or economic powers of the past. The condition of such monuments is determined largely by their present function and use. Monuments which have no further utilisation tend to decay rapidly, while monuments which are still in use have a better chance of being maintained. There is a good chance that monuments which have a new function through “adaptive re-use” are even better maintained. In fact, the strategy of conversion of monuments for adaptive re-use appears to be the most effective approach for a self-financing and sustainable form of conservation.

There is, of course, a very large variety among urban heritage monuments throughout Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Latin America and, hence, it is difficult to generalise with regard to their conditions and the possibilities for conservation and rehabilitation. Generally speaking, there is a tremendous shortage of funds for the upkeep and maintenance of government owned, registered monuments. In the case of privately owned monuments the situation is often not much different. Private owners may consider the maintenance of a (registered or un-registered) monument as a burden due to inability to afford the necessary maintenance, and they may be unable to establish other forms of use or innovative mechanisms for the financing of the required conservation.

During the last decades, several international bodies, such as UNESCO, ICCROM and ICOMOS, and local or national heritage societies, have initiated important campaigns and proposals for conservation of neglected monuments and “heritage complexes”. Despite considerable enthusiasm, the actual results of such campaigns have been limited. Few international agencies, cultural or archaeological institutions (mostly from Europe), or bilateral donors have stepped in to help to preserve valuable heritage complexes. Developmental banks have been shying away from conservation schemes as they found them economically and financially unfeasible and, thus, not convincing. Very few cities have succeeded in generating an ambience for private-sector participation in urban heritage conservation through the establishment of an attractive and innovative strategy of heritage “commercialisation”.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE IDEAS OF CONSERVATION AND REHABILITATION

Until the 1940s few countries in the world appreciated the value of their older cities. In Europe, conservation was limited to a concern for historical buildings of special importance, usually castles, palaces, churches, museums and other significant public buildings. Attention was focused on the monuments individually, considered in isolation from their urban surroundings. (For example, the Paris Church of Notre Dame was preserved, but the historic buildings surrounding it were demolished.)
It was the Second World War and its mass destruction of the historic cities in Europe which provided the stimulus for a more serious consideration of older urban areas. The re-building which occurred across Western Europe in the 1950s and into the 1960s led to a much greater awareness of the unique character of these older areas and the need to treat them sensitively and constructively.⁶

At the same time, in Europe and in North America, there was growing criticism of the ‘modern’ school of architecture and the ‘bulldozer’ school of planning. There began to be popular resistance to the standardised ‘high-rise’ housing solutions which were imposed in the name of modernisation. People who had been shifted to new housing estates generally compared them unfavourably to their previous lives in older housing areas of the city core. The ‘bulldozer’ approach to urban renewal generated great dissatisfaction, as whole areas were indiscriminately destroyed and their social communities thoughtlessly ruined. Professionals in the housing and planning field gradually retreated from this ‘bulldozer’ approach as the negative consequences became more and more well documented and publicised. They started to formulate new concepts and approaches, which slowly won acceptance from politicians and bureaucrats.⁷

From these various experiences has emerged the idea of urban rehabilitation. This does not mean simply the passive protection of individual buildings of historic significance; nor does it mean the wholesome preservation of everything which is old. Instead, it means the creative use and re-use of older quarters of the city, taken as a whole.⁸ Where possible, old buildings are repaired and modernised, to facilitate their continued use, especially as housing. This often includes upgrading of infrastructure services (water, sewerage, drainage, roads, etc.), but on a modest scale, allowing the preservation of the existing urban pattern and fabric. Where necessary, some change of use may be incorporated, but on a small scale. Demolition should normally be reserved for structurally unsound buildings, but may also sometimes be needed in order to provide space for essential social services, infrastructure or open space.⁹ An overriding objective is to minimise the displacement of existing residents, because of either demolition or repair and upgrading.¹⁰ The intention is to provide enough modernisation of the physical fabric to allow the life of the community to go on, with scope for both buildings and social systems to evolve and adapt to new conditions.

Interestingly, experience in many countries has shown that it can be easier and less costly to restore and modernise old buildings than was originally expected. In contrast, the cost of demolition and replacement by new buildings has almost always turned out to be more expensive than expected. Naturally, many mistakes were made in the early years of rehabilitation efforts; some projects were failures, some were far too expensive and some succeeded at the expense of the original residents. Nonetheless, the trend of the experience is favourable, leading to a steadily growing support in countries throughout Europe and elsewhere.

