

CONSERVING CULTURAL HERITAGE IN AN URBAN SETTING AND THE POTENTIAL ROLE OF MULTIMEDIA TECHNOLOGY

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ABSTRACTS

The conservation of cultural heritage faces the harshest challenge when physical reconfiguration is equated with modernization, and economic transformation with progress. Furthermore, with globalization in full gallop, the inherent “value” of cultural heritage is oftentimes challenged. The issue becomes all the more complex when the quest for “authenticity” comes into play. This is particularly true in urban communities where “change” is rapid in pace and extensive in scale. Too often, the “authenticity” of a historic place seems to be compromised. Or is it?

This paper begins with a selective review of key international charters and documents to trace the evolution of “authenticity” as well as “integrity” in the evaluation of historic resources and related treatment. This is followed by a brief recount of the parallel evolution from the recognition of historic sites to the emergence of places of cultural heritage.

The role of the community and other related implications are then briefly examined through the experiences of three historic urban neighborhoods, including Chinatown, Boston, United States, the historic Da-Dao-Cheng District, Taipei, Taiwan, and the ancient town quarters of Lijiang, China -- a Cultural Heritage Sites inscribed in UNESCO’s World Heritage List since 1977.

Ultimately, by conserving living heritage places, the diversity in culture is kept alive. For historic urban neighborhoods to thrive with their authenticity and integrity intact, building a community that is well educated, informed, and active in historic conservation is one of the keys. In this respect, the application of multimedia technology in consort with the world-wide-web will be vital.

1. INTRODUCTION

While both Chinatown in Boston and Da-Dao-Cheng in Taipei trace their beginning to the early 19th century, the ancient town of Lijiang dates back to the late 12th century. The differences in their respective historical lineage notwithstanding, all three are densely populated and highly urbanized. In addition, all three are manifestations of rich layers of cultural fabrics accumulated through time. Today, each is faced with the difficult task to find the “right” balance between conservation and development. The quest for safeguarding authenticity and/or integrity must contend with the inevitability and desirability of changes.

The objectives of this short paper are thus two-pronged:

1. Re-examine the distinction between authenticity and integrity in relation to the conservation of a historic urban place; and
2. Review and explore the role of the multimedia technology therein.

1.1 Chinatown, Boston

- Population: 4300
- Land area: 19 hectares (46 acres)

Boston’s Chinatown, a historic immigrant neighborhood built on landfill, dates back to the mid 19th century when successive waves of immigrants began to arrive en mass in 1850s. Before the Chinese established a firm foothold in the area in 1890s, it had been home to the Irish, Central European Jews, and Syrians. The neighborhood’s proximity to the railroad terminal and the city’s administrative and entertainment center also attracted the thriving leather industry.

Today, it is the fifth largest Chinatown in the United States. Intermixed with the Greek Revival styled rowhouses that have been turned into shophouses are loft buildings constructed at the turn of the last century for the wholesale trade of textile and the manufacturing industry of leather. Adorned with various Chinese emblems, they dominate the streetscape of Chinatown. In addition to a thriving businesses community, the neighborhood has also developed an underlying support infrastructure comprised of family associations, service providers, and advocacy organizations that serves the needs of the Chinese community in New England at large. For many of the Asian immigrants and transient visitors alike, Chinatown help maintain a ethnic identity and/or a distinct lifestyles.

Coming into the 21st century, Chinatown faces the expanded presence of non-Chinese speaking immigrants from other parts of Southeast Asia and the impending transformation of the nearby adult entertainment district, a.k.a. Combat Zone, into a downtown cultural hub officially known as the Midtown Cultural District. In addition, the community still has to contend with its long-term nemesis, major medical and educational institutions that were introduced into its folds with the City’s urban renewal efforts in 1960s.

To help deter institutional encroachment and gentrification, the community forced the City into a joint development of the 1990 Chinatown Community Plan. The accompanying rezoning plan also established the first Chinatown District in Boston. In 1995, Chinatown was selected along with nine other neighborhoods in Boston to participate in the nation’s first urban, multi-district Main Street Program under the auspices of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

1.2 Da-Dau-Cheng , Taipei

- Population: 16,000
- Land Area: 40 hectares

Da-Dau-Cheng is located on the bank of Tamshuei River that flows along the western edge of Taipei, the capital city of Taiwan. The district got its start as a major trading port of Oolong tea and other goods in northern Taiwan in 1861, after the Ching government, as a result of its defeat by the French and the British, was forced to open it to international trade. In 1896, Taiwan was ceded to the Japanese in the aftermath of the Sino-Japanese War. During the next fifty years, Da-Dau-Cheng continued to strengthen its role as the preeminent business, cultural and entertainment center of Taipei.

