

“First Principles” in Conservation: The UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Awards

RICHARD A. ENGELHARDT

This article, based on the 2009 APT College of Fellows lecture, explores award-winning projects and how they illustrate a consensus about powerful “first principles,” which are anchored by international conservation standards while also reflecting regional specificities.

Asia’s Endangered Heritage: The Conservation Imperative

Culture is the source of our identities, providing a set of values on which to base our lives and a frame of reference for our actions. The diversity of cultures is a source of creativity, innovation, and renewal and is vital for the continuity of human development. Emanating from our cultures are the tangible and intangible manifestations of this heritage. The built heritage, which provides the physical space for the non-physical expressions of culture, constitutes one of the most varied, complex, and eloquent manifestations of tangible cultural heritage.

Built heritage is a physical representation of culture and of cultural diversity. Monuments, religious buildings,

and houses provide a connection with earlier times, serving as physical reminders of people, events, and values and providing tangible spaces in which intangible forms of culture can be expressed. The conservation of local, national, and regional physical-cultural resources is pre-requisite to sustaining equitable social and economic development. Our built heritage is also valuable for its aesthetic beauty and symbolic qualities and for the emotions that they inspire. Yet our historic cities and the buildings and public spaces of which they are constituted are increasingly under threat from the twenty-first-century requirements for housing, commerce, transportation, and public services linked to development and modernization.

The basic question we must confront is this: How do we balance the preservation of the heritage significance of our built environment with the transformations required by modernization?

Nowhere is this question more pressing than in the Asia-Pacific region, where the twin juggernauts of politics and development have swept before them centuries of historic environments. Unaddressed threats from development and modernization have too often resulted in negative consequences such as:

- dismemberment of heritage sites, with resultant loss of integrity
- dilapidation and structural deterioration of the fabric of the region’s built environment, to the point where it can no longer adequately support the human uses for which it is intended
- replacement of original components with counterfeit and non-indigenous technologies and materials
- loss of the sense of place of the region’s heritage sites through inappropriate reconstruction processes that



Fig. 1. Embodying Principle 1: Leh Old Town Community Conservation Project, Ladakh, India. All images copyright UNESCO 2007 and reproduced with permission.

homogenize their unique characteristics

- disenfranchisement of the heritage from the traditions of community use

At the same time, the Asia-Pacific region is also the crucible for forging creative new strategies for heritage conservation that are based on living traditions of cultural practice and community stewardship. With an overwhelming percentage of historic structures in private hands, issues of restoration and adaptive reuse of heritage buildings inevitably become a part of every policy debate.

Recognizing the value of built heritage both as a source of cultural memory and a resource for sustainable development, UNESCO supports efforts worldwide to preserve built heritage. The 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (popularly known as the World Heritage Convention) forms the framework for international action in the conservation of immovable tangible heritage.¹ The principles enshrined in the convention and its Operational Guidelines extend not only to the safeguarding of World Heritage sites but also other significant heritage sites.

Stimulating Private-Sector Initiatives for Heritage Conservation

A key component of UNESCO's strategy to promote the conservation in the region is the annual Asia-Pacific Heritage Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation, a program that was inaugurated in 2000 to coincide with the beginning of the new millennium and was developed to respond to the question, Within the realities of contemporary, fast-track development, what do we, as Asians, want to preserve from the past to inform our place in the global future?

Strategically positioned at the center of the often-heated debate between "Western principles" and "Asian values," the awards establish a means of identifying and showcasing the most successful examples of best practices in the region — practices which are as often values-based as they are technical.

The awards recognize private-sector achievements and public-private initiatives and encourage both policies and

practices that result in preservation and catalyze other projects within the same communities and beyond.

Since its establishment, the program has brought to public attention a noteworthy body of work. From 2000 through 2009, more than 500 entries were received from 23 countries, of which 91 projects have been recognized with awards. Winners represent a broad spectrum of the region's built heritage and testify to how buildings can be successfully preserved in their traditional settings. They also demonstrate how conservation principles can be integrated into various local development strategies.

