HISTORIC URBAN LANDSCAPE: INTERPRETATION AND PRESENTATION OF THE IMAGE OF THE CITY

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Abstract

The new developments in historic urban areas in a country frequently make the cities look similar instead of keeping the unique image of the place. Historical image of the city is usually re-created and used to attract tourists from different cultural backgrounds. In some historic urban areas, reproduction works are introduced to re-establish the historical images which have been wiped out due to the previous developments. This paper aims to construct the basic guideline for interpretation and presentation of historic urban areas based on the notion of historic urban landscape and the ICOMOS Ename Charter for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites. Three major issues are identified, which are; 1) the deficiency interpretation and presentation of the intangible value, 2) excessive focus on tourism business purpose, and 3) reproduction work and authenticity in historic urban landscape. This paper proposes two key points, based on the concept of historic urban landscape, which are; 1) interpretation and presentation of historic urban areas should focus on the image of the city in both tangible and intangible aspects and 2) the tangible and intangible elements of image of the city for interpretation and presentation.

Key words: historic urban landscape, image of the city, interpretation, presentation

Introduction

In regard to the present-day interpretation and presentation of historic urban areas, at least two relevant concepts could be articulated. One is the concept regarding the conservation of historic urban areas. This concept was recently shifted from the consideration of historic center as 'group of buildings' or 'site' to a type of 'cultural landscape'. Another is the guidelines for interpretation and presentation of cultural heritage site.

The most important international guideline for interpretation and presentation is the ICOMOS Ename Charter for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites. It has been initially developed by the Ename Center in 2002 and subsequently supported by ICOMOS in 2003. 'The interest aroused in the subject of interpretation and presentation and need for more formalized ICOMOS institutional structure for discussion and further research on the general subject of interpretation and presentation, led to the formation of an International Scientific Committee on Interpretation and Presentation (ICIP), which was officially approved by the ICOMOS Executive Committee during the 15th General Assembly in Xian, China in October 2005.'[1]

The latest version is the 7th draft made in the second annual meeting of ICIP in March 2007 and officially approved by the Committee in June 2007. In July 2007, 'The final proposed, dated 10 April 2007 draft, was officially submitted to the ICOMOS Executive Committee for consideration and decision regarding its presentation for ratification at the 16th ICOMOS

General Assembly in Quebec.'[2] According to the ICOMOS Ename Charter, 'the interpretation and presentation of the cultural heritage are part of the overall process of cultural heritage conservation and management.'[3] As for historic urban area, the interpretation and presentation should therefore pursue the concept regarding conservation of historic urban area which currently is the notion of historic urban landscape (HUL).

The aim of this paper is to propose the fundamental guideline on the interpretation and presentation of the historic urban areas based on the notion of HUL which image of the city is the core concern. By doing so, this paper visits two major concepts regarding the interpretation and presentation of the historic urban areas, which are; 1) the notion of HUL which has been discussed mainly by ICOMOS and 2) the ICOMOS Ename Charter for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites.

The effort in safeguarding the historic urban landscape and current issues

The notion of HUL started from the request of World Heritage Committee in its 27th session, Paris, in 2003 which 'called for the organization of a symposium to discuss how to properly regulate the needs for modernization of historic urban environments, while at the same time preserving the values embedded in inherited townscapes, in particular of cities inscribed on the World Heritage List.'[4]

Themba Wakashe, Chairman of the World Heritage Committee and Francesco Bandarin, Director of the World Heritage Centre, explained that 'UNESCO welcomes and promotes contemporary cultural expressions, including modern architecture, as they constitute a continuation of culture. However, there are obviously limits to what to plan, design, and build when working in valuable historic environments, which were voluntarily nominated by the countries concerned to be placed on the World Heritage List.'[5] To respond the request of the World Heritage Committee, the 'International Conference World Heritage and Contemporary Architecture-Managing the Historic Urban Landscape' was held in Vienna, Austria on 12-14 May 2005. The outcome of this conference is the 'Vienna Memorandum on World Heritage and Contemporary Architecture-Managing the Historic Urban Landscape'.

