

Keynote

Integrity of Historic Urban Landscape

역사도시경관의 완전성

Speaker

Yukio Nishimura

Professor of University of Tokyo /
Vice-President of ICOMOS-Japan

NAME :

Yukio Nishimura

TITLE :

- Professor of the University of Tokyo
- Vice president of ICOMOS-Japan

EDUCATION :

Trained as physical planner at the Department of Urban Engineering, University of Tokyo, where he got BA, MA and D Eng. in Planning.

EXPERIENCE :

Professor Yukio Nishimura teaches urban planning, urban design and urban conservation planning at the Univ. of Tokyo, his alma mater.

Majoring in conservation planning, he has also been advising a number of historic cities and towns for their conservation plans throughout Japan as well as some Asian countries, such as Taiwan, where he is chief honorary advisor to the Council for Cultural Affairs.

He also served as Vice President of the International Council on Monuments and Sites, ICOMOS, whose functions include evaluation of World Cultural Heritage nominations as a consultative body of UNESCO.

He is also Executive Committee member of Asian Planning Schools Association, APSA.

He is the author of two award-winning books; *Urban Conservation and Urban Design*(1997), and *Urban Conservation Planning*(2004) (both Japanese) and five other books and contributed more than fifty books as coauthor or editor.

CONTACT INFORMATION :

nishimur@ud.t.u-tokyo.ac.jp

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1. Urban Problems in the World Heritage Cities

It was observed that 389 properties inscribed in the World Heritage List in 2004 were in the urban areas(1). When we count World Heritage Sites with more than 5,000 inhabitants, the number was 340 sites in 92 State Parties as of 2005 List(2). It means that most of the Heritage Sites are located in urban settings and may witness a lot of difficulties that common cities usually come across.

As living organs, it is inevitable and, in most cases, healthy for every city to hold deferent inertia to change its form and function to cater for the contemporary needs of private and public sectors alike. For the heritage protection, however, this living features of cities have resulted in a series of difficulties in many heritage cities.

Kathmandu Valley, Nepal, inscribed in 1979, is one of the classic examples. This historic city has been suffering from the haphazard urban development since early 1990's. The World Heritage Committee decided to inscribe the Site in the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2003, noting "the threat of uncontrolled development has persisted, which continuously decreases the **urban landscape** and architectural fabric of the property."(3) The Committee clearly referred the term 'urban landscape' in its decision.

Another cause of the change is the inappropriate infrastructure development led by the public sector. For example, Group of Monuments at Hampi, India, inscribed in

1986, was put on the List of World Heritage in Danger in 1999, due to the partial construction of two cable-suspended bridges. The Committee worried about “potential dangers threatening the **integrity** and **authenticity** of the site.”(4)

In recent years, not only the urban developments within the protected zone or buffer zone, but also developments beyond the boundary of buffer zone became heavily controversial issues worldwide with the introduction of more high-rise buildings in many parts of the city.

There has been a series of discussion in the World Heritage Committee to express worries about the construction of high-rise buildings in the vicinity of World Heritage Sites, such as Historic Centre of Vienna, Austria (inscribed in 2001), Cologne Cathedral, Germany (inscribed in 1996), Meidan Eman, Esfahan, Iran (inscribed in 1979), Historic Centre of St Petersburg and Related Groups of Monuments, Russia (inscribed in 1990), and Historic Centre of Riga, Latvia (inscribed in 1997).

For example, in Cologne Cathedral case, the World Heritage Committee decided to “urge the City of Cologne to reconsider the current (high-rise) building plans as to their **visual impact** on the World Heritage property of Cologne Cathedral and to request that any new construction should respect the **visual integrity** of the property.”(5)

In Meidan Eman, Esfahan, the World Heritage Committee strongly opposed the height of the on-going multifunctional complex to “with a view to ensure the conservation of the **authentic setting** and **integrity** of the historic city of Esphahan surrounding the Meidan Emam World Heritage property.”(6) The site was eventually put into the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2006.

In Historic Centre of Riga, the World Heritage Committee worried the damage of the Riga’s flat urban situation by the high-rise development at the waterfront and decided to request “to protect the World Heritage property and its **visual integrity**.”(7)

In Asia and the Pacific region, there have been several reactive monitoring activities for many sites such as Kathmandu Valley, Lhasa, Temple of Heaven Site in Beijing, and Jyung Myo in Seoul. In most cases, the critical issues were haphazard urban developments within or just outside buffer zone.

2. Vienna Memorandum on the Conservation of Historic Urban Landscape and its Framework

At the 27th Session of the World Heritage Committee held in Paris in 2003, the discussion of Vienna's proposed high-rise building brought a tension for the strong urban development pressure and eventually called for the international conference to discuss the urban development problems in the heritage cities. Consequently, the conference entitled "World Heritage and Contemporary Architecture – Managing the Historic Urban Landscape" was held in Vienna, Austria, from 12 to 14 May 2005.

Over 600 participants from 55 countries finally resolved the *Vienna Memorandum on World Heritage and Contemporary Architecture – Managing the Historic Urban Landscape*(8). The original idea had been discussed and formulated as a proposal to the conference by the UNESCO in conjunction with ICOMOS, ICCROM, OWHC, IFLA, IUA and IFHP.