Submissions reflect the public concern for the continuity of local cultural expression. The range of religious building awards — Chinese ancestral temples, Buddhist monasteries, Hindu shrines, Sikh gurdwaras, Muslim mosques, Christian churches, and Jewish synagogues — collectively reflect the diverse living traditions of the region. Secular buildings receiving awards include monumental structures, such as forts and palaces; non-monumental buildings, such as houses, factories, schools, shops, and other commercial buildings; and public infrastructure, such as bridges. Awards have also gone to large-scale projects involving the protection and rehabilitation of gardens, streetscapes, canal and waterfront districts, in-situ archaeological sites, and historic urban quarters. The winners also include a representative slice of vernacular structures.

Every year detailed project dossiers are submitted for consideration for an award from every country and territory around the Asia-Pacific region, from Antarctica to Uzbekistan, testifying to the universal concern about conservation of cultural places through the continuity of traditional building practice, thus firmly debunking the sometimes-heard ideas that conservation is a "Western" preoccupation and a luxury of concern only to the developed economies of the world. The entries also highlight practical issues, ranging from the disappearance of traditional materials, skills, and techniques to the economic and political forces driving urban densification and distorting property values.

The Jury Commendation for Innovation was inaugurated in 2005 to recognize innovative new buildings that have been integrated into historic districts. The submissions tackle head-on the key issues facing the conservation profession everywhere, namely:

- Is it possible to adapt heritage buildings for contemporary needs and still retain their heritage significance?
- How do we insert contemporary architecture into the historic urban landscape?
- To what extent is change possible if historic districts are to maintain their character and identity?
- Most crucially, is historic conservation a mainstream action key to sustainability strategies or only a minor diversion in the development process?

The winning entries offer proof that the answer to these questions is everywhere a resounding yes, and they demonstrate that while conservation is grounded in universal principles, it is expressed in specific cultural practices that vary from place to place because of environment, politics, tradition, and, most importantly, the perception of the value of heritage in each community.

Awards Criteria

The selection process for the awards program is rigorous and is conducted annually by a panel of international experts in conservation architecture, urban planning, landscape design, and heritage resource management, all of whom practice professionally in the Asia-Pacific region.

To qualify, buildings must be more than 50 years old; the restoration work must have been completed within the last 10 years; and buildings must have been in viable use for at least one year. Residential, commercial, cultural, religious, industrial, and institutional buildings and historic towns, gardens, and bridges are eligible. The project must have been carried out with private-sector input in the form of ownership, funding, or other support. Public-private partnership projects are especially encouraged to apply.

Since the program's establishment in 2000, the selection criteria have evolved:

greater emphasis has been placed on the assessment and understanding of the significance of a place. Not only has this focus encouraged applicants to clearly define the heritage values of projects, it has led to a fuller interpretation of the projects; thus helping to generate greater awareness of the importance of heritage conservation in the region.

Entries are evaluated for excellence in the following 11 criteria, which are grouped into three distinct categories: spirit of place, technical excellence, and impact.²

Spirit of place. The first three criteria together emphasize the importance of safeguarding the spirit of place in the conservation process. Without unqualified success in this pre-requisite category, a project, however technically proficient, cannot be considered successful. These criteria are:

- the articulation of the structure's heritage values in order to convey the spirit of place through the conservation work
- appropriate use or adaptation of the structure
- the interpretation of the cultural, social, historical, and architectural significance of the structure(s) in the conservation work

Technical excellence. The next four criteria emphasize technical excellence, judged both by international standards and by the standards of traditional practice. These criteria argue that technical expertise is not a relative concept but is determined by exacting professional standards. The four criteria are:

- the understanding of the technical issues of conservation/restoration in interpreting the structure's significance
- the use and quality control of appropriate building, artisan, and conservation techniques
- the use of appropriate materials
- how well any added elements or creative technical solutions respect the character and inherent spatial quality of the structure(s)

Impact. The final four criteria relate to the impact the project has in the community and within the profession to influence conservation practice and to



Fig. 2. Embodying Principle 2: Wat Sratong Temple Restoration Project, Thailand.

catalyze further efforts in conservation as an act of development. The indicators of these impacts, which may be economic, social, or political, comprise the following:

- the manner in which the process and the final product contribute to the surrounding environment and the local community's cultural and historical continuum
- the influence of the project on conservation practice and policy locally, nationally, regionally, or internationally
- the ongoing socioeconomic viability and relevance of the project and provision for its future use and maintenance
- the complexity, sensitivity, and technical consistency of the project methodology

The UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Award winners consistently demonstrate that technical achievement in conservation must be underpinned by a profound understanding of conservation as a social process.