By the time Taiwan was released from the Japanese rule in 1945, the district had become home to many of Taipei's leading merchants, literati, and political activists. However, with the suspense of the cross-strait trade and the continuing deterioration of the working harbor, Da-Dau-Cheng soon began to lose its luster. While Taipei went through an explosive growth during the ensuing decades, the district was largely left unheeded. As a result, legacies of over a century of high achievements are left standing in a rich reservoir of architectural styles along Di-Hwa Street, the commercial spine for the wholesale base of dry goods, textiles, and traditional herbal medicines. The buildings range from simple Chinese courtyard structures, grand western-style mercantile mansions, to shophouses built in elaborate pseudo-Baroque or Modernist styles with a distinct Japanese-Chinese flare. And despite the district's fall from grace, a majority of the properties are still owned by third or fourth generation residents who have chosen to stay or become absentee owners.

In 1977, the government announced its plan to widen Di-Hwa Street from 7.8 meters wide to 20 meters wide – a move that would obliterate the historic fabric of the neighborhood. Many in the neighborhood were more than ready to part with remains of the past in hope of an economic redemption. After a prolonged struggle between contesting interests and ideologies, plan was put to rest with the adoption of “The Special Historic Landscape District of Da-Dau-Cheng” in 2000. In addition to Transfer of Development Right as a mitigating measure, other related incentives and punitive provisions have also been adopted. Nevertheless, skepticism and animosity toward conservation lingers as much as economic uncertainty.

The glaring impotence and limitations of existing legal measures were made painfully clear when, around 1:20A.M., May 26th, 2002, a bulldozer wrecked the front section of the Da-Dau-Cheng Presbyterian Church - one of the 77 historic buildings in the district. The Church was planning a major expansion, while the evaluation for a municipal landmark designation was in progress. Two days after the midnight attack, the designation became official.

1.3 The Old Town of Lijiang (Dayan Jen)

- Population: 14,000
- Land Area: 140 hectares (including surrounding hills)

The Old Town of Lijiang as inscribed on the UNESCO World World Heritage List in 1997 actually comprises of three adjacent but not contiguous townships. Dayan Jen, the focus of the present paper, is the largest and most populated among the three; it is also the seat of the Lijiang Naxi Autonomous County. The other two townships forming the trio are Baisha and Shuhe,

both have remained rural.

Lijiang, situated in a basin that lies 2,400 meters above sea level, lies to the southeastern part of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, popularly known as the “roof of the world”. It formally came under Chinese rule during the Tang Dynasty in 1235. Eventually Lijiang prospered economically and politically as the main exchange center for caravans traveling along the Ancient Trade Route of Tea and Horses (Cha-Ma-Goo-Dau) which linked China with the Near East by way of India. In the process, it also became a stronghold of the Naxi people, one of the eleven minority tribes residing in the region. Known for their Dongba culture and an ancient music tradition dating back to the Tang Dynasty, the Naxi built a multi-ethnic settlement.

Lijiang's strategic importance began to wane as the ancient inland trade route was replaced by railroad and other modern alternatives. Nevertheless, it continues to be the national home base for the Naxi and a regional center politically and commercially. As early as 1951, the local government formally issued a policy that focused on “preserving the Ancient Town and Cultivating the New City”. In 1983, the Ancient Town of Lijiang received national designation as a Historic and Cultural City. In 1994, the authorities began to prepare for a nomination to UNESCO's World Heritage List by launching a major infrastructure improvement program. However, it was the disastrous earthquake in 1996 that galvanized national as well as world attention on the conservation *and* rebuilding of this unique historic enclave – including the creation of a new commercial sector in mocked traditional Lijiang style – an indigenous adaptation of traditional Chinese courtyard houses.

Since the successful inscription on the World Heritage List, the Old Town has been booming with the explosive growth in tourism. However, most of the new revenues have been generated by businesses in an “old town” that never existed before the earthquake. Meanwhile, the community is going through a forced transfusion, with the original Naxi residents losing out to new comers, and life becoming stage sets. To help relieve the pressure from the historic quarters, the government announced an ambitious plan to build a new 5000-acre commercial/residential district, Siang-He-Li-Cheng (Town of Peace and Beauty) to its south in April of 2003.