The core issue of historic urban areas discussed in the conference in Vienna was how to deal with the impact on the value of historic urban areas from new developments, such as high-rise structures, infrastructure, etc. Some instances were presented in the conference including the new development in Toledo and Barcelona, urban project in Lyon, Frankfurt's skyline of high rise building, and modern design in Vienna. 'From London's skyline to Beijing's transformation, public discussion is taking place about new urban and architectural developments and the extent to which change is possible in order for cities to maintain their historic character and identity.'[6]

In addition to the issue of new development in the historic urban areas, inadequate awareness on the intangible values is another concern discussed in recent years. Bandarin pointed out 'the need to distance ourselves from the notion that "the city is a monument; unfortunately it is inhabited" (…) Stressing that cities are first and foremost places where people live, he encompassed that to date we have not considered intangible values enough.'[7]

As for the interpretation and presentation of the HUL, there would be at least three major issues. The first is the deficiency interpretation and presentation of the intangible value. The present-day interpretation and presentation tend to emphasize the tangible aspect, such as monuments, archaeological site, etc. whilst intangible value, such as local food, lifestyle, language, belief, etc. have a little presentation. In the globalization era, intangible elements of

the historic urban areas are very fragile and easy to be changed. As a part of culture, intangible elements can naturally develop, blend with other cultures, or change its form, but it should not be intentionally replaced by interpretation and presentation of other cultures. If the interpretation and presentation of the historic urban areas do not contribute to the public awareness, intangible value of the historic areas would be in danger.

The second issue is the purpose of interpretation and presentation of HUL tends to focus on tourism business purpose rather than to enhance the understanding of the cultural heritage. The increase of tourism activities can be seen in every historic urban area, in particular the cities inscribed as World Heritage site. To facilitate the tourists and visitors, huge signage, information panels, and other kind of media are installed, in many cases, with little or without public consultation or public dialogue. This kind of excessive presentation would eventually degrade the value of the place by disorganized and misleading information.

The last issue is the reproduction work to attract attention from visitors. Reproduction work can be used to re-create the identity of the place but, in some cases, local identity was substituted by new design to attract more tourists. This kind of development would go against the principle of authenticity and the reproduction work would actually take away the identity of the place. However, there are some exceptional cases which reproduction work is welcome, for example, reconstruction of the historic buildings in Tokyo which original buildings have collapsed due to the war or natural disasters. In this case, the reproduction could somehow bring back the identity of the place and dignity of citizens. Another case should be mentioned here is the successful reconstruction of 'Cheonggyecheon', a historic stream in downtown Seoul, Republic of Korea.[8] This restored stream not only brought back the historic scenery of Seoul but also a number of stories related to the development of the city and citizens.

Notion of HUL and the ICOMOS Ename Charter
According to the ICOMOS Ename Charter, interpretation refers to 'the full range of potential activities intended to heighten public awareness and enhance understanding of cultural heritage site'[9]. 'Presentation is more specifically denotes the carefully planned communication of interpretive content through the arrangement of interpretive information, physical access, and interpretive infrastructure at a cultural heritage site.'[10]

The notion of HUL gives clear implication that 'Cities must preserve their spirit and character, as these are ultimately an expression of their collective memory as well as of cultural and social, material and immaterial values.'[11] Bearing this in mind, the interpretation and presentation based on the notion of the HUL strongly welcome the principle of the ICOMOS Ename Charter in particular Principle 1, 2, 3, and 4.

> 'Principle 1: Access and Understanding; Interpretation and presentation programmes should facilitate physical and intellectual access by the public to cultural heritage sites. 1.2 Interpretation and presentation should encourage individuals and communities to reflect on their own perceptions of a site and assist them in establishing a meaningful connection to it.' The aim should be to stimulate further interest, learning, experience, and exploration.'[12]

In this regard, HUL deals with the perception of the site implied as the image of the city in both tangible and intangible aspects

> 'Principle 2: Information sources; Interpretation and presentation should be based on evidence gathered through accepted scientific and scholarly methods as well as from living cultural traditions.

