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# Responsible Tourism and the Conservation of Heritage in Asian Urban Areas

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## Introduction

Fundamental to the conservation of heritage in urban areas is a planning, design, development and management process based on responsible and sustainable objectives and criteria. This chapter establishes the ethical setting required, through discussing the topics presented in Figure 1.1.



**Figure 1.1:** Topics in Chapter 1

## Cultural heritage explored

Culture and heritage are valued worldwide. The Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity reminds us that the “defence of cultural diversity is an ethical imperative, inseparable from respect for human dignity” (UNESCO, 2001, Article 4). This is because cultural diversity “is one of the roots of development” (ibid, Article 3).

Cultural heritage is esteemed and handed on to future generations because it contributes to local, national and international identity. While national identity is state sponsored, local identity emerges “naturally through the evolution of the history and cultural experience of the people” (Embong, 2011: 16). Cultural heritage is also valued as it is “the wellspring of creativity” (UNESCO, 2001, Article 7).

Cultural heritage is made up of both physical (movable and fixed) and intangible elements that are successfully passed from one generation to the next. Movable physical elements include handicrafts, sculptures, paintings, archaeological objects, musical instruments and furniture. Fixed cultural dimensions include “houses, factories, commercial buildings, places of worship, cemeteries, monuments and built infrastructure such as roads, railways and bridges; physically created places such as gardens, mining sites and stock routes; and other places of historical significance such as archaeological sites” (Modern Heritage Matters, 2013); as well as historic districts and townscapes.

Intangible heritage encompasses oral traditions and expressions, including language – a vehicle of intangible cultural heritage, “performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe” (UNESCO, n.d.), and traditional craftsmanship. Intangible heritage is important not only for the cultural manifestation itself, but also for “the wealth of knowledge and skills that is transmitted through it from one generation to the next” (ibid.). This transmission of knowledge is valuable for all social groups, both minorities and the mainstream, and in both ‘developing’ and ‘developed’ countries.

Places are given meaning, ‘a sense of place’, by people. It is the interaction between the place and the people who live there and visit it that makes a place significant. A place may engender multiple senses of place because places have different meanings for different people. Places therefore belong to many groups, each of which may have a different sense of place.

Decisions about which heritage resources and places to retain and not retain, and how that should be accomplished, require considering several dimensions, not only economic factors. As the Universal Declaration declares, “Market forces alone cannot guarantee the preservation and promotion of cultural diversity” (UNESCO, 2001, Article 11). Governments must therefore develop cultural policies that consider all of the dimensions, including social and environmental factors.

While some cultural heritage resources and places are considered to be worthy of designation as World Heritage sites and are protected by internationally-recognized criteria and procedures (see Chapter 4), others are of particular national