2. AUTHENTICITY AND /OR INTEGRITY

Authenticity and *integrity* are unquestionably two of the most definitive criteria applied to the assessment of historic resources as well as related treatments in modern times. Notably, the current Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention has established *authenticity* as a condition for the definition of cultural heritage properties, and *integrity* for that of natural heritage properties (UNESCO 1997). Whereas the authenticity of cultural properties is tested by their design, material, workmanship or setting, the integrity of four distinct categories of natural properties is to be examined by four correspondent sets of criteria, all emphasizing on completeness, or wholeness. Essentially, this means the properties have to be sufficient in coverage and in size to include key interrelated, interdependent or diverse elements that form a natural relationship, a biological or geological process, or an ecosystem.

Nevertheless, a closer examination of international charters and other documents related to the conservation of historic heritage reveals that *authenticity* and *integrity* are in fact

interchangeable or differentiated with a degree of ambiguity increasingly. Meanwhile, the basic reference to related geographic confines has also expanded from *a historical site* to *a place of cultural heritage*.

It is proposed here that an understanding of the correlation between the two parallel threads of changes will reveal the role yet to be played by the host community and the potential contribution by multimedia technology in preserving historic urban habitats as living places through the dynamics of changes.

2.1 A Selective Review: From Athens Charter to Nara Document

In accordance with the Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments adopted at the First International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments in 1931 (The Athens Charter), *historical sites* are to receive strict custodial protection while *areas surrounding historic sites* should also be protected. In the Athens Charter, the concept of integrity, both historical and aesthetic, makes its first appearance without the use of the specific term. As one of the two general principles, the Charter recommends that, in the case of restoration, “the historic and artistic work of the past should be respected, *without excluding the style of any given period.*” In other words, *historic integrity* is implied whereby the current form of a heritage resource should bear the imprint of growth and changes over time.

Similarly, a demand for *aesthetic integrity* is also implied. With regard to the aesthetic enhancement, the Athens Charter recommends that new constructions should respect “the character and external aspect of the cities.” Special consideration is placed on *the area surrounding ancient monuments* where particular groupings and picturesque perspective treatment need be preserved. To preserve the *ancient character* of artistic and historic monuments, it is further recommended that care be extended to vegetation and the exclusion of any impairing constructions and elements – visual or audio alike.

However, the term *integrity* did not make its official debut until 1964, with the charter produced at the Second International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments held in Venice (The Venice Charter). Most significantly, the Venice Charter establishes that the underlying intention in conserving and restoring monument is to safeguard them as *historical evidence as much as works of art*. Accordingly, *the integrity of the physical setting* in terms of scale, the relations of massing, color, layout and assorted appendages is stressed with regard to conservation. In relation to restoration, it is recommended that instead of aiming at a unity of style, *valid contributions of all periods* should be respected. Furthermore, additions will be allowed only when they compliment a monument’s “traditional setting, the balance of its composition and its relation with its surroundings.” The foregoing principles are to be applied to the conservation and preservation of *historic sites -- defined as the sites of monuments*.

Along with *integrity*, the term *authenticity* also enters into officialdom with the Venice Charter. In the preamble of the landmark charter, the current generation is called upon to deliver the ancient monuments “*in the full richness of their authenticity*” to posterity. Specifically, the charter asserts that with regard to restoration, “It must *stop at the point where conjecture begins*, and, moreover, *any extra work which is indispensable must be distinct from the architectural*

composition and must bear a contemporary stamp.” For nearly three decades that followed, authenticity defined as such became the supreme doctrine for historic restoration.

The focus on *historic areas and their surroundings* is continued in the Recommendation concerning Safeguarding and Contemporary Role of Historic Areas presented at the General Conference of the UNESCO in Nairobi, 1976 (The Nairobi Recommendation). Among the categories of areas recognized are urban quarters as well as historic towns. These historic and architectural areas are recognized for their archaeological, architectural, prehistoric, historic, aesthetic or *socio-cultural values*. Accordingly, aside from the architectural framework acknowledged in the preceding charters, the Nairobi Recommendation also acknowledges *a related social and economic context* for historic conservation. In defining *the parts that compose the whole*, the guideline stresses that “*human activities as much as the buildings, the spatial organization and the surroundings*” should be included.

Most significantly, the importance of diversity is highlighted. Historic areas are viewed as “part of the daily environment” and that “*they provide the variety in life’s background needed to match the diversity of society*, and that by so doing they gain in value and acquire an additional human dimension.”