In 1964, ICOMOS had promoted with the Venice Charter, the establishment of the conservation approach for historic monuments. In 1972, many developing countries signed up for UNESCO’s Convention Concerning the Protection of the World’s Cultural and Natural Heritage, and by 1977 the listing of world heritage sites had begun. While the Venice Charter was still only concerned with single monuments, the UNESCO Convention introduced for the first time the concept of cultural heritage, which is the basis for area conservation and rehabilitation concepts.¹¹ UNESCO also promoted the establishment of a fund for the protection of the world cultural and natural heritage, but in actual fact very few countries have been able to benefit from this substantially, and very few funds became available for historic city centres.

Although the concept of rehabilitation has seen increasing support in most of the industrialised countries, a very different situation exists in the developing countries. The concept is still new and unfamiliar in most places. Intellectually and professionally it remains limited to heritage societies, a small number of foreign-trained local professionals, and eventually a few external advisors. Politically, it has not yet generated significant support. Legal and administrative machinery for historic area conserva-
tion, where it exists, is largely prohibitory rather than constructive and is seldom effectively enforced. Older housing areas are still seen as "problems" rather than as important components of urban life. In some cases, single-minded concern for a narrowly-conceived "modernisation" has been carried so far that there is almost nothing left of the old city. Singapore is the best example, but, only thanks to a recent shift in policy, conservation of a few remaining historic zones has been initiated (see also below).

ASPECTS RELATED TO URBAN REHABILITATION

Realistically, no one argues for total preservation of everything that is old in the city.12 Equally, few would quarrel with attempts to improve sanitation and water supply, reduce overcrowding, or otherwise improve the living conditions in older housing areas. Such improvements do provide a more satisfactory environment. But a better environment also implies a satisfying of social and cultural life for those who make use of the environmental resources. It is the human inhabitants who create and constitute the social-cultural and economic systems which give life to the physical environment.

The focus of revitalisation and rehabilitation of historic centres, therefore, has to be on whole areas, not just individual buildings, and on social communities, not just the physical environment. These older housing areas, typically in the inner parts of the city, are often home for lower-income families and they have physical, social, economic and cultural values different from, and beyond the perceptions of, bureaucrats or planners.

Advocates of rehabilitation policies emphasise the importance of a comprehensive and integrated approach to planning for older areas, and especially the need to consider complete conservation/rehabilitation areas, not just individual buildings. Of course, particular buildings of special historic and/or architectural interest should be preserved as part of the overall scheme. But the real focus is on the activities and uses of the buildings taken as a whole, and the need to upgrade selectively and adaptively.13

This rehabilitation approach raises a variety of crucial issues and questions.

Political aspects

- How can political support be generated and maintained?
- How can a national policy in support of conservation and rehabilitation of urban heritage be established?
- How can the affected population participate in the formulation and execution of conservation and rehabilitation schemes?

Cultural aspects

- To what extent can the rehabilitation of historic housing areas and monuments contribute to the strengthening of indigenous cultural traditions and forms?
- What is the role of historic city centres and of monuments, their physical characteristics and their social life in the local (or national) culture?
- Can historic monuments and city centres become an area of special tourist interest?

Social aspects

- How can the poor, who generally comprise a majority of those living in the historic housing areas, participate effectively in the rehabilitation process?
- How can the community of low-income residents be retained in the face of changing land uses and values? (Or how can they be supported when relocation is unavoidable?)
- How can low-income residents be protected from the impact of "gentrification"?
Economic aspects

- How can urban rehabilitation be financed?
- What mix of private and public resources, i.e. public–private partnerships, should be used?
- How can older land uses and activities compete with new ones?
- What happens when land values and/or taxes increase?
- How can the contribution of the older area of the urban economy be consolidated?
  Which economic role could tourism play in this context?

Urbanisation aspects

- How can the urban pattern and tissues of historic city areas be preserved in the face of necessary upgrading and land use changes?
- Can the historic quality of the mixed-use environment be adapted to modern conditions?

In order to answer these questions, reference will be made to the urban heritage experiences of a number of cities, namely Cairo, Tunis, Sana'a, Delhi, Bombay, Bhaktapur, Galle, Penang, Singapore, Shanghai, Beijing, Quito, Cartagena and Havana.