2.1 Interpretation should show the range of <u>oral and written information, material remains, traditions, and meanings attributed to a site</u>. The sources of this information should be documented, archived, and made accessible to the public.

2.2 Interpretation should be based on a well researched, multidisciplinary study of the site and its surroundings. It should also acknowledge that meaningful interpretation necessarily includes <u>reflection on alternative historical hypotheses, local traditions, and stories.</u>

2.3 At cultural heritage sites where <u>traditional storytelling or memories of historical participants</u> provide an important source of information about the significance of the site, interpretive programmes should incorporate these <u>oral testimonies-either indirectly</u>, through the facilities of the interpretive infrastructure, or directly, through the active participation of members of associated communities as on-site interpreters.'[13]

According to the notion of HUL, elements such as, traditions, stories, memories, oral-testimonies, etc. are integral part of the intangible value of the historic urban areas.

'Principle 3: Context and Setting; The Interpretation and Presentation of cultural heritage sites should relate to their wider social, cultural, historical, and natural contexts and settings.

3.1 Interpretation should explore <u>the significance of a site in its multi-faceted historical, political, spiritual, and artistic contexts</u>. It should consider all aspects of the site's cultural, social, and environmental significance and values.

3.4 The <u>surrounding landscape, natural environment, and geographical setting</u> are integral parts of a site's historical and cultural significance, and, as such, should be considered in its interpretation.

3.5 <u>Intangible elements</u> of a site's heritage such as cultural and spiritual traditions, stories, music, dance, theater, literature, visual arts, local customs and culinary heritage should be considered in its interpretation.'[14]

The notion of HUL accommodates various aspects of the urban context which is more comprehensive than the concept of monument or sites. Intangible elements of the city, such as spiritual tradition as well as performance, music, etc., are also an essential part of the cultural significance of the historic urban areas.

'Principle 4: Authenticity; The Interpretation and presentation of cultural heritage sites must respect the basic tenets of authenticity in the spirit of the Nara Document (1994).

4.1 Authenticity is a concern relevant to human communities as well as material remains. The design of a heritage interpretation programme should <u>respect the traditional social functions of the site and the cultural practices and dignity of local residents and associated communities</u>.

4.3 All visible interpretive infrastructures (such as kiosks, walking paths, and information panels) must <u>be sensitive to the character, setting and the cultural and natural significance of the site</u>, while remaining easily identifiable.

4.4 On-site concerts, dramatic performances, and other interpretive programmes must <u>be carefully planned to protect the significance and physical surroundings of the site and minimise disturbance to the local residents</u>.'[15]

Authenticity of the historic urban areas is not only demonstrated by monuments or tangible aspect but also the intangible aspect, such as way of living, function of the city, etc. All kinds of presentation media must concern the historical context and the impact on the image of the city.

In summary, the review of the two notions on HUL and the ICOMOS Ename Charter illustrate the relevance to the interpretation and presentation of the historic urban areas. To

safeguard the image of the historic urban areas regarding the concept of HUL and to pursue the spirit of the ICOMOS Ename Charter which is to heighten public awareness and enhance understanding of cultural heritage site, the clear understanding on the elements for interpretation and presentation is essential.

Elements for interpretation and presentation of the historic urban landscape

Based on the concept of HUL, both tangible and intangible aspects of the image of the city should be interpreted and presented. The image of the city, defined by tangible and intangible aspects, proposed in this paper is derived from the review of current discussions towards the establishment of the notion of HUL[16] as well as the practice of present-day interpretation and presentation of the historic urban areas. These proposed elements could be useful as a basis for interpretation and presentation of the HUL.

Tangible elements for interpretation and presentation of the historic urban landscape

1) Architecture

Architecture expresses the society where it belongs to and it is the result of social development in structural form. It tells stories of citizens and change of culture in the city. Some architecture has high value due to its rarity and become the landmark of the city. The interpretation and presentation of architecture has been done for years based on the concept of monument, however, as a part of the whole historic urban landscape, the interpretation should provide the information on the relationship with other parts of the city as well.