In 1979, the concept of *places of cultural significance*, or *historic places with cultural value*, was introduced with the first version of Burra Charter adopted by Australia ICOMOS (The Burra Charter). The charter was later revised in 1981, 1988 and, most recently, 1999. The charter also asserts that cultural significance, i.e., aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations, is *embodied in the place itself and its fabric, setting, use, associations, meanings, records, related places and related objects*.

By definition, *place* refers to site, area, land, landscape, building or other work, group of buildings or other works, and may include components, contents, spaces and views. Specifically, *elements of place* may include memorials, trees, gardens, parks, places of historical events, urban areas, towns, industrial places, archaeological sites and spiritual and religious places. While *setting* means the area around a *place*, which may include the visual catchment, the *fabric of a place* covers all the physical material of the *place*, including components, fixtures, contents, and objects. Also included are building interiors, sub-surface remains, and excavated material.

Subsequently, in the ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Historic Towns and Urban Areas adopted in Washington, D. C. (The Washington Charter), the conservation of *historic towns and urban areas* assumes the central role. The new charter brings into focus *the values of traditional urban cultures* embodied in these areas that are being endangered by the dramatic advancement of urbanization at the heels of industrialization. Specific references are made to the Nairobi Recommendation, emphasizing that the conservation of historic towns and urban areas should also ensure “*their development and harmonious adaptation to contemporary life.*” The close interconnection between historic conservation and every level of urban planning is further reaffirmed and elaborated, and a multidisciplinary planning approach accentuated.

In 1992, the Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Heritage Value adopted by ICOMOS New Zealand (New Zealand Charter) in which distinctions are made with regard to those cultural heritage values relating to *the indigenous and the*

more recent peoples respectively. By definition, cultural heritage value means possessing historical, archaeological, architectural, technological, aesthetic, scientific, spiritual, social, traditional or other special cultural significance, associated with human activity.

By adopting a *broad definition*, **place** here refers to “*any land, including land covered by water, and the airspace forming the spatial context to such land ... and anything fixed to the land and any body of water ... that forms part of the historical and cultural heritage of New Zealand.*” In addition to archaeological site, garden, building, or structure affixed to the land, the categories of land *include any landscape, traditional site, or sacred place associated with indigenous culture*. The charter also establishes that, in principle, **the historical setting of a place should be conserved with the place itself**.

In 1994, an international conference focusing on authenticity was organized by Japan’s Agency for Cultural Affairs and the Nara Prefecture in cooperation with UNESCO, ICCROM and ICOMOS. Representatives of international organizations from 28 countries took part in a historic discourse and produced the landmark Nara Document on Authenticity (The Nara Document). While affirming the spirit of the Venice Charter, the Nara Document sets out to formally recognize and advocate **the necessity of maintaining diversity in culture and its heritage for the benefit of human development** in the artistic, historic, social, and scientific dimensions. Instead of relying on a set of fixed criteria, **the assessment of authenticity and value of cultural heritages can only be carried out within their respective cultural context**.

Furthermore, **the intangible expression of culture is to be respected as much as the tangible in the preservation of heritage**. Accordingly, the defining sources for authenticity have been further expanded by the Nara Document to include form and design, materials and substance, use and function, traditions and techniques, location and setting, and spirit and feeling, and other internal and external factors

2.2. Authenticity and Integrity

In the decades since the adoption of the Venice Charter, heritage properties have continued to multiply in terms of range and variation in physical character as well as related associations and meanings. Meanwhile, the diversity in cultural values represented by the participants in assessing and evaluating historic resources also continues to grow with the ascent of cultural pluralism and social inclusion. As a result, the prevalent definition and assessment of authenticity steeped in Western Euro-perspective has been increasingly called into questioned, and eventually led to the international conference in Nara.

At its official debut, the test of **authenticity** was primarily applied to physical recreation in the case of restoring a monument. The core concerns lied with the validity, the legitimacy, and the realness of the references on which architectural restoration is carried out, including designs, materials and construction. Whereas new materials and technology may be permitted, a genuine distinction between the new and the old is required in the same spirit of upholding authenticity. Similarly, the test of **integrity**, while emphasizing completeness, or wholeness, along with soundness in moral and artistic conviction, also started with aesthetic and the historical concerns related to the physical aspects of monuments and their surrounding areas.

