

## Heritage contribution in sustainable city

R Rostami<sup>1,3</sup>, S M Khoshnava<sup>1</sup>, and H Lamit<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Skudai. 81310, Johor, Malaysia

Email: Raheleh.rostami@yahoo.com

**Abstract.** The concept of sustainability has been an integral part of development work since the late 1970s. Sustainability is no longer a buzzword but a reality that must be addressed by cities all over the world. Increasing empirical evidence indicates that city sustainability is not just related to technical issues, such as carbon emissions, energy consumption and waste management, or on the economic aspects of urban regeneration and growth, but also it covers social well-being of different groups living within increasingly cosmopolitan towns and cities. Heritage is seen as a major component of quality of life, features that give a city its unique character and provide the sense of belonging that lies at the core of cultural identity. In other words, heritage by providing important social and psychological benefits enrich human life with meanings and emotions, and raise quality of life as a key component of sustainability. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to examine the role that built cultural heritage can play within sustainable urban development.

### 1. Introduction

Today more than ever cities are characterized by intensified high-level human concentration accompanied by the accumulation of the main human activities such as the economic, cultural, educational and social ones. As a consequence, they found themselves in an ambivalent positions which from one side are action centers of economic activities and carriers of innovation and economic growth, and on the other hand, they are the trustees of cultural heritage and carriers of socio-cultural identity [1]. This dichotomy raised growing concerns about the sustainability of the cities and inquiries that how we can have a sustainable city.

Increasing empirical evidence indicates that city sustainability is not just related to technical issues such as carbon emissions, energy consumption and waste management, or on the economic aspects of urban regeneration and growth, but also it covers social well-being of different groups living within increasingly cosmopolitan towns and cities. Heritage is seen as a major component of quality of life, features that give a city its unique character and provide the sense of belonging that lies at the core of cultural identity. Cultural identity is based on heritage which is a broad concept including values, attitudes, customs, historical memory, language, literature, art, architecture, etc. A very important and visible part of heritage consists of the built environment, the context of urban living, which constitute an intrinsic elements of cities. Thus the purpose of this paper is to examine the role that built cultural heritage can play within sustainable urban development.

### 2. Sustainability

The concept of sustainability has been an integral part of development work since the late 1970s. "Sustainable Development" proposed in 1972 at the United Nations conference on the human environment in Stockholm [2]. It was considered in different aspects in order to minimize and reduce the negative impact of human activities and safeguard the quality of life of both the present and future generations. The main concern of sustainable development refers to the "interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars" including economic development, social development, and environmental protection.

---

<sup>3</sup> To whom any correspondence should be addressed.



“Sustainability” as main concern of sustainable development was defined by [3] as a way of living and working in which meet and integrate existing environmental, economic and social needs without compromising the well-being of future generations. The basic objectives of sustainability are to reduce consumption of non-renewable resources, minimize waste, and create healthy, productive environments. It is a concept about the interconnectedness of the environment, the economy, and social equity, as a path forward - through which demonstrate responsibility for the future legacy for a better life for our children and our children’s children. So, humans to live decently within their own conceptions of welfare, must be in respect of the others and without compromising the ecosystem, social and cultural set-ups.

### 2.1. Sustainable city

Sustainability ever since it emerged as a research and policy priority in the late 1980s and early 1990s, has been constructed as presenting a new and distinctive type of research problematic [4]. It seemed as a very general concept that is not easily implemented in practical work; therefore, specific concepts have been proposed to make sustainability more operational [5]. At the beginning the concept of sustainability shaped based on “natural capital” and arises from environmental issues such as: pollution, increase of the world temperature and destruction of natural sources. After that anthropocentric outlook added in which human survivability and well-being outstands the nature [6]. Consideration of both attitudes indicates that sustainability will achieved through a dynamic balance among environmental and social aspects. In these, economic and social aspects are certainly considered since they are identified as responsible for ecological change. European Commission’s First Report on the Sustainable City, [7] also indicate that environmental sustainability cannot be perceived without social equity and economic sustainability. Sustainability, and sustainable society, therefore was defined as a multi-aspect objective; which is not simply about changing environmental practices, it also involves wider changes.