URBAN REHABILITATION AND REVITALISATION IN PRACTICE

Political support

Political support for urban rehabilitation and revitalisation is certainly crucial and a prerequisite for any substantial programme. However, the experiences of the majority of cities are not encouraging in this respect. Too many instances exist where the political commitment is lacking or very difficult to obtain, and even the concerted efforts of international and national heritage organisations have not been able to generate such support. For instance, in the cases of Cairo and Sana'a, many years of efforts on the part of UNESCO and the Aga Khan Foundation of Architecture have not yielded a firm commitment for area conservation from the national authorities which were expected to take up a World Bank loan (in the case of Cairo) or to negotiate with donors for their support (in the case of Sana'a). Both Cairo and Sana'a have benefited only from a number of rather isolated cases of monument restoration, financed, for instance, by foreign archaeological institutes and other bilateral donor agencies. In the case of India, and quite exceptionally if seen from an international perspective, the National Housing Policy of 1994 speaks of support to historic residential areas which have been defined as conservation areas, but in reality there is very little implementation of these policies, and most local agencies lack the skills to design and implement conservation schemes.

Bombay is quite an exception in this regard and the repair of chawls, historic working-class housing, has been taken up by the local authorities. But the chawl repairs programme itself — after the repair of several thousand units — is endangered by a resource crunch, and the high investment pressure on inner-city land on the peninsula of Bombay make it seem likely that the Bombay housing repairs programme will be aborted in the near future. In Old Delhi, as in so many Indian cities with a historic city centre, a complete laissez faire approach is being followed, and there has been a lack of political commitment to the conservation of the historic centre. In reality, in Old Delhi, anybody can develop, demolish or build as he likes.

Equally, in the case of Shanghai, the old walled-city area has been declared a national monument, and some pilot rehabilitation/area upgrading projects have been executed during the last 10 years, but this overall policy has not been translated into a major investment scheme for the old tenement housing stock of Shanghai. Some cities
have, of course fared better, as the cases of Tunis,²² Bhaktapur,²³ and Aleppo show. Collaboration with bi- and multi-lateral external donors have initiated some large scale area conservation and rehabilitation projects in Tunis (with World Bank funding), in Bhaktapur and Aleppo (with German GTZ funds) and local political commitment has been a precondition for these projects.

The case of Singapore is of a certain significance, as it combines many factors. When it was realised that Singapore, which is quite dependent on income from tourism, was losing its attraction as a tourist destination due to the rapidly vanishing urban heritage, a complete turn in policies was initiated.²⁴ Henceforth, heritage conservation has become an important element of the city’s development policies and image building. In all of these cases, the active participation of the residents of historic city centres in the preservation and conservation of their city, be it in the formulation or execution stages, has been very limited. In a few instances there are reports of a limited number of user/consumer surveys being carried out, mostly in terms of affordability of the proposed measures only. However, certain interest groups, such as cultural and conservation and heritage associations of concerned citizens, have initiated at least some degree of publicity and debate on conservation and rehabilitation issues. These organisations act mostly at city level (Bombay,²⁵ Delhi,²⁶ Singapore,²⁷ Penang,²⁸ Tunis²⁹), but in some countries there are also national campaign groups (for instance in India³⁰ and Indonesia³¹) which have taken the conservation of cultural and natural heritage on their banners.

Cultural aspects

These have been highlighted very prominently by conservationists and campaigners, international organisations (UNESCO, ICOMOS, ICCROM, Aga Khan Foundation for Architecture) as well as bi-lateral institutions (cultural and archaeological institutes). Of late, with the concept of more tourism-orientated marketing of cities, culture has been accepted as a means to promote tourism and even the local investment climate or ambience of cities.³² Thus, culture is no longer a pure end in itself, but a means for local economic promotion (or as the critiques of this approach brandish for a sell-out of culture). Singapore, after it awoke to the claims of the local conservationists’ campaign for a cultural city,³³ has come out very prominently in this respect, and is now marketing conservation areas in the city for tourism.³⁴ Bhaktapur, as one of the most traditional cities in Nepal, as well as the Medina of Tunis, or historic Quito³⁵ are presented (and marketed) as attractions due to their cultural values. In the cases of Cairo, Sana’a or Havana some local agencies are also very keen to promote the old towns as tourist centres, but are losing out to rapid decay and destruction, and the non-availability of political support and funding.