Nearly half a century later, the test of authenticity and that of integrity when applied to **places of cultural heritage** have become, by necessity, multi-dimensional, since a place is defined as much by its man-made and/or natural parameters and forms as its social and cultural constructs that are not necessarily expressed in physical and tangible terms. Where historic places are concerned, the expanded echelon of defining constructs is also interrelated parts that form a whole. The quest for authenticity thus in fact becomes interconnected with that for integrity. The more dynamic, the more fluid, and the more extensive a place is, as in the case of an urban neighborhood, the more difficult to sever the two.

In fact, the term “integrity” is generally used in place of “authenticity” in the United States (Crocker, 1996). Defined as “the ability of a property to convey its significance”, it is comprised of seven qualities, including design, materials, workmanship, setting, location, feeling and association. (U. S. Department of Interior, 1997). It is worth noting that, but for the inclusion of feeling and association, the U. S. version of “integrity” in connection with historic properties is, in fact, identical with the definition of “authenticity” provided by the aforementioned UNESCO Operating Guidelines concerning cultural heritage properties.

3. THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY AND THE USE OF MULTITECHNOLOTY

3.1 The Role of the Community

The Athens Charter, recognizing the right of the community in regard to **private ownership**, recommends that the related administrative and legislative measures “should be in keeping with local circumstances and with **the trend of public opinion**, so that the least possible opposition may be encountered.” In the Venice Charter, it is further noted that in the case of restoration, “the evaluation of the importance of the elements involved and the decision as to what may be destroyed **cannot rest solely on the individual in charge of the work.**”

The Nairobi Recommendation brings to the forefront the necessity of integrating historic areas into the life of contemporary society through planning and land development. In so doing, it confronts the operating context for the practice of conservation and preservation, one that is marked by expansion, modernization, and demolition. As recommended, the **reciprocal links between protected areas and surrounding zones, ways of life and social relationships** should be covered, whenever possible. Most significantly, it is recommended that, **“This programming operation should be undertaken with the closest possible participation of the communities and groups of people concerned.”**

A similar stance is echoed in both the Burra Charter and the Cracow Charter on Restoration adopted in 2000. The former emphasizes the need to involve people in the decision-making process, particularly those that have strong associations with a place, regardless of their social standing or ethnicity. The latter points out that, “cultural heritage should be an integral part of the planning and management processes of a community, as it can contribute to the sustainable, qualitative, economic and social developments of that society.”

Obviously, the question regarding the authenticity of a restored building or a re-enacted ceremonial procession cannot be easily

transposed to a historic urban neighborhood that continues to evolve. Whereas the concern for material authenticity is valid “for cultural properties which are more static with persistent materials, they would be *insufficient for heritage whose significance derives from dynamic processes and associated cultural values as well as physical features*. (Stovel,1994; Larsen, 1995). According to the Nairobi Recommendation, revitalization should accompany protection and restoration by allowing new functions that could answer the social, cultural and economic needs of the inhabitants over the long run.

While the needs of community life, its evolution and technical development warrants recognition and support (UNESCO, 1962), the *continuing history* of the place could also lead to *changes* in the associated cultural significance (Burra, 1999). As a result, the question regarding authenticity, as well as the very significance of the heritage resource at issue has to be repeated on a continuing basis, related decisions will have to be made and remade in an on-going process over the long run. Ultimately, only those aspects and elements that can withstand the test of time, and their assessors, will continue to bear witness to and further enrich human development.

3.2 The Use of Multimedia Technology

There is no question that the host community of a heritage place must join other stakeholders with potentially contesting interests in making the evaluation, the question is rather how well prepared all the participants are. In so far as heritage conservation is concerned, many of the defining factors related to historic places are subjective in nature, such as feeling, spirit, and association. The more *diverse* the *contending stakeholders*, or the stronger the *contesting interests*, the more challenging it will be to address the issues at hand collectively within an open and inclusive framework.

It should come as no surprise that, in each of the three neighborhoods introduced above, the community voice is by no means in unison. Adding to this are the choruses formed by outsiders with their own sets of agenda. A fine distinction has also been made between the cultural community that generates a heritage and the one that assumes the responsibility of its care in the Nara Document. “Balancing their own requirements with those of other cultural communities is, for each community, highly desirable, provided achieving this balance does not undermine their fundamental cultural values.”

Here one is reminded that, in a world where more and more Jihads confront an expanding McWorld, self-determination if left unchecked will result in a tribalism in which only the local power elite gets a fair deal. As counter measures, true citizenship and civic spaces that nourish it have been suggested (Barber, 1995). Where conservation of a living urban heritage is concerned, one would venture that part of the antidote is to be found in an educational and informational infrastructure that form the base for participation. In this respect, the versatility and the flexibility of the multimedia technology have yet to exert its full potentials.

