

**Role and Place of UNESCO and WHC (Culture, Cultural Heritage, Physical, non-material)
Past Experiences and Shortcomings. The Future. Where does UNESCO stand? Issues of concern.
(Also for other Governmental Organizations, such as ICCROM and NGOs such as Icomos)**

- It is a universally known fact that UNESCO has been the main factor/facilitator and, by excellence, the UN Agency in collaborating with Member States in matters of Cultural Heritage, and to that matter, culture as such.
 - UNESCO has a certain merited credibility for its role in major works related to the preservation of cultural heritage. That credibility stems from the 1960's and 1970's, when international campaigns launched by UNESCO for the protection and enhancement of major cultural sites in Indonesia, Egypt, Italy, Pakistan caught a great momentum. Works done in Borobudur, Abu Simbel, and Venice have caught the eye of professionals and public opinion alike on this positive intervention with know-how and funds for such heritage projects, which even then needed hi-tech involvement.
 - UNESCO continued with launching campaigns for heritage protection of universally recognized cultural heritage sites in the 1980's and 1990's. Things however, had changed. The number of campaigns was inflated. Too many campaigns, too few projects in the making, and, above all, **no funds forthcoming** for such campaigns in different parts of the world. The nature of the campaigns was also in terms of universal value-less appealing to the world audience. There was a certain inflation in increasing the number of campaigns which in most cases led to no international funding, but were worthless in some cases immobilizing international funds from other sources e.g. La Plaza Vieja, Habana (Cuba) – Fez (Morocco) etc, etc. Others simply disappeared.
 - It is not our intention to make an in-depth analysis or evaluation as to what happened to those campaigns and how in fact most of them faded away, while UNESCO still lives with the credibility it acquired from down-to-earth, practical, professional and well-funded major campaigns and projects of the 1970's is a fact.
 - Given the professional know-how and experience of UNESCO, it was obvious that it had to respond to requests, emanating from member states for the preservation of physical heritage, both **movable** and **immovable**, and now over the last years **non-physical Heritage**. This entailed consultant/expert services to the countries, funding and executing jointly with UN Agencies, the Banks, ICCROM and others in organizing national and **regional training courses**, and providing minor equipment for inventory works and other related issues to physical heritage protection and recently non-physical.
 - Over the last 25 years or so most of the funds for medium-scale and large-scale projects used by UNESCO, were provided **by extra-budgetary funds**, the bulk being provided by UNDP, as were the rules of technical cooperation, namely UNDP-UNESCO-Government concerned, back in the last century!
 - Within this formula of UNDP funding, regular funds of UNESCO, though limited, and other modalities, like the “programme of participation”, **funds and trust**, etc., were used for project **design** and **implementation**. These have diminished considerably by the mid 2000's.
- In this respect, we could see projects on cultural heritage in many countries in the world, especially Latin America and the Caribbean and Arab countries, both national and regional (see S. Mutal's 25 Years of UNESCO/UNDP Cultural Heritage Activities in LAC, 2000). UNESCO was also involved in regional projects (Niamey) in Africa on museum

development in Jos (Nigeria) Bantu Civilizations (CICIBA) and national projects on historical monuments. It was involved in a good number of countries in the Middle East and Asia with project managers on the spot, all funded by UNDP.

- While the role of UNESCO was thus established, in '**substance, know-how and experience**', most of the jobs which had to be done in the field with technical assistance funds through UNDP were in a way successfully implemented, establishing the prerequisites for possible **investment** national and/ or international projects to follow suit.
- UNESCO's Conventions and Charters, alongside those of ICOMOS and some regional inter-governmental or non-governmental entities were also bearing fruit, as guidelines and principles of conservation were put in place alongside **legislation**, and other tools.
- Following the 1972 UNESCO Conference in Nairobi and the establishment of an international Convention for **World Cultural and Natural Heritage**, UNESCO was **strengthened** and **started** to cooperate with the State Parties of the Convention in matters of cultural heritage, the built heritage of **monuments and sites**, and **actual Historic Centers/Towns/Cities**, and increasingly so in **natural landscapes**.
- The World Heritage Fund was established, and here again there were possibilities to offer grants to state parties for **project preparation** under "Preparatory Assistance", actual "Technical Assistance", "Training facilities" and Emergency assistance for disaster-prone areas, may it be in Disaster Preparedness or actual **mitigation** work, and in some cases, preparation of projects emanating from **destructive elements** of nature affecting World Heritage Sites.
- The World Heritage Centre established some 30 years ago oversaw the implementation of the International Convention, collaborated in **monitoring** and **evaluation** services and disbursed funds from its

World Heritage Funds upon requests of State Parties for specific objectives.