In the case of Rio de Janeiro, area rehabilitation has become a leverage for the establishment of a so-called “cultural corridor” which has succeeded in revitalising the city centre with cultural and economic activities and attractions.³⁶ In the early colonial city of Galle,³⁷ which is one of the declared world heritage cities, the cultural aspects of the built environment figure strongly in the pledge of the local authorities for external funding to preserve the city as a testimony of global culture of the colonial period. However, where culture has the stigma of the colonial era, considerable resistance is to be expected from local political forces which will try to lobby against any expenses for the conservation of the testimony of this historic period.

Social aspects

Social aspects manifest themselves in particular through the presence of the poor, who (as recent immigrants) have become residents in very crowded historic housing stock, usually suffering from the impacts of sub-division and over-utilisation of outdated services. This picture is contrasted by the fact that many well-to-do owners of historic
buildings have moved elsewhere and have lost interest in the upkeep of their properties, as can be seen in the cases of Cairo, Tunis, Delhi, Bombay, Penang, Quito, Havana and many others. The income situation of the poor and the disinterest of absentee landlords who earn hardly any income from the low rents being paid by the occupants of their old housing stock have strongly contributed to the decay and lack of maintenance of old housing stock in historic city centres. For the formulation of area revitalisation and rehabilitation schemes there is a good chance that the poor will be forced to leave and that they will have to sacrifice their centrally located residences for rehabilitation or redevelopment projects. The former residents of Singapore's Chinatown and Kampong Glam are a point in case; almost all of the previous residents have been relocated elsewhere in modern housing estates as a prelude to "gentrification" of these areas. Similar developments are taking place in Shanghai and Beijing, where more than 40% of the population of the historic residential areas are to exchange these locations for new suburban satellite townships.\textsuperscript{38}

However, such government-sponsored relocation in modern high-rise housing estates is not so common elsewhere, and the poor inhabitants of inner-city areas are mostly left to fend for themselves. Cases like Quito and Cartagena demonstrate that low-income residents receive no support for finding alternative and affordable accommodation when properties are being sold for conservation and adaptive re-use by high-income groups or commercial activities. Very few examples of area revitalisation and rehabilitation, like that in Tunis (with financial support of the World Bank), have attempted to address a mixed social group of residents (high-, middle- and low-income), and to finance the renovation of housing stock inhabited by the poor partly through cross-subsidy mechanisms. But even in this case it remains to be seen whether the low-income groups will be able to resist pressures by higher income groups for these centrally located housing units. In the case of Bombay's restoration of \textit{chawls}, attempts have been made to transfer ownership of neglected housing stock, owned by absentee landlords, into the hands of specially created tenants' co-operatives, but these efforts have had limited impact so far.\textsuperscript{39}

\textbf{Economic aspects}

These certainly dominate the considerations for urban rehabilitation of historic city centres and monuments. World-wide experiences show that most local and national governments and religious organisations cannot afford to conserve and improve a large majority of even their most precious monuments. This can be demonstrated in a number of cities, such as Cairo, Tunis, Delhi, Galle and Sana'a. Efforts to improve the financial status of national archaeological institutes and to increase their portfolio have mostly been unsuccessful, as most governments seem to shy away from additional expenses for the preservation and rehabilitation of monuments. Most countries do not have an adequate policy of charging entrance fees to monuments; in many cases monuments remain inaccessible to the public and to tourists, or if they are accessible, only a pittance of an entrance fee, if any is charged, as for instance in most parts of India. Very few cities have adopted a more progressive policy like the city of Bhaktapur, which charges a (still nominal) lump-sum entrance fee from tourists for entering the historic conservation zone. Sri Lanka follows a similar approach in its "cultural triangle" of the historic cities of Kandy–Anuradhapura–Polonnaruwa (and some enclosed sites), but has failed so far to do the same for the historic city of Galle. The economic problems of financing the preservation and upkeep of monuments have stimulated a good deal of debate about the possibilities of doing this through the approach of "adaptive re-use" and to invite the private sector (or non-governmental institutions) to lease historic buildings with commercially viable activities. These activities would pay for the conservation and rehabilitation of the monuments, and have an overall revitalising impact on the economic development of such areas. There are many isolated examples of such an approach in India, in Quito, Cartagena, Tunis, Sana'a, Penang and Sin-
Singapore to name a few. But there are very few examples of integrated area concepts which strive for the revitalisation of whole historic city centres, including (i) the revitalisation and modernisation of local economic activities and the required infrastructure, (ii) the restoration of monuments, and (iii) the rehabilitation of old housing stock, which apply an integrated financing policy that pools together private individual, private commercial as well as public-sector efforts and funds. To some extent this has been tried to Bhaktapur (though the private sector's contribution may be low in this particular case) and in Tunis, but it has been proposed in quite a number of cities, such as Cairo, Quito, Sana'a and Penang.