In the Vienna Memorandum, the historic urban landscape was defined, just as the 1976 UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Role of Historic Areas, "ensembles of any group of buildings, structures and open spaces, in their natural and ecological context, including archaeological and palaeontological sites, constituting human settlements in an urban environment over a relevant period of time, the cohesion"(section 7).

Furthermore, in the section 8 of the Vienna Memorandum, the historic urban landscape was described to be "composed of character-defining elements that include land uses and patterns, spatial organization, visual relationships, topography and soils, vegetation, and all elements of the technical infrastructure, including small

scale objects and details of construction (curbs, paving, drain gutters, lights, etc.).” Then, section 25 adds that “townscapes, roofscapes, main visual axes, building plots and types are integral parts of the identity of the historic urban landscape.”

The *Memorandum* acknowledged the continuous changes “as par of the city’s tradition” (section 13) and encouraged “the contextualization of contemporary architecture in the historic urban landscape.”(section 29)

The Vienna Memorandum, however, did not clearly stipulate how to cope with the continuous change of urban landscape or did not clearly define the idea of the historic urban landscape. The *Memorandum* was often said too moderate and transitional in terms of conservation. Nevertheless, it is a good start to reconsider the historic cities, which is often regarded as visual ensemble. Landscape component of the term, historic urban landscape, is more flexible and inclusive of many aspects of heritage, both tangible and intangible.

3. Serial Meetings for the Formation of the Concepts of HUL

Thereafter, the World Heritage Committee endorsed the Memorandum at its 29th session in Durban in July 2005 and 15th General Assembly of the State parties in October 2005 adopted the Declaration on the Conservation of Historic Urban Landscapes(9) in line with the *Vienna Memorandum* and decided to prepare a UNESCO Recommendation based on the *Vienna Memorandum* by 2009.

After the Declaration, the main concern for the conservation of World Heritage Sites may shift from maintaining the *authenticity* to managing and reviewing the “impact on the *integrity* of a World Heritage property”. (section 32b)

The sudden surge of the concept of historic urban landscape resulted in a series of international meetings and discussions on this matter in many parts of the world, which includes the Montréal Round Table entitled “Heritage and the Conservation of Historic Urban Landscape” in March 2006, Jerusalem Workshop on New Approaches

to Urban Conservation in June 2006, and Regional Seminar on Historic Urban Landscapes in Central and Eastern Europe in January 2007.

In each discussion, it is often pointed out that the idea of historic urban landscape is premature and transitional and need to be improved, for example, to include “*inter alia* natural elements, intangible dimensions, and cultural diversity”(10).

However, landscape approach may bring rather rich outcome regarding integrity concept, because it requires organic and ecological considerations, which is different from static and visual approach of historic cities or group of buildings. As early as 1994, the author proposed the same idea by the term, ‘**cultural townscape**’(11), which stressed the management of change from the cultural landscape viewpoint..

4. ICOMOS Approach to the HUL and Xi’an Declaration

Since the *Vienna Memorandum* did not clearly stipulates how to cope with the continuous change of urban landscape or did not have clear conservationist point of view, ICOMOS needs much clearer stance to the urban developments and this let to the *Xi’an Declaration on the Conservation of Setting of Heritage Structures, Sites and Areas*(12).

The main concern of the *Xi’an Declaration* was to protect the setting of the heritage properties from the urban development, because Xi’an and other urban areas in China as well as many large cities in Asia in general have been suffering from large scale urban development adjacent to the heritage sites.

Xi’an Declaration stressed the importance of managing “the change of the setting, while avoiding inappropriate visual and spatial encroachments or land use in significant setting” (section 7), because it may affect the **integrity** of the site.

The discussion of the historic urban landscape should be based on the **integrity** of the site and the integrity itself is again closely related to the idea of setting. Therefore, the *Xi'an Declaration* should be re-examined seriously for approaching the better understanding and eventual conservation of the **integrity** of the site

Notes

- 1 Vladimir Krogus, *The Full Systematized Inventory of World Heritage Cities*, Institute on Reconstruction of Historic Towns (INRECON), Moscow, 2005.
- 2 Mechtild Rössler, *The evolution of the Vienna Memorandum on World Heritage and Contemporary Architecture*, in "Proceedings- 'Heritage and the Conservation of Historic Urban Landscapes' held on 6 March 2006 in Montréal, Canada.
- 3 WHC-03/27.COM/7B.52.
- 4 WHC-99/23.COM/COMF.209/22
- 5 WHC-04/28.COM/15B.70
- 6 WHC-04/29.COM/15B.63 and the expression can be seen in the decisions of the World Heritage Committee in the following years in WHC-05/29.COM/7B.54 and WHC-06/30.COM/7B.57.
- 7 WHC-03/27.COM/7B.69 and the same expression as **visual integrity** was also used in the decision in 2004 (WHC-04/29.COM/7B.78).
- 8 WHC-05/15.GA/INF.7 •
- 9 WHC-05/15.GA/7
- 10 Statement of the Workshop on New Approaches to Urban Conservation held in Jerusalem (4-6 June 2006).
- 11 Yukio Nishimura '*Changing Concept of Authenticity in the Context of Japanese Conservation History*', in Kunut Einar Larsen ed., Nara Conference on Authenticity, Proceedings, UNESCO WHC, 1995.
- 12 <http://www.international.icomos.org/charters/xian-declaration.pdf>