2) Skyline

Skyline is an element derived from the viewpoint of cultural landscape. It is 'the line or shape that is formed where the sky meets buildings or the land.'[17] It is the uniqueness of architectural pattern of the city which can be perceived from remote distance. Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation, is one of good examples where a conference entitled *Regional Conference of Countries of Central and Eastern Europe on Management and Preservation of Historic Centers of Cities inscribed on the World Heritage List* was held in 2007 to tackle the issue of safeguarding the skyline of the historic urban landscape. The result of the conference 'specifically recommended keeping the current differential height regulations for new constructions within and around the city's World Heritage limits in order to maintain St. Petersburg's unique characteristic of "horizontality", which is unprecedented in the world.'[18] Interpretation and presentation of the skyline of historic urban landscape could play an important role to heighten the public awareness.

3) Urban space/ circulation pattern

Urban space, such as plaza, boulevard, water front, etc., is where people gather and have activities. It is also where they have the memories of scenery and small elements of townscape as the background of their activities. This kind of memory subsequently becomes the image of the place. A good example could be the circulation network of water transport in Venice which even for other cities, they have been named after this unique city, such as Bangkok -the Venice of East. Interpretation and presentation of such urban space could emphasize the people's memories to reflect the spirit of the place.

4) View/ scenery

View or scenery of the HUL is important as the image or first impression which visitors have with the place. Scenery of the place depends on the geography of the city and also the urban design. In many historic centers, the axis and group of buildings were designed to represent the national identity, for example the axis to Arc de Triomphe, the center of Paris. Interpretation and presentation of view and scenery should give the information on the history

of the place and its importance and should help visitor to understand the geography and design of the place.

5) Small scale element/ designed ornament

Small scale elements or designed ornaments are small component of the historic urban landscape which represents the arts style of the city. Small scale elements, such as bridge, decoration, stucco, etc. make the city more attractive for citizen and visitor. A form of interpretation and presentation of small scale element would be utilized in decoration in new urban design, such as street furniture. In this regard, the artistic style must be clarified and well chosen.

6) Vegetation

Vegetation is another element which makes the historic urban landscape unique because some vegetation can grow only in certain areas. Local trees usually have meanings or stories related to the citizens. Interpretation and presentation would help visitor to understand not only the history of the place but also how local people interact with nature.

Intangible elements for interpretation and presentation of the historic urban landscape
1) City function

City function is an image on the role of the city, for instance, trading-town, administrative town, industrial town, castle town, etc. Interpretation and presentation of city function should tell the difference regarding the special function of the city. The significant stage of development or the golden era of the place should be presented.

2) Name of place/ language

In many cases, the name of the place has special meaning and interesting story behind. Many places have been named after the important person, trees, activities, goods, or events. Interpretation and presentation of the name of place helps visitor to understand the cultural significance of the place. As for language, it can be used as a medium to convey the culture to the visitors, such as how local people greet when they meet or how they express feeling. Interpretation and presentation could raise the value of the place by revealing this kind of meaningful story.

3) Social events/ traditions

Social events and traditions demonstrate how people interact to their natural setting and to each other. It is a very important element of the image of the place; unfortunately a number of social events and traditions are disappearing due to the social change. In addition to the continuity of social event and traditions, demonstration and educational programs for kids and local people would be encouraged.

4) Stories/ history

Historic urban areas have long history and stories regarding the place and people. It tells how the place has been developed and what people have gone through. Even minor stories should be recorded and interpreted.

5) Lifestyle

Lifestyle is not what citizens present to visitor but it is what they actually do in daily life, such as clothing, hairstyle, daily activities, etc. In many places, local people still maintain this kind of traditional lifestyle, such as Kimono dress in Japan. Presentation of fabricated lifestyle for tourism purpose must be avoided because it could create negative impact on the significance of the place.

6) Food
Food including local fruit, spice, special type of ingredient, is one of the intangible value and it is a part of the image of the place. Nowadays the food is also a kind of national identity just as people from different parts of the world could identify what Italian food, Japanese food, or Indian food is.