First Principles for Conserving Asia's Heritage

In the winning entries there is an emerging consensus around a set of powerful "first principles" guiding heritage con-

servation in the region; they have evolved and been validated through professional practice over the past two decades:

- Collective mapping of cultural space, its hierarchies, symbolic language, and associations is a pre-requisite for appropriate and successful conservation.
- Tangible cultural expressions derive their origin, value, and continuing significance from intangible cultural practices.
- Authenticity, the defining characteristic of heritage, is a culturally relative characteristic to be found in continuity, but not necessarily continuity of material.
- The conservation process succeeds when histories are revealed, traditions revived, and meanings recovered in a palimpsest of knowledge.
- Appropriate use of heritage is negotiated, resulting in a life-enhancing space.

Together, these first principles affirm a set of professional norms that have arisen out of a uniquely Asian physical and socio-cultural space.

Principle 1: Collective mapping of cultural space, its hierarchies, symbolic language, and associations is a

pre-requisite for appropriate and successful conservation. Conservation professionals and students are taught that conservation work should begin with a thorough investigation of the building. By studying historical documentary evidence and in-situ physical evidence in the building fabric itself, it is possible to come to an understanding of the evolved significance of the place and to identify character-defining elements of the site that must be conserved in the ensuing work.

Beyond a purely technical approach to this research, often dominated by the voice of the conservation expert, the award winners demonstrate the value of bringing multiple voices into the process, which allows for actualization of the principles espoused in the 2001 Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity.³

Developing an understanding of the true spirit of place, and consequently reflecting that understanding in the conservation process and product, is central to the mission of reanimating the heritage through conservation. Only a truly participatory process, which is predicated on a broad-based cultural-mapping exercise, can ensure this end. This mapping can reveal “which heritage is important,” “to whom,” and “why.” The mapping reveals the heritage values that are inherent and often unspoken in a community, notably social values and religious or spiritual values. The conservation work can then be undertaken in an appropriate manner, with full cognizance of the issues at hand, adding a “how” dimension.

Case Studies. Leh Old Town, Ladakh, India, a 2006 Honourable Mention, was recognized for “catalyz[ing] a conservation and urban rehabilitation movement in the ancient capital of Ladakh by successfully undertaking the pilot restoration of a residential neighbourhood which includes a range of building typologies. By conducting a detailed social survey alongside a conservation inventory, the needs of the population were addressed in an integrated way.” A community-based inventory of 178 structures led to a strategic selection of representative vernacular structures ranging from a Buddhist shrine to residential buildings to an alleyway. These upgrades have not only

benefited the heritage but also improved the quality of life of residents and now serve as models for additional work in the town (Fig. 1).

In Broken Hill, Australia, a 2002 Honourable Mention, a vibrant partnership between the municipal government and the community, began with the mapping of the town’s resources for economic development. This process revealed the ripe potential embedded in the charming townscape. By developing a heritage-tourism program to capitalize on these resources, the town succeeded in:

conserving significant heritage buildings and revitalizing the public streetscapes of a historic mining town [which] establishes an exemplary conceptual framework that can be adapted by other communities in Australia and throughout the Asia-Pacific region. The initiative of the local government in setting up associated programs to conserve and manage the city’s built heritage is not only noteworthy, but also demonstrates how municipalities can play an effective role in stimulating the conservation process.

The Hanok Regeneration in Bukchon, Seoul, Republic of Korea, 2009 Award of Distinction, has brought about a striking change in people’s attitudes to the city’s traditional residential quarters, originally slated for demolition and redevelopment. With successful collaboration among the municipality, community members, academics, and heritage-conservation advocates, this large-scale project has raised awareness about the heritage value of the *hanok*, preserved an important traditional Korean architectural legacy, and inspired other cities around the country.

