

Course Name: An Introduction To Urban Ecological Heritage: Theories and Applications

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Urban Heritage - Global Conventions and Declarations

So, this lecture is on Urban Heritage, Global Conventions and Declarations. And in this lecture I will cover the historical context behind the expansion of the concept of Heritage followed by you know this some of the dedicated agencies that had passed or that is adopted several conventions, charters and declarations relating to Heritage Preservation, Conservation and Management. Followed by you know what are these International charters, conventions and declarations all about what are the key arguments, what are the key guiding principles, that are part and parcel of these charters and conventions followed by criticisms, challenges and hence what is the way forward so far as the contemporary the current, the present generation is concerned. So, let me take you to the historical context a bit because as you know like even in our school days sometimes when we had learned about heritage always it was a monument or a big palace or like these were all singular entities what I would like to say is that you know the heritage by, heritage it meant palatial buildings, it meant mainly you know, the built heritage structures maybe a road also and, but entities which were very very singular to a great extent. But I think there has been an expansion or a broadening of the concept of heritage, where we understand heritage no more as only singular entities or structures, but also you know like it is a broad concept constituting and covering multiple tangible and intangible components and aspects. Now, how did this shift, how did this transformation you know take place first in our cognitive levels and then you know gradually this change getting reflected in the laws policies and charters conventions, etcetera.

So, let me take you to you know the Second World War period for example, because during Second World War in Europe some of the cities were devastated and destroyed by the enemy countries. So, one typical example is the city of Warsaw. So, Warsaw was like devastated 85 percent of the city and its historic place and the city center of course, was destroyed by the Nazi troops and you can see the picture here. So, this is like you know the devastated part of the Central Warsaw. And so, what happened is that then there was a movement by the citizens, by the civilians and the movement was a kind of so, it was in the form of a reconstruction campaign. But the people themselves the citizens you know they were extremely upset with the devastation of the city because apart from a mortality

apart from you know other costs severe damage was also done to the history of the city. So, there was an arch there was a desire, there is an aspiration from below from among the citizens that this city needs to be rebuilt again. And a fantastic you know this Warsaw restoration process if you see it was really fantastic because you know within the next few years they could really rebuild part of their city I mean and kind of they could revive the historical aspects the history spanning from 13th to 20th century.

And you see this is an example of the rebuilt, restored Warsaw. So, in this way you know like there was a gradual understanding there were shifting sensibilities and sensitivities towards heritage conservation and management, where heritage now meant not only you know built structures, but also built and natural and living traditions of cities. So, so, second world period can of course, be taken as a point of departure and where we find this conservation ethic and we find you know conservation expanding to cover historical urban fabric of cities. So, this is something which this context I think this political and this historical context needs to be remembered. Now, yes so, if we have to cover some of the very important conventions and charters in terms of the protection of worlds cultural and natural heritage, I think this 1972 convention adopted by the UNESCO it is the first most important convention that clearly talks about the need behind restoring cultural and natural heritage. And if you go through this charter it is available in the internet it is like, you can access it is an open access site you just go to the UNESCO world heritage convention website and you will be able to read all the articles that are part of this charter. So, if you go through this charter you will see that you know first of all this charter was adopted on 16th November 1972, and there is a background to this because as I mentioned you know, second world war and post second world war period lot of attempts and efforts where, their adverse efforts were taken by several experts and historians and architects you know coming together and discussing about the future of our cities and future of historic city centers and even including you know several other intangible components of cities in the form of my real, you know cultural traditions and facets. So, what is important is that finally, in 1972 the in the general conference, the general conference of UNESCO adopted this charter and this is known as the recommendation concerning the Protection at National level of the cultural and natural heritage and if you go there you will also be able to see you know which are the states who are parties to this who had signed this charter who are part of this entire initiative, but what is very important is that in this convention you will find what UNESCO actually, what the experts could understand about what cultural heritage is and what natural heritage is. So, if you see you know the cultural heritage has been described or you know kind of perceived in the form of monuments. So, monuments again implying architecture, culture, painting, structures of special value from the point of view of archaeology, history, art of science and groups of buildings and sites.