As pointed out in the Cracow Charter, “The plurality of heritage values and diversity of interests necessitates *a communication structure* that allows, in addition to specialists and administrators, an *effective participation* of inhabitants in the process.” To that, an open platform enabling interdisciplinary *learning* and public *education* on a continuing basis should be added. In other words, given the complexities involved, an understanding of the issues as well as access to information is

the prerequisite to meaningful discourse among the various stakeholders and contenders. And it is here multimedia technology in consort with the digital network have a more than significant role to play. This is particularly true considering the fact that the conservation of cultural heritages world-wide is no longer parochial affairs.

For many in Da-Dau-Cheng, the continuing prosperity of the herb shop that has been run by the family for three generations lies closer to heart than a building with a exquisite Pseudo Baroque façade down the street. To long-time Naxi residents of Lijiang, the occasional reenactment of street washing procedure for the entertainment of distinguished guests only reminds them of the lively marketplace now replaced by a tourist bazaar on the stone-paved central square. In Boston’s Chinatown, to most residents and merchants alike, neighborhood conservation means foremost a primo struggle for land and control. In each of these three cases, a communication system as well as an information/education platform that takes full advantage of the versatile multimedia technology and the borderless electronic network has yet to be constructed.

A brief survey of the web sites related to the three historic places reveals that, with only few exceptions, the contents are primarily tourists oriented, and promotional in nature. Typical of these is “The Ancient Town of Lijiang, a Virtual Tour”. Among other sites, some provide a rather limited amount of information on planning and development issues, some function as a digital databank of historic images. The former category includes “The Revitalization of the Da-Dau-Cheng District”, hosted by the City of Taipei and “Window of Lijiang” by the county government. “Digital Photo Album of Da-Dau-Cheng”, a site developed by the Academia Sinica in Taipei is an example of the latter.

Among other sites surveyed here is “The Boston Chinatown Heritage Trail Demonstration Project” developed by the Chinese Historical Society of New England. The project covers the history of Chinese immigration in the New England area as well as the transformation of Boston’s Chinatown. In addition to help preserve and record historical materials and artifacts for the Society, the fully developed interactive archive is intended to provide an informational as well as educational reference base for the general public, including but not limited to the Chinatown community. To date, only phase one of the project has been completed. It focused on structuring an interactive databank of still images and texts along three theme lines, including (1) the neighborhood trail emphasizing the physical transformation; (2) the community trail emphasizing the cultural and social aspects; and (3) the historical timeline for Chinese immigration in New England. A full multimedia presentation planned for the second phase is yet to be completed.

Except for the “Boston Chinatown Heritage Trail” and the “Digital Photo Album of Da-Dau-Cheng”, all are basically no more than the e-versions of traditional texts and images in static form. Little use has been made of the unique capabilities presented by the multimedia technology and the internet, including, but not limited to, visualization, animation and multi-channel communication. The opportunities for stimulating awareness, making complex issues digestible and enabling self-directed interactive learning and exchange for the professional as well as general public, including school children, are still largely un-touched.

4. CONCLUSIONS

On the role of education, the Athens Charter recognizes that “the best guarantee in the matter of the preservation of monuments and works of art derives from the respect and attachment of the peoples themselves.” To avoid the proliferation of Xintiandi, Faneuil Hall, and Yebisu Garden Place around the world, and the growing homogeneity of the place experiences they offer, preserving *the integrity of the host community*, one that is an active facilitator and supporter of conservation, will be critical. In this respect, multimedia technology along with the digital network could and should play a vital role by supporting and advancing effective communication, learning and education for all concerned.

The legacies of historic places cannot be assured until a well-prepared host communities themselves can take part in deciding what is significant about the place, how significant it is, and why it is significant. Only then can *the historic essence of an authentic place* be preserved through the changes of time.

What is *authentic about the past* depends as much on *who* is making the evaluation as on *how* the evaluation is made. Simply put, the evaluator is as critical as the evaluative criteria and process, if not more. The same also holds true when making a decision on *what continues to be significant as the future unfolds* for a living place – especially if we are to avoid the growing ranks of look-alike historic places around the globe. Despite outward differences, be it tangible or intangible, the inherent substance that breathes life into culture, that makes each place genuinely unique, i.e., authentic, can not be sustained without an informed and educated host community that cares.

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