The more dilapidated and out-of-use a structure is, the more important it is to recover its meaning through a multi-stakeholder, participatory approach. This principle is well demonstrated in the restoration of Suffolk House, Penang, Malaysia, 2008 Award of Distinction. Originally the home of Sir Francis Light, Penang’s founder, and reputed to be one of the finest European-style buildings in the Far East, the building was in ruins when a private conservation consortium took on the project with financing from the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank. There was long discussion about whether restoration was possible or whether the building was too deteriorated for such an attempt. Through a multi-dimensional research project that involved archaeol-

ogy, art and photographic research, comparative analogies, technical investigation, and computer modelling, the conservation and restoration process returned one of the most important colonial heritage landmarks in Penang to its former state of grandeur. It was restored to its 1812-1820 form in strict accordance with the documentary and technical evidence uncovered during the long process of mapping the building’s history. The restoration work has set new standards of technical excellence in the conservation of British colonial buildings worldwide. Most importantly, the project has renewed the building’s iconic role in the community and has become a setting for local cultural events.

Principle 2: Tangible cultural expressions derive their origin, value, and continuing significance from intangible cultural practices. The tangible and intangible are inextricably intertwined in the Asia-Pacific region, and any conservation project that privileges tangible over intangible values of a building risks stripping away the significance of the place, leaving only an empty shell.

The manifestations of intangible cultural heritage include oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, knowledge about nature, and traditional craftsmanship. This living heritage provides not only the wellspring of cultural diversity but also guarantees continuing expressions of creativity. Indeed, the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Heritage makes provisions for the protection of tangible artifacts and cultural spaces that are associated with intangible cultural heritage, thus allowing for effective cooperation between the convention and other international legal instruments, such as the 1972 World Heritage Convention.⁴

Case Studies. The project to rehabilitate Virtuous Bridge, Medan, Indonesia, 2003 Award of Merit, undertaken by a local non-governmental organization, demonstrates well how important the intangible aspect of a heritage-conservation project can be. The bridge was constructed in the nineteenth century by local residents to connect and improve communication between two local groups — Chinese and Muslims. In the

past half century, relations between the two communities deteriorated, and the bridge fell into disuse and was badly in need of repair. As a conscious attempt to reinvigorate the relations between the two communities, restoration work on the bridge was begun. The technical issues were simple and easily handled. What was important for the success of the project was that the symbolic meaning and community significance of the bridge embodied in its name, Virtuous Bridge, were restored along with the physical fabric. As observed by the award judges, "the people of Medan have also uncovered an important chapter in their shared history and awakened a new consciousness about their local heritage. The newly restored bridge has become a unique symbol of the city's multicultural legacy, and is a model for future community-driven efforts in conserving local heritage throughout the region."

A different aspect of intangible heritage — traditional social practices — was strengthened through the conservation of Wat Sratong, Khonkaen, Thailand, 2002 Award of Merit. This project revived not just the skills needed for crafts by the local villagers but also the devotional aspect of temple restoration. Long an important duty of Buddhist laypersons in the Theravada tradition, their involvement in restoring their temples has been in modern times hampered by lack of know-how and an overly judicious interpretation of the heritage regulations (Fig. 2). The restoration of religious buildings, notably churches, synagogues, and ancestral halls, demonstrates how the conservation of physical fabric is inextricably tied to the reanimation of the living heritage associated with the place. The conservation of the Ohel Leah Synagogue, Hong Kong SAR, China, 2000 Excellent Project, was an early winner that breathed new life into the heart of the Jewish community. The restoration of the Catholic Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Hong Kong, 2003 Honourable Mention, has returned one of the city's finest churches to its former glory. Structural stabilization, refurbishment of the interior, and modernization of the acoustic and lighting systems have allowed services to be conducted in an enhanced ambience, conducive to deep



Fig. 3. Embodying Principle 3: Ahhichatragarh Fort Renovation and Adaptive Reuse Project, Rajasthan, India.

spirituality. The project inspired four other congregations in the territory. One such project was St. Joseph's Chapel, also in Hong Kong, 2005 Award of Merit. Located on an undeveloped island in mostly urban Hong Kong, the restoration has not only renewed the chapel itself but has had a spin-off effect on the entire island community, which now has a heightened awareness of its living cultural heritage. The project has turned the chapel into the focal point of religious activities and island social life. Meanwhile, the conservation of St. Joseph's Seminary Church, Macao SAR, China, 2001 Honourable Mention, saved a city landmark, which has now been reopened to the public and serves again as a site for public worship with an annual *Te Deum* ceremony.

