

REPORT

What is the Value of your Heritage?

Exploring perspectives on heritage as a tool for economic development

8 March 2013, Kochi, India





INTRODUCTION

On March 8, 2013 CIE – Centre for International Heritage Activities in conjunction with the Kochi-Muziris Biennale and with support from the Netherlands Embassy, organized the conference *What is the Value of your Heritage* in Fort Kochi, India. The aim of this day was to explore the perspectives on heritage as a tool for economic development and to bring together various stakeholders to discuss their perspectives and experiences. Questions like ‘what are the strengths and desires of the different stakeholders’ and ‘how can the stakeholders supplement each other’ were discussed, and outcomes from recent projects were presented.

SHORT SUMMARY OF THE PRESENTATIONS

The day started off with words of welcome from Riyas Komu of the Kochi-Muziris Biennale and Nicoline van Cann of the CIE – Centre for International Heritage Activities. After this, four presentations were given to illustrate recent heritage activities in India.

Mr. Govindankutty

Mr. Govindankutty started his presentation by giving a broad view on India’s history and its urbanization over the last fifty years. With regard to the last point he stressed that today there is still a lot of urban planning going on, and therefore heritage programs should try to get more involved and lobby more with local governments. Govindankutty also stressed on the sustainability of projects. Management plans should be made for the long term, including terms of references and action plans for the maintenance and safeguarding of the (restored) heritage. Additionally, future urban and landscaping plans should be taken into account when creating management plans, including facilities needed to accommodate (future) tourists. Another important point that was made is that heritage programs should not only focus on a specific type of heritage, but should try to include multiple forms of heritage such as built heritage, traditions, living heritage, religions, culinary traditions, music, et cetera.

Together with the local community, the heritage should be inventoried and the results of heritage projects should be open to the public.

*Ms. Ruchita Madhok, Mr. Narendra Raghunath,
and Mr. Rohan Sarma*

Ms. Madhok, Mr. Raghunath, and Mr. Sarma were participants of the CREARE winter course *Value of Culture* that took place last December (2012) in Mumbai. CREARE is a foundation, situated in the Netherlands,



which stimulates research in arts and economics and organizes various courses on cultural-economic perspectives in the Netherlands and abroad. The main point in this presentation was that up until now local communities are often not included or consulted on heritage projects, which makes it difficult to explain the importance of heritage for today's society. The heritage profession should act more as an advisor and facilitator - the ownership, and preferably the initiative, should be left to the local communities. But to get local understanding and support, educational and public outreach programs are needed first. Knowledge about one's past can cause a sense of pride, and subsequently can inculcate responsibility towards the safeguarding of the remaining traces of their (shared) past. If the community is included (through jobs and ownership), the maintenance of the heritage becomes socially and economically relevant for society. This relevance is a decisive element for local governments and the private sector to possibly invest in non-profit projects.

Mr. Kuriakose

Like Mr. Govindankutty, Mr. Kuriakose of the Muziris Heritage Project also stressed on the sustainability of heritage projects, only he focused more on the relevance of heritage for other stakeholders. To keep the heritage maintained the local community and government should be included. This can only be successful by making the heritage relevant for them. Heritage and history can strengthen the local communities. Furthermore, it can create new

job opportunities and revitalize traditional craftsmanship. The latter can be used for the creation of souvenirs, but can also sustain people in their own way of life, for example with the use of traditional fishing techniques. And as Govindankutty also stated, it is important to gain commitment from the local government and to be more involved in town planning. For instance, restoration works on historical buildings could be incorporated with refurbishment and elevation plans, as was the case with the Kottapuram Market in Kochi.

Mr. Komu

As co-founder of the Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2012, Riyas Komu has been involved with the creation of a platform where contemporary artists can showcase their works. The heritage of the region has been used as an inspiration for artists of the Biennale. Through works of art a dynamic dialogue can be created,



sometimes they show a critical perspective which otherwise would have been hard to talk openly about. But mostly the aim of the exhibited art is to make the viewer think more about the subject, instead of only reading or listening about it. The Biennale has organized art-education and public outreach programs. Additionally, it has created art-routes that show heritage sites and spaces that are thus used as eyewitnesses that can tell about the site's part in local history. Riyas Komu also stated that the community was closely involved with the Biennale and its projects. It was also the local community who looked for ways of funding.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

After the presentations (and short break) a panel discussion was set up. Here a few questions were asked to the speakers of the presentations, and the audience was allowed to share their



thoughts and questions. The main question that was sought out to answer was how to improve on sustainability for heritage projects in India?