7) Local wisdom/ belief
Local wisdom and belief is the knowledge on how local people live with their natural setting or how they tackle problems regarding their settlements. It becomes a part of the image of the city due to its uniqueness, for example, the knowledge on irrigation system, construction, herbal medicine, etc.

Interpretation and presentation techniques
According to the ICOMOS Ename Charter, interpretation can include 'print and electronic publications, public lectures, on-site and directly related off-site installation, educational programmes, community activities, and ongoing research, training, and evaluation of the interpretation itself.'[19] Presentation 'can be conveyed through a variety of technical means, including, yet not require, such elements as information panels, museum-type displays, formalized walking tours, lectures and guided tours, and multimedia applications and websites.'[20]

In particular the interpretation and presentation of intangible elements of image of the city, in addition to the techniques suggested in the ICOMOS Ename Charter, a sort of performance, demonstration, or interactive activities could be constructive tools. Interpretation and presentation could contribute to the enhancement of public awareness. Therefore, the interpretation and presentation of the historic urban landscapes would aim for the understanding of local people on their cultural heritage. Moreover, the network of the historic urban landscapes should be established in order to share experiences and learn from each other.

Conclusion
The interpretation and presentation of historic urban landscape is essential as a part of overall process of heritage conservation and management. In addition to the ICOMOS Ename Charter for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites, the notion of historic urban landscape suggests that image of the city in both tangible and intangible aspects are the major concern. This paper has elaborated both notions and suggested that image of the city is the key for interpretation and presentation of historic urban landscape. This paper has also proposed the elements for interpretation and presentation of historic urban landscapes comprised of the tangible and intangible elements. The author hope that this proposed elements would contribute to the on-going international discussion on the notion of the historic urban landscape.

Acknowledgement

Notes

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[1] Ename Center, 2007, Chronology of the Charter, Document provided in http://www.enamecharter.org, accessed 8 September 2007, p.3

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[3] ICOMOS Ename Charter for the interpretation and presentation of cultural heritage sites, version 10 April 2007

[4] Oers, Ron van, 2006, Report HUL Planning Meeting 25 September 2006

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[6] Wakashe, Themba, 2006, Conference Report of the International Conference World Heritage and Contemporary Architecture-Managing the Historic Urban Landscape, Vienna, 12-14 May 2005, p.8

[7] UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2007, Summary Report of the Regional Conference of Countries of Central and Eastern Europe on Management and Preservation of Historic Centers of Cities inscribed on the World Heritage List, St. Petersburg, Russian Federation, 29 January-2 February 2007, p.3

[8] Seoul Metropolitan Government, http://english.seoul.go.kr/cheonggye/, accessed 2 September 2006.

[9] ICOMOS Ename Charter for the interpretation and presentation of cultural heritage sites, version 10 April 2007, Definitions, p.3

[10] Ibid.

[11] Laboranti, Virginia, 2005, Rapporteur of the Plenary 1 World Heritage and contemporary architecture, Managing the historic urban landscape, in Conference Report of the International Conference World Heritage and Contemporary Architecture-Managing the Historic Urban Landscape, Vienna, 12-14 May 2005, p. 18

[12] ICOMOS Ename Charter for the interpretation and presentation of cultural heritage sites, version 10 April 2007, Principles, p.6

[13] Ibid., p.7

[14] Ibid., p.8

[15] Ibid., p.9

[16] Discussion during 2006-present organized by ICOMOS International Scientific Committees: the Committee on Historic Towns and Villages (CIVVIH) and the ICOMOS-IFLA Committee on Cultural landscapes submitted to the World Heritage Committee

[17] Collins Cobuild English Dictionary

[18] UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2007, Summary Report of the Regional Conference of Countries of Central and Eastern Europe on Management and Preservation of Historic Centers of Cities inscribed on the World Heritage List, St. Petersburg, Russian Federation, 29 January-2 February 2007, p.6

[19] ICOMOS Ename Charter for the interpretation and presentation of cultural heritage sites, version 10 April 2007, Definitions, p.3

[20] Ibid.