Heritage Conservation Conference: Conserving Heritage and development – Partners or rivals?

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“Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment: Making the Most of the Methodology”

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Hong Kong Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Ordinance, Cap. 499

enacted in 1997

Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment (CHIA) as a tool for identifying, mapping and managing heritage in all its forms
CHIA is defined as “the process of identifying, predicting, evaluating and communicating the probable effects of a current or proposed development policy or action on the cultural life, institutions and resources of communities, then integrating the findings and conclusions into the planning and decision making process, with a view to mitigating

[International Network for Cultural Diversity, 2004]
Fundamental steps in the CHIA process

**SCREENING**
- To identify which projects require CHIA

**SCOPING**
- To define the CHIA TOR

**BASELINE STUDIES**
- To understand current status

**ASSESSMENT**
- To identify sources and nature of potential impacts

**MITIGATION & MONITORING**
- To minimize or remove negative impacts
Public Benefit

Predictive Methods

Spatial Data

Use of Matrices

Distributional Data

Understanding of Significance

Multiple Scenarios

Engineering works/Plans / Interventions

Public Benefit
Implementation of CHIA leading to:

- An expanding database
- Government commitment to heritage conservation
- Growing public awareness
- Investment in training of heritage professionals
A different situation in most of the Asian region
CHIA as a donor agency requirement

CHIA at request of World Heritage Center

CHIA of conservation projects

CHIA of use of heritage as venue

CHIA as NGO/private sector advocacy

CHIA to evaluate sustainability of tourism

CHIA of indigenous people’s intangible heritage
Enriched the practice but results in methodological chaos and mixed standards
International Principles and Frameworks

- IAIA Principles of EIA Best Practice
- International Network for Cultural Diversity, Framework for CHIA

Guidance from countries where CHIA is part of an EIA process

- English Heritage, Enabling Development and the Conservation of Heritage Assets
- Planarch Guiding Principals for Cultural Heritage in EIA

Guidance from International Donor Agencies / Banks

- World Bank Safeguard Policy, Physical Cultural resources
- IFC Performance Standard 8, Cultural Heritage
Guidance for specific types of heritage

• NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service, Guidelines for Aboriginal HIA

• ICOMOS Guidance on HIA for World Heritage Properties

Guidance for specific types of development

• Ireland National Roads Authority, Guidelines for the Assessment of Architectural Heritage Impacts of National Road Schemes

• World Commission on Dams, Dams and Cultural Heritage Management
Targeting site managers, consultant practitioners, government heritage authorities, funding banks and agencies

All state the importance of safeguarding heritage (tangible heritage)

All urge inclusion of CHIA in a formal EIA system

But

Few provide step-by-step detailed guidance on how to design and implement a CHIA
Critical Points of Divergence and Lack of Clarity

What Cultural Heritage is Assessed?

Intangible Heritage

not included in many CHIA systems
Addressing the “most significant impacts first”

Who can identify the most significant impacts before the impact assessment has been done?

“Critical Cultural Heritage”

Well protected, well known resources are the focus of attention at the expense of less well known and vulnerable heritage
“Potential” Heritage

Vast undocumented areas of archaeological and heritage potential

Frameworks fail to acknowledge the issue or to give advice on how to approach it using predictive modeling, sampling and investigative survey
Reliance on “Chance Finds Procedures” and emergency responses

A matter of particular urgency to countries in Asia where large tracts are unstudied and have undocumented potential and contain untapped resources on an unknown scale.
Who Does What in a CHIA?

Shortfall of formal training in the region
Many practitioners are self-taught
Result is a multiplicity of approaches and standards
In some places there is strict vetting and listing of practitioners who can carry out CHIA
in other cases no professional is involved
only consulted
There is a risk that poorly informed decisions at the early stages of the CHIA will negate later findings and compromise the effectiveness of the whole project
Sequencing of Steps in the CHIA Process

Confusion over which steps need to be carried out before or after others

Particularly a problem with archaeological sites

“Over-investigation” is destructive, not informative
The Role of Community “Consultation”

In some cases only passing reference to communities

in other cases meeting community demands takes precedence over cultural heritage and the CHIA

Task of the CHIA practitioner:

- preserve heritage values and fabric
- Satisfy as much of the community as feasible
- be financially viable
- practicable in conservation terms
- if possible, allows the project to move forward
How are Impacts Identified and Assessed?

Most guidance documents gloss over this critical issue

No direction through this very complex and demanding process

“Significance”

- fundamental point of the exercise
- needs to be factored into assessment process at all stages
- rarely mentioned in guidance documents
- requires professional experience
Sectoral Guidelines

Based on the project type: dam, highway, housing development, subway, infrastructure improvements

Cannot replace an in-depth and thorough understanding of engineering works and techniques, from piling methods, to back-hoe blades, dredging methods, tunnel boring machinery, blasting and site formation
Mitigation Measures

To maintain the condition of heritage resources at existing levels or to improve them

Monitoring Plan to evaluate effectiveness and compliance

Development and use of Indicators
Monitoring Program

Long – term/ Cumulative issues:
Effects of pollution, wear and tear of tourism, rising water tables, creeping encroachment....

Short – term/ Immediate issues:
Road construction, sewerage installation, historical building renovations, re-use proposals.....

Periodic Monitoring

Cultural Heritage Impact Assessments

Indicators
Indicators of change:

Direct statistical indicators

number of historical houses still remaining in a district

Proxy Indicators

community involvement measured by the frequency of school visits / projects

Narrative Indicators

perceived trends in environmental improvement in areas of cultural heritage significance
Removal of Cultural Heritage from its Original Setting

Standards frequently state firmly that heritage resources may not be significantly altered, damaged or removed but then immediately go on to elaborate on how to do just that, when a client claims that the need is “unavoidable”.

![Image of a house being moved](attachment:house_moving.jpg)
Training and Professional Needs

Need for a new sub-discipline merging heritage management, planning, engineering, mapping and sampling

Training needed across the region:

• Task 1: agreement on and preparation of a Training Manual
• Task 2: course development
• Task 3: implementation through the UNESCO-ICCROM Asian Academy for Heritage Management
• Task 4: Certification
Training for players at a number of different levels

To embed the process

Training in the use of CHIA in many different situations

To ensure flexible and widespread application

Training based on:

Core Capacities

Standardized Data Collection and processing

Requirements

Standardized assessment methodologies

Creative mitigation design

Rigorous reporting benchmarks
Standards must be based on experience and best practice adapted to the needs and circumstances of the region.