- The inscription of sites to the World Heritage List became a normal consequence of the presentation by member states of indicative lists of their national heritage and requests for inscription.
- We are now reaching in 2008 nearly the figure of 800 or more listed sites in the world. 2/3 are cultural sites (with a 10% of mixed cultural-natural sites), and as at 2008, 226 Historic Cities are on the List, from almost 70 countries in the world.
- It is obvious that the funds of WHC, if hypothetically were to be distributed to all inscribed sites, the figures would be outrageously minimal. 4000 US\$ per site per year! Luckily, this is not the situation, as not all state parties request assistance, and therefore there is a certain harmonious balance in the distribution of available funds though still much more in kind than in cash.
- Most of the assistance provided by UNESCO's funds as such and WHC funds have been for seminars, workshops, training activities and specific inputs from consultants on technical issues of conservation.
- Campaigns were supposed to raise funds. They were supposed to raise funds in the case of Historic Cities for a variety of activities which would be embodied in what one would call 'integral rehabilitation and conservation'. Given the incapacitated conditions of the campaigns, governments at times called upon UNDP to collaborate financially with UNESCO to make in-depth studies on heritage and other matters in their countries/cities/sites leading to project files which could in turn be brought to the attention of major donor groups, bilateral foundations, etc., and international loan mechanisms, such as the World Bank and regional Banks.

- Integral rehabilitation of Historic Cities and to that matter any heritage site, call for an interdisciplinary approach, whereby **heritage** and its **conservation** are **only one** of the components. **Only one**.
- The **days of the 1970's**, when heritage was directly related to tourism and enhancement meant in a way beautifying aesthetic and historic values for viewers and tourists, **are gone** and should be gone in the future. We are now talking about heritage in context of development and the welfare of the inhabitants. We hope so. Tourism is however returning since 2000. At this point of time (2008) this should be looked up with precaution.
- Is tourism really gone as an excuse to intervene in heritage for investors, Banks, and even UNESCO? Is tourism the main reason for conservation? I have my doubts. Conservation of built heritage has two sides to its coin. The Human and Cultural/ Economic, Human Development at the Environmental should be addressed.
- In an integrated rehabilitation project of a Historic City, does UNESCO, or to that matter, WHC, have the holistic approach and project **execution mechanisms** in place? Our answer would have to be a reserved "no". Some "considerations" and "reflections", "experiences" and "lessons learnt" are in place.

We have been waiting for Banks to be involved and to give loans for investment projects in Historic Cities as a follow-up of pre-investment activities.

We were preaching in the desert in the 1970's and 1980's and a good part of the 1990's. And now that the prayers are heard, what do we do in member states and how do we seek the effective role of IGO's, UNESCO, ICCROM along NGO's, ICOMOS, IUCN etc.?

What is the role of UNESCO and/or WHC in the preparation of these projects, and their actual execution? We are referring to strictly **cultural heritage** projects and not only city rehabilitation. We are

referring to components of urban infrastructure projects, such as the one in Bali, Indonesia and the urban environment project in Sichuan, China. There are at least 50 projects in various parts of the world with international banks.

- A matter of great concern is whether UNESCO and ICCROM are called upon by Governments and the WB to take their role as they did with UNDP in the past, or a variation thereof.

This may well bring us to the point of assuming that the EU, with grant projects, the Council of Europe, the WB with grant and loan projects, the IDB with grant and loan projects, may be self-sufficient to deal with heritage matters, both physical and non-material. IS THAT SO? The issue would need to be reviewed and assessed for the future – as we move to the end of this decade (2010).