A second question was about the (current) willingness of communities to cooperate with heritage projects, and subsequently how to improve this. From the presentations it was already said that a lot of projects in the past did not include the communities enough. The Muziris Heritage Project and the Biennale are good examples of projects in which the local community was involved and as a result the community was willing to put an effort in the safeguarding and revitalization of the heritage. In the case of the Kochi-Muziris Biennale, it was the community that sought out funds from the private sector. Additionally, when there is enough need from the community, governments are more easily persuaded in supporting heritage projects.

At the start of the discussion it was already pointed out that India has its own financial reserves and therefore it is not so much dependant on foreign money. That being said, many people and organizations do not know how to get aid or financial support for potential heritage projects. So a third question arose: What is recommended for communities in order to get aid and financial support for (durable) heritage projects?

- *More know-how and expertise*

What India needs is more know-how and expertise: to know in what manner to restore and maintain its heritage. Subsequently, some of the projects fail because the continuation of the project is not thought out clearly. More attention should be given to the procedures for ongoing maintenance work, follow-ups, and to the clarification of patronage.

- *Community involvement and ownership*

When people feel proud of their heritage and their town, they are willing to take care of their heritage, which will, as a result, subdue vandalism and decay. Subsequently, to get funding from the private sector or the governments, the local community should benefit socially and

economically from the heritage programs. A committed community can also make sure to put the preservation of their heritage on the (local) political agenda.

- *Sustainability*

In the interest of the continuation of a project, it is important to keep the ownership on a local level, because only the people who are physically there can keep the heritage relevant and maintained. In order to do this, training of local staff is necessary. More focus should also have to go to future activities, by means of multiple year management plans, terms of references for regular maintenance works, and regulations for the protection and conservation of the heritage and its surrounding areas.

- *Integration with urban development plans*

With India's rapid urbanization it is much recommended that heritage projects should try to get involved as early as possible within urban development plans. This means that heritage projects need to be relevant for the (future) economic and social developments. Restoration works on, for instance, public buildings could be included in general refurbishment plans. This has the ability to restore and strengthen the local identity and can create an overall sense of pride and local commitment. The revitalization of traditional jobs and craftsmanship can uplift the economy of the town and its vicinity.

- *Knowledge of the tourism industry*

Heritage preservation projects can be utilized as a means to boost the tourism industry, and can subsequently create job opportunities for the local community. However, in order to make a heritage site a tourist attraction, knowledge of the cultural tourism industry is needed. With the stay of visitors, many other facilities will be needed, such as: restaurants, hotels, infrastructure and (public) transportation, tourist agencies, tourist guides, souvenir shops, food products and water.



- *Good communication*

Another recommendation for future projects is the need for good communication. When there is no update about ongoing activities and the social relevance of the project, funds and commitments will stop. People who are working for the heritage sector need to think more commercially and promotionally on how to keep the target groups and investors active and interested. This does not have to be expensive per se, for instance with the help of social media.

Heritage cannot sustain itself; it needs funding and goodwill. To achieve this, cooperation from governments, communities, the private sector and the tourism industry is essential. To keep all stakeholders involved, it is necessary to keep every party reminded why heritage is important to today's society.



LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Name	Profession	Organization
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What is the value of your heritage?

8 March 2013, 10:30 to 5:00 pm

Outset Carnoustie Pavilion, Aspinwall House, Fort Kochi (India)

PROGRAM

11h00	Words of welcome & Set-up of the day	Kochi Muziris Biennale & Centre for International Heritage Activities
11h30	Presentation: UNESCO / IHCN-F vision	Sri Govindan Kutty
11h50	Presentations: Two case studies	Participants of the CREARE winter course
12h10	Presentation: Muziris Heritage Project	Benny Kuriakose
12h30	<i>break</i>	
13h00	Presentation: Kochi Muziris Biennale	Riyas Komu
13h20	Panel discussion	We encourage the audience to participate in the debate!
14h20	Closing remarks and recommendation	
14h45	<i>drinks</i>	