Principle 3: Authenticity, the defining characteristic of heritage, is a culturally relative characteristic to be found in continuity, but not necessarily continuity of material. The awards have shown that the conservationist's mantra of "do as much as necessary and as little as possible" is subject to interpretation within the framework of widely varying cultural norms throughout the Asia-Pacific region. Anecdotal evidence illustrates fundamental clashes between those who seek the most catholic interpretation of seminal documents, such as the Venice Charter, that hold material authenticity sacrosanct, with local stakeholders calling for renewal of the fabric to ensure the spiritual intactness of the place.

The Nara Document on Authenticity, adopted in 1994 and since incorporated into the Operational Guidelines of the World Heritage Convention, has articulated a middle ground that reflects a way of balancing diverse definitions of authenticity and different underlying values within an Asian sensibility in the conservation process and product.⁵ The Nara Document states that "it is thus not possible to base judgements of value and authenticity on fixed criteria. On the contrary, the respect due to all cultures requires that cultural heritage must be considered and judged within the cultural contexts to which it belongs." The Nara Document further states that

Depending on the nature of the cultural heritage, its cultural context, and its evolution through time, authenticity judgements may be linked to the worth of a great variety of sources of information. Aspects of these sources may include form and design, materials and substance, use and function, traditions and techniques, location and setting, spirit and feeling and other internal and external factors. The use of these sources permits elaboration of the specific artistic, historic, social and scientific dimensions of the cultural heritage being examined.

The Nara Document does not provide a license for cultural relativity but rather reaffirms the validity of a rational system for evaluating and consequently safeguarding various heritage values, one that is consistent within its own socio-cultural system. In so doing, social, cultural, and spiritual values may gain a foothold alongside artistic and historic values in the conservation process.



Fig. 4. Embodying Principle 4: Tung Wah Coffin House Conservation Project, Hong Kong, SAR, China.

Case Studies. Of all the winning entries, the Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion, Georgetown, Malaysia, 2000 Most Excellent Award, most clearly demonstrates Principle 3 as judged through the various criteria. As the judges noted:

This structure of impressive style is an extraordinary tribute to the construction techniques and craftsmanship of the past and the mansion is now a cultural statement and icon of Penang. The project has successfully restored a heritage building to its former glory and returned a cultural landmark to the Penang community.

Since its restoration the central ensemble of rooms and courtyards has served as a public space for exhibitions, tours, concerts, weddings and other public activities, and the annexes have been converted into 16 uniquely themed apartments, decorated in nineteenth century style...

Most importantly, the project symbolizes a turning point in conservation, serving as the pioneer case for heritage sites in Penang. The restoration of Cheong Fatt Tze mansion has had an enormous impact and influence on the preservation movement in Penang and serves as a model for conservation projects throughout the region.⁶

In the restoration of Ahhichatragarh Fort, Nagaur, Rajasthan, India, 2002 Award of Excellence, demonstrates the importance of sustaining continuity of social value in the on-going occupation of the space. Although the fort is no longer the seat of the ruling family, it still maintains its ties to the larger community. Located at the heart of Nagaur town, it continues to host the annual

cattle fair, an important regional gathering that is rooted in traditional livelihood and ways of life (Fig. 3). The project was commended as follows: the historic evolution of the site has been captured by respecting the various periods of the complex in the conservation work. The on-going work has created a live research laboratory, providing valuable field education for conservation professionals and students. The physical preservation of the complex returns the largest open grounds in the region to the local public, as a venue for festivals, cultural performances, and religious events, thereby allowing for the continuity of the fort's rich history.