The concept of sustainable development which includes aspects of urban planning and community development is considered in city sustainability. The concept of sustainable development was framed in 1972 at the United Nations (UN) conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm [2]. Based on Brundtland report [8] sustainable development is “a process of change in which the use of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological developments and institutional changes are all in harmony with each other”, the aim of which is not only to meet present day needs, but also to ensure future generations “*will be able to live as they would like to live*” [9]. This means that the actual generation needs must be satisfied without compromising the capability of future generations satisfying their needs [10]. Cities must try to solve their problems, recognizing that they themselves can achieve potential resolutions, without transferring them towards other scales, or different locations and future generations. [4] also envisage a sustainable city as a balance of natural, built and cultural elements, a city ‘*one in which people and businesses continuously endeavour to improve their natural, built and cultural environment*’. [11] trace the pathways to urban sustainability and delineate respective policy responses. They consider urban sustainability as comprised of physical (natural, built), social and economic elements and factors that effectively support three main objectives: environmental equity (intra- and inter-generational), long-term allocate efficiency and distributive efficiency. So, sustainability is now no longer a buzzword but a reality that must be addressed by cities all over the world, an authenticity which is based on three main pillars: a healthy environment, social cohesion, economic efficiency and a universal concern [12].

### 3. Heritage

Heritage means something of inheritance, part of culture which has been passed down from previous generations to the next. It is multi-dimensional and clearly quite broad and encompasses a great many attributes. It can cover historic buildings or monuments as well as natural landscapes. However, in broad definition it covers intangible parts and is more than preservation of architectural design and places associated with historical events and personalities. Heritage is the different forms of cultural capital [13] which represents the community’s value of its social, historical, or cultural dimension [14].

A very important and visible part of heritage consists of built heritage, the context of urban living. It is one main part of heritage that declared by the Charter of “Built vernacular heritage”, approved by

ICOMOS in 2000, as: “*The built vernacular heritage occupies a central place in the affection and pride of all peoples. It has been accepted as a characteristic and attractive product of society. It appears informal, but nevertheless orderly. It is utilitarian and at the same time possesses interest and beauty. It is a focus of contemporary life and at the same time a record of the history of society. Although it is the work of man it is also the creation of time. It would be unworthy of the heritage of man if care were not taken to conserve these traditional harmonies which constitute the core of man's own existence*”.

#### 4. Heritage and sustainability

While the concept of sustainability that was first presented in the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development's report emphasized ecological concerns, the idea of sustainability had been extended to the arena of cultural development through the report of the World Commission on Culture and Development (WCCD), *Our Creative Diversity*. The report promoted the long-term needs of future generations for access to cultural resources [13], hence the notion of cultural sustainability, a new interdisciplinary approach aimed to raise the significance of culture and its factors in local, regional and global sustainable development had emerged.

Throughout the past decade, statistics, indicators and data on the cultural sector, as well as operational activities have underscored that culture can be a powerful driver for development, with community-wide social, economic and environmental impacts. Heritage retention in balance with other goals for sustainability in community planning can have a “triple bottom line” impact with environmental, economic, social and cultural benefits that are critical for developing sustainable cities.

Environmentally, preservation and improvement of green design features of heritage and older buildings is one of effective way of reducing the impact of development on the environment. Also, Heritage retention, rehabilitation and reuse are forms of green building. In this regard, United States National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) issued the *Pocantico Proclamation on Sustainability and Preservation* in 2009, which declares a commitment to five principles that connect heritage and climate action values:

- Principle 1: Foster a Culture of Reuse
- Principle 2: Reinvest at a community Scale
- Principle 3: Value Heritage
- Principle 4: Capitalize on the Potential of the Green Economy
- Principle 5: Re-Align Historic Preservation Policies with Sustainability

Additionally, in planning for sustainable cities the built and natural environment are connected to human well-being to develop local economics. Together with other culture and nature areas, these World Heritage Sites are important tourism attractions and form the backbone of the tourism industry. In this regard, heritage can help to foster sustainable tourism and creative cities and contribute to the economy and poverty alleviation. What is clear is that tourism is growing and will have an increasing impact on cultural heritage. In its forecast *Tourism: 2020 Vision*, the World Tourism Organization (WTO) predicts that cultural tourism will be one of the five key tourism market segments in the future. Sustainable tourism, moreover attracting visitors and wealth creation, will have a positive force for the preservation of nature and culture, and its contributions bring about benefits for the host community and provide its members with significant resources and incentives to look after and maintain their Heritage.

Moreover tourist attraction, heritage has also been a cornerstone of urban revitalization strategies for almost forty years, which anchored in community economic development through revitalizing historic commercial districts in downtowns and older neighbourhoods. Heritage-led revitalization also has the capacity to increase property values, to renew the economic vitality of business districts in historic areas of a community, and to re-brand a place as a cultural, or creative city.