Very few cities have, however, taken the complete commercial path for area revitalisation. Singapore is one example in which the local redevelopment authority has acquired all the plots of the designated conservation areas, and has been tendering these plots for rehabilitation-cum-redevelopment as commercial activities (shops, restaurants, tourist hotels or offices for other activities). Another case in point is Cartagena which, after designating the conservation area, the authorities have only seen to it that historic properties are not demolished and that private investors conserve and rehabilitate the late mediaeval buildings for their private use. Practically all these renovations are taken up by high-income users who convert historic mansions into modern residences, offices or shops. In the case of Cartagena the local administration is very supportive of private investments in the historic town, and with some flexibility in the application of the permissible floor space indexes it has become possible to convert backyards into modern structures, and to increase the land use.

In Bombay, the application of the (North American) method of transferable development rights (TDR) is being experimented with. TDR can be applied to privately owned listed monuments in prime locations where there is a lot of development pressure (for instance sky-rocketing land prices and development of high-rise buildings in the vicinity). To encourage the owners to invest in the conservation and renovation of such monuments and to discourage them from demolishing these buildings, they are offered alternative plots of land for development. This is intended to compensate for the loss of development potential in the plots occupied by the monuments, and to cover renovation costs. An indispensable precondition is, of course, the availability of government-owned land that can be bartered for the TDR arrangement.

In the case of Havana, a world heritage city which is doomed to collapse in rubble very soon, such possibilities of commercialisation and utilisation of the market forces do not (yet) exist, as the country is still dominated by socialist patterns of economy and state control of land and investment. Also, China and its historic city centres still face problems of this nature, although the trend of commercialisation of the housing sector will, in due course, contribute to innovative financing mechanisms for rehabilitation of historic city centres.

In the context of the modernisation of cities and their historic centres, there is also concern for the old, historic types of land uses. Most of the traditional economic activities (in cities like Cairo, Tunis, Sana'a, Old Delhi, etc. these are almost "medieval"-style activities) will — over time — be unable to survive, particularly in locations where conservation and rehabilitation of historic city centres have the impact of "gentrification".

As conservation and rehabilitation are introduced, not only the land values of these areas increase, but also local revenues. Such revenue increases can have an additional stimulating impact for the revitalisation of infrastructure and other services in conservation areas. Thus, revitalisation of historic city centres will contribute both to the modernisation of the private commercial sector and to enhanced revenues. In conservation plans and concepts this aspect of increased land values and property values plays an important role which is fully taken into account, as demonstrated in the case of Tunis or Singapore. (Singapore proudly announced that property values in conservation areas have risen by 8 times after rehabilitation of "shophouses".) In other cities, such as
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Quito or Cartagena, the increase of property values in the historic city was not so much planned for, but seen as a likely outcome.

Tourism development has been mentioned before as an incentive for the conservation of monuments and the rehabilitation and revitalisation of historic city centres. To what extent the economic impact of tourism is felt city-wide or only within the historic city centre itself depends fully on the particular characteristics of each case and how area conservation/rehabilitation is being implemented. If tourism activities (such as hotels) could be charged a "heritage tax", this could also contribute to the sustainability of urban heritage by boosting the financial position of archaeological and other heritage related institutions.

**Urban aspects**

Urban aspects are also very prominent in the conservation and revitalisation of old city centres. One can distinguish in each historic city specific urban patterns or features such as the nature and density of land uses, height of buildings, width and pattern of circulation routes (roads, alleys, footpaths), building typologies, as well as specific infrastructure components. These form the components of the "urban tissue". Within the urban tissue the size and format of individual plots is a prime characteristic that has a wide impact on the urban form and appearance. For area conservation and rehabilitation it is essential that the maximum possible preservation of the original tissue pattern is a prime objective of conservation programmes. Once the tissue pattern is no longer respected and has been widely, modified obviously the nature of the built environment is bound to change radically. Hence, for many physical planners this issue of the urban tissue is one of the prime areas of concern, and it is in this perspective that all efforts to generate new uses for old buildings and neighbourhoods need to be evaluated. Some rehabilitation experiences and proposals, as in the cases of Singapore, Cartagena, Bhaktapur, Cairo and Galle, have stressed the importance of the preservation of existing urban patterns and tissues, and some have even developed detailed design guidelines (Bhaktapur, Singapore) which are to be applied by private investors. The area conservation and redevelopment experience in the Medina of Tunis illustrates, however, a more "liberal" approach, with its quasi-traditional style of housing development (middle- and high-income housing) that does away with the old street patterns, and provides modernised versions of the classic Tunisian courtyard housing.