The restoration of Chinese clan halls has vividly illustrated the importance of addressing religious and spiritual values in the conservation process. The temple committees and community members often stress the need to freshen up the appearance of the hall as an act of respect to the gods and to their ancestors. This process results in material consolidation and repainting, particularly of frescoes and depictions of deities. Care is taken, however, to ensure that existing materials in sound condition are retained; meanwhile, new additions or work are guided by the use of compatible materials and authentic crafts skills and building techniques. Indeed, the premium placed on assuring the continuity of the craftsmanship is so high that many winning projects have brought over master craftsmen from

China in order to undertake the work. Their skills in decorative arts germane to Southern Chinese-influenced architecture, such as *chien nien* porcelain mosaics, guarantees not just the material authenticity but also connotes the highest level of veneration.

Principle 4: The conservation process succeeds when histories are revealed, traditions revived, and meanings recovered in a palimpsest of knowledge. In extreme but increasingly frequent circumstances, the thread of continuity has been frayed to the point that it is barely distinguishable. Left to the course of economic renewal and the tides of social change, heritage and the values it embodies are often vulnerable to being eradicated or subsumed into a newer narrative, which may not be self-reflexive. Judicious intervention in these cases can result in revealing unique histories, reviving local traditions, and recovering the meaning of the place.

The awards have recognized projects that have excelled not only in technical virtue but also in the dramatic impact that they have effected, especially traditions that are dying or have faded away. These projects often do so in a way that does not impose one solitary reading of the place by capturing a single snapshot of time but rather reveals a renewed understanding of the place in the context of other embodied historical layers of meaning. In some projects, this remembrance of meanings past is accomplished in a quite literal yet effective manner — by physically juxtaposing the layers of the building history against each other. In other projects, this recovery is a social process, which reaches back into historical traditions and revives the living core of the community.

Case Studies. The restoration of Guang Yu Ancestral Hall, Guangdong, China, 2003 Award of Excellence, offers a textbook example of interpreting the historical value of place as a physical palimpsest of different temporal periods. The conservation team painstakingly retained physical evidence dating back to eras in the building's 600-year history. These elements included a wooden beam that had been partially replaced during earlier restoration and a fragment of a wall slogan painted during the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s.

New materials used to replace the rafters were marked with a stamp, indicating the material and the date, as per Article 9 of the Venice Charter. The project was commended for "carefully preserving the layers of historical change seen in the building, [thereby] the Lu clan ancestral hall has not only become a living record of the history of Qiangang village, but has also captured the sweep of Chinese history from the Song dynasty to the current People's Republic."

In the restoration of the Dorje Chenmo Temple, Ladakh, India, with its superb wall paintings, 2004 Award of Merit, the conservation has re-sanctified the once-abandoned prayer hall and revived the local tradition of conducting worship ceremonies in the space. "A key catalytic role in the project was played by the village Oracle, who framed the project within a traditional devotional context. Working with the project management team, the Oracle encouraged extensive involvement by the residents of Shey in the conservation work, resulting in the reintegration of the temple into community life." The physical restoration provided a platform for the renewal of village traditions and reinvigorated the social values of the place.

The social significance of a conservation project is often as important as its technical excellence. In this regard, the restoration of the Tung Wah Coffin Home, Hong Kong SAR, China, 2005 Award of Merit, provides a model. The Coffin Home has long served as a charitable organization reaching out to a spectrum of residents throughout Hong Kong SAR, provided through the patronage of the Tung Wah group, a leading health-care provider. Over time, the increasing dilapidation of the complex has impacted the institution's capacity to serve its growing audience. The restoration, which stabilized the buildings on site and the complex as a whole, has consolidated the site physically and, at the same time, allowed it greater functionality and social significance (Fig. 4).

In another approach to revealing the complex histories of a building, a new architectural intervention served to enhance the interpretation and understanding of what already existed on site. At the Meridian Gate Exhibition Hall of the Palace Museum, Beijing, China,



Fig. 5. Embodying Principle 5: Krishan Temple Preservation Project, Punjab, India.

2005 Jury Commendation for Innovation, the design of new interior exhibition structures improves the understanding of the historic hall, revealing the spirit of place. In adopting a modern vocabulary of architecture consisting of transparent glass walls, ceilings, and floors, as well as glass cabinets for the display of objects and a dramatic interior lighting scheme, the appreciation of the traditional Chinese imperial architecture is greatly heightened.