Socially, heritage contributes in building social capital between residents through community identity and pride. It has the power to strengthen communities where citizens associate the historic environment with a shared identity, attachment to place and everyday life. In this regard, memories and values that are associated with heritage often create a sense of belonging and connectedness to a community, fostering social cohesion and inclusion, consequently contribute to cultural well-being and quality of life which are key components of sustainable cities.

## 5. Conclusion

Sustainability is no longer a buzzword but a reality that must be addressed by cities all over the world. It seems clear that the role of heritage are one of the challenges of this century, not only of human interest, but it is one more necessary step towards a more sustainable future towards our cities. The study underlined heritage as one of vital pillars in helping the efforts of the government to attain sustainable development when there is a requirement of balance between economy growth, social expansion and environmental protection. Cultural heritage are an intrinsic element of cities, part of the present which is drawn from the past. They are part of culture which is transmitted from one generation to the next. Heritage is seen as a major component of quality of life, features that give a city its unique character and provide the sense of belonging that lies at the core of cultural identity. In other words, heritage by providing important social, psychological, and even economic benefits enrich human life with meanings and emotions, and raise quality of life as a key component of sustainability.

The strategic alliance between heritage and sustainability could be use of the concept of *conservation and protection* as a linking concept between these two areas in terms of planning and management. The role and impact of conservation is substantial. Heritage can have a role and impact in sustainable cities in connection to competing goals and larger policy issues in citywide planning, issues such as tourism, new jobs and businesses, adaptation to climate change and green building, affordable housing and cultural well-being. Heritage alone will not secure a sustainable city, it is an asset to safeguard past for present and future generations, an element of the city that must evolve and respond to the challenge of sustainability. Thus, countries should pursued conservation policies, as conserving the past offers a source for cultural identity and a basis of reference for the future.

## Acknowledgement

The authors would like to thank “Centre for The Study of Built Environment in the Malay World (KALAM)”for funding this research.

## References

- [1] Nijkamp, P., Bal, F., Medda, F., (1998). A Survey of Methodes for Sustainable City Planning and Cultural Heritage Management
- [4] Houghton, G., and Hunter, C. (1994) Sustainable Cities: London Regional Studies Association
- ICOMOS: International Council On Monuments and Sites. (2000). International Symposium about Preservation in the Global Context. 6-9 April 2000, Indianapolis, Indiana, USA.
- [5] Antrop, M. (2006). Sustainable Landscapes: Contradiction, fiction or utopia? *Landscape and Urban Planning* 75: 187–197
- [6] Jamieson, D. 1998. Sustainability and beyond. *Ecological Economics* 24: 183-192
- [7] EFILW: European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions. (1994), reports from European Conference on Urban Innovations, Dublin
- [8] WCED (1987). Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future. Available at: <http://www.un-documents.net/wced-ocf.htm>
- [10] EUC: European Union Council. (2006). *Nova estratégia da EU para o Desenvolvimento Sustentável*, na versão adoptada pelo Conselho Europeu de 15/16 de Junho de 2006. Brussels.
- [11] Finco, A., Nijkamp, P. (2001). Pathway to urban sustainability. *Journal of Environmental Policy and Planning* 3(4): 289–309.
- [12] Mega, V. (1996). Our city, our future: towards sustainable development in European cities. *Environment and Urbanization* 8(1): 133-154.
- [13] Throsby, D. (2003). Cultural Sustainability. In Ruth Towse (ed) *A Handbook of Cultural Economics*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, Cheltenham
- [14] Benhamou, F. (2003). Heritage. In Ruth Towse (ed) *A Handbook of Cultural Economics*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.
- [15] CHE (1972) Report of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment. Available at: <http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.Print.asp?DocumentD1/478&ArticleD1/497>

- [16] UN: United Nations. (1992). *Cimeira da Terra, Meio Ambiente e Desenvolvimento*, documento da Assembleia Geral das Nações Unidas. (Earth Summit Middle Environment and Development, the document General Assembly of the United Nations, 1992)
- [17] USNTHP: United States National Trust for Historic Preservation, Available at: [www.preservationnation.org](http://www.preservationnation.org)
- [18] WCCD: World Commission on Environment and Development. (1987). *Our Common Future*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- [19] WTO: World Tourism Organization. (2004). Available at: [http://www.worldtourism.org/frameset/frame\\_sustainable.html](http://www.worldtourism.org/frameset/frame_sustainable.html)