**THE OUTLOOK**

The general picture today is not encouraging. Destruction of historic city centres, of old housing stock and of monuments continues in most developing countries, either by active policies of clearance and replacement or by passive policies of doing nothing to halt the slow deterioration and decline of such areas. In some countries there have been small-scale efforts, but often these have focused only on the most "profitable" projects, such as historic areas with tourist potential. The lower-income residents have been ignored (at best) or pushed out by existing renewal policies.

If this trend continues, there is a real danger for the future that in the cities in developing countries we will find that only fragments of their urban heritage remain. What is preserved will be isolated and without impact on the life of the majority of the population. Rehabilitation strategies should, of course, aim to avoid the idea of static preservation, and not attempt to "fossilise" the past and convert it into a sort of open-air museum.

There is an urgent need for rehabilitation approaches which maintain — or better "sustain" — the typical and essential qualities of the historic city areas, and of the life of the resident communities, but which can also adapt these physical structures and economic activities in accordance with the needs of the present. A continuous and
organic approach of revitalisation is needed — the type of approach which characterised all urban areas in the pre-industrial era and which has given form to older urban areas everywhere. Adaptation of form and function can proceed, however, within a stable matrix of buildings and urban patterns. Selectivity is crucial. This implies, for example, a choice of new design concepts and relevant new technologies to enable older buildings and areas to adapt successfully to modern needs but without destroying existing urban form.

To achieve this, it will be necessary to change the attitudes of professionals — of economists, architects, planners, developers and administrators. It will be necessary to create a changed political environment in which historic centres are rehabilitated in their true value, and where policies and practice of government are modified accordingly. Institutions must be developed, and economic and administrative instruments for control and promotion must be worked out.

Civic authorities should pay attention to rehabilitation and re-use of old and historic properties which are not under government protection and use. These properties should be listed, and their rehabilitation and re-use should be promoted. Those under public ownership could be brought to appropriate community or private-sector uses. In the case of privately owned properties, owners should be provided with incentives like property tax exemptions and transfers of floor-space indexes if they rehabilitate and conserve old and historic properties and put them to new economic uses (such as hotels, restaurants, shops, offices).

There remains great opposition to such changes towards area conservation and rehabilitation. Landowners/landlords, speculators, government administrators, big construction companies, and many public agencies have vested interests in re-development and will fight to protect their stakes for modernisation. These groups have their political allies as well. Unfortunately, the people are large — and especially the people living in historic city centres — have not yet developed a sufficient sense of self-identity and community purpose to allow them to fight back. This can change, and indeed must change, if anything is to be done about the sustainability of urban heritage. But it will not be easy. And time is rapidly running out.

NOTES


16. Ministry of Urban Development, National Housing Policy (Government of India, New Delhi, 1992), p. 3 (which states among its objectives "to promote vernacular architecture and to preserve the nation's rich heritage in the field of human settlements")

17. For the case of Old Delhi refer to Dewan Verma (1995) see note 4. In the case of the katars of Old Delhi, despite detailed preparation of an integrated rehabilitation project, this has been called off. For reference see Indian Human Settlements Programme, Renewal of Historic Housing Stock in Old Delhi: Action-Oriented Research Project for the Renewal of Kataras (IHSP — Human Settlement Management Institute, New Delhi, 1988).


20. Ministry of Urban Development, National Housing Policy (Government of India, New Delhi, 1992), p. 3 (which states among its objectives "to promote vernacular architecture and to preserve the nation's rich heritage in the field of human settlements")


27. Singapore has the Singapore Heritage Society.
29. In Tunis there is the Association for the Safeguarding of the Medina.
30. Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH).
31. Indonesian National Heritage Trust.
41. Illustrate Municipio de Quito, *Dirección de Planificación, Diagnostico del Centro Historico* (IMQ, Quito, 1992).