Principle 5: Appropriate use of heritage is negotiated, resulting in a life-enhancing space. Award-winning projects have often been conducted by conservationists who also play an advocacy or activist role. With heritage conservation unfortunately being a relatively low priority on most political agendas in the Asia-Pacific region, the conservationist-activists have had to shoulder the task not only of ensuring professional excellence but also of raising awareness of the multiple benefits of conserving heritage. The essential messages conveyed by the conservationist-activists include heritage as a fundamental cultural right, heritage as a building block for sustainable development, and heritage as a shared resource for local stakeholders.

The success of such advocacy efforts is usually the result of negotiation —

revisiting the fundamental questions of which heritage is important, to whom, why, and how it should be conserved. The cultural diversity of the Asia-Pacific region, dating back to its earliest history, belies easy answers to these questions. Add to the debate at the local level the complication of state-mandated histories and definitions of heritage, and the process becomes very complicated indeed.

Seeing value in the process of negotiation, however, means recognizing the value in cultural diversity and according respect to the full range of stakeholders. Projects undertaken through this negotiation have emerged all the stronger, ensuring greater social and political sustainability.

Case Studies. Stadium Merdeka, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 2008 Award of Excellence, is a salutary example of the process of conservation as one of negotiation. The judges' citation speaks directly to this issue:

The restoration of Stadium Merdeka, the iconic setting of the announcement of Malayan independence, has saved a national heritage building and recovered a nation's collective memory. Originally slated for redevelopment into a commercial complex, the Stadium has been restored to its original 1957 form in recognition of the inextricable connection between the building and the historic moment of independence. Later additions, notably the upper tiers, were carefully removed and the original structure and aesthet-



Fig. 6. Setting new conservation standards: Baltit Fort Conservation and Adaptive Reuse Project, Hunza Valley, Pakistan.

ics of the building were reinstated, demonstrating a thorough understanding and respect for the significance of the Stadium at a specific moment in history and a recognition of the heritage value of modern architecture. The privately-funded rescue effort spearheaded by Permodalan Nasional Berhad, with professional assistance from Badan Warisan Malaysia, serves as a stirring inspiration for civil society around the region in safeguarding heritage sites as part of a shared social and political responsibility.⁷

The role of conservation as a positive social process is best seen at the Krishan Temple, Punjab, India, 2001 Award of Distinction, located in the multi-cultural village of Kishankot. The villagers were active throughout the project, being trained with necessary skills to take part in the conservation work and the ongoing maintenance. Today, the temple houses worship services and literacy classes serving all religious groups in the village and continues to be maintained by residents. The conservation project served as a platform for intercultural dialogue, resulting in peaceful co-existence and a multivalent understanding of local heritage (Fig. 5).

The very definition of heritage was negotiated in the rescue of a dilapidated 1930s grain warehouse along the banks of the Suzhou River in Shanghai, China. The restoration of the Suzhou River Warehouse, Shanghai, China, 2004 Honourable Mention, was undertaken at a time when the industrial heritage of the city, once China's manufacturing powerhouse, had fallen into ruin and had not yet been recognized either in the public eye or by state authorities as cultural heritage and a significant expression of the city's past. By taking the initiative to save one of the warehouses and convert it with minimal changes into his loft workspace, the project architect demonstrated how Shanghai's

industrial buildings were indeed worthy of conservation, leading to a widespread recognition and official protection policies.

The boundaries of heritage-site conservation in Asia were pushed by the project to safeguard the M24 Midget Submarine Wreck, Sydney Harbor, Australia, 2009 Award of Distinction. This project presents an exemplary model for in-situ conservation of underwater cultural heritage in the Asia-Pacific region, coupled with culturally sensitive measures for the protection and interpretation of the site, which contains human remains. The physical remains of the largely intact submarine have been protected by a sophisticated, non-invasive management system appropriate to the underwater environment.

Codifying the First Principles in the Hoi An Protocols for Best Conservation Practice In Asia

This portfolio of projects brings to light a body of standard-setting practices in which the conservation of the physical form of tangible heritage is inextricably linked to the continuation of the intangible cultural practices that originally produced and continue to give meaning to the heritage (Fig. 6). As a whole, the award-winning projects add to our understanding of the role of heritage conservation as a social-development process. They demonstrate that good conservation practice, wherever it takes place and whatever the cultural, social, and economic contexts, needs to be grounded in an understanding of the locality of place and its many overlapping values. These values of place, identified through a participatory cul-

tural mapping process, must inform the conservation decision-making and implementation process if the result is to be viable. This values-based approach to conservation practice yields a richly nuanced end result, where tangible and intangible heritage are authentically conserved and historic layers of meaning are revealed. Through the application of these "First Principles," the long-term safeguarding of the diverse cultural heritage of Asia — and, indeed, of all the peoples of the world — can be ensured to form an essential part of the core resources for sustainable development with a recognizable, human face.

To bring these First Principles into general practice throughout the region and, indeed, further afield, UNESCO has compiled, through an exhaustive series of consultations with regional conservation experts, the Hoi An Protocols for Best Conservation Practice in Asia, which are professional guidelines for assuring and preserving the authenticity of heritage sites in the context of the cultures of Asia. The protocols were endorsed by ICOMOS Asia-Pacific chapters at the ICOMOS General Assembly in Xi'an, China, in 2005.⁸

The protocols give practical operational guidelines for conservation practitioners working in Asia, thereby establishing high standards of best conservation practice for the region, with specific regard to the safeguarding the authenticity of heritage sites within their cultural context.

To conclude, I would like to quote Laurence Loh, a member of the UNESCO Heritage Awards Selection Panel and himself a winner of three awards and an advisor to two other award-winning projects, speaking on what he saw as the importance of the awards when his project for the restoration of the Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion in Malaysia was awarded Most Excellent Project in the first year of the awards competition:

The principal importance of the restoration lies in the impetus it provides in the drive to instill conservation consciousness in Georgetown. It also sets benchmark standards of architectural restoration integrity in a milieu not notable for its quality of restoration work. Traditional techniques revived in the restoration works are now acknowledged as widely applicable throughout the historic city. The restoration...has kept faith with its architecture, it has opened the door for heritage incentives. Conservation was recognized

for the first time as an Act of Development. It has bought time for Georgetown and put Penang on the world conservation map, imparting an extraordinary and memorable experience to all who enter its portals and share its past glories and current revelations.⁹

As demonstrated by this project and the other award winners and the application of the First Principles, we can ensure the safeguarding of the heritage of distinct cultural communities, which form the core resources for long-term sustainable development.

RICHARD A. ENGELHARDT is UNESCO Charge de Mission and Senior Advisor to the UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Culture. In 1994 H. M. King Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia knighted him Commandeur de l'Ordre Royal du Cambodge. Mr. Engelhardt has also been decorated by the governments of China, the Philippines, and Viet Nam and by the Global Heritage Fund for his service to safeguard heritage. He can be reached at richard.a.engelhardt@gmail.com.

Notes

1. See http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13055&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html.
2. For an elaboration of these criteria, please refer to the Rules and Regulations of the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Conservation Awards for Culture Heritage Conservation, which can be found at www.unescobkk.org/culture/our-projects/empowerment-of-the-culture-profession/asia-pacific-heritage-awards-for-culture-heritage-conservation.
3. See http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13179&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html.
4. See http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=17716&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html.
5. See <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/opguide08-en.pdf>.
6. See www.unescobkk.org/culture/our-projects/empowerment-of-the-culture-profession/asia-pacific-heritage-awards-for-culture-heritage-conservation/previous-heritage-awards-2000-2008/2000/award-winners/cheong-fatt-tze-mansion-malaysia/.
7. See www.unescobkk.org/culture/our-projects/empowerment-of-the-culture-profession/asia-pacific-heritage-awards-for-culture-heritage-conservation/previous-heritage-awards-2000-2008/2008/award-winners/.
8. Copies of the Hoi Protocols for Best Conservation Practice in Asia can be downloaded from UNESCO's Web site, www.unescobkk.org/culture/.
9. See www.unescobkk.org/culture/our-projects/empowerment-of-the-culture-profession/asia-pacific-heritage-awards-for-culture-heritage-conservation/previous-heritage-awards-2000-2008/2000/award-winners/cheong-fatt-tze-mansion-malaysia/.