So, it is a kind of a broadened you know understanding and conceptualization. Similarly,

it also of course, includes natural heritage because you can see it from the name that it is about the protection of world natural and cultural heritage. So, natural heritage it is about you know physical and biological formations, geological and physiographical formations and all the precisely you know everything you know delineated all the precisely delineated areas that constitute the habitat of species and animals. This is a very interesting you know kind of landmark understanding where you see the expansion even to include you know the delineated areas constituting the habitat of species and animals plants and valuable or threatened of special value from the point of science or conservation perspective. Now, just 2 years after this because there was all the time there had been criticism and which is good because these are all constructive criticisms and this constructive criticism actually had led to the you know broadening of the concept of heritage which is a good thing. So, challenges and criticisms which are also there now I think that had made us to a great extent to really push forward the concept of heritage by continuously you know incorporating in it several elements which otherwise were not part of the heritage understanding even few decades back. So, in 2003, 29th September to 17th September you know this draft was made and then of course, there is always a background to all of these charters and conventions and documents. So, here it was another step ahead there were. So, you can see the advancement because from the name from the title itself, you can see that how there were, there was awareness to safeguard the intangible cultural heritage. And now UNESCO was absolutely clear about this that it is also very important to identify, to have a very detailed nuanced sophisticated understanding about what intangible cultural heritage actually you know means and implies.

And you see you if you go to this site, I would encourage all of you actually to visit this UNESCO site and this is this map if you see it is it is what UNESCO says that it is a kind of a constellation. And it is really a great resource I personally enjoy navigating you know this particular constellation because it the font size is very small here, but if you zoom in and if you actually go to this website, UNESCO website, you can click on any of these you know circles. So, for example, in this circles there is like instruments, costumes, dance, vocal music, festivals right family, rituals and this is a kind of an augmented reality map or constellation. So, you just click on any one of them and you get to know the details you also get to know some of the examples from the world. So, for example, one of my student, my first student actually she have, first PhD student she completed her PhD on one of the folk dances like, one of the folk dancing performative art practices from the Purulia district of West Bengal and their name of this dance is Chorida.

So, it was quite amazing for us when we found the name of the Chorida village, and the Chhau dance and also, but the Chhau dancing community from this constellation. So, I think I must appreciate, I personally would like to because there are criticism I am sure UNESCO is very kind of in a critiqued agency, but apart from that, I think like apart from

this criticism it is also important to for us to appreciate you know how like at least there are attempts to accommodate all the different types of cultures and cultural traditions and performative arts and living traditions of the world that are otherwise gaining some weightage and footage you know through these attempts and initiatives. So, if you like, I would again I would encourage you to go through this map and click you know, make like, click some of these like performative traditions and arts and know further details about it. It is quite interesting that how the information they are also they are trying to disseminate how the mechanisms the mode of disseminating you know information in an innovative creative way. So, I do not need to explain this further I think, but of course, intangible cultural heritage means which also has I mean have to be appreciated has to be appreciated using our sensory perceptions as well.

So, all kinds of practices, expressions, knowledge, skills and different types of instruments object, artifacts, cultural spaces associated there with that communities, groups and in some cases individuals recognizes part of their cultural. So, automatically spontaneously you see that the that communities and you know the cultural performers and people inheriting this culture across generations through intergenerational knowledge transmission this also become very important at the same time. So, there was a lot of like emphasis on the communities and on their cultural traditions and what they consider to be their cultural heritage. So, this I think is also very important, this particular convention which was adopted in 2003. So, these are some of the activities they are just very few, but some of you if you want to know the details and of course, if you are doing or you are interested in heritage studies because heritage is such a broad concept.

So, I tell you like in whatever area domain or you know in whatever subjects or themes you are working on or you later you aspire to work on, I think somehow as the concept of heritage is expanding so much now. So, somehow I am sure that your research will also be part of this larger you know heritage understanding and perspective. So, I would definitely like you to, I would definitely like I mean definitely request you to actually go through the official websites and know more about this chartered and convention because they are also quite interesting. But this is very few, very like primary fundamental information that I have compiled from the conventions. So, article 11 of the 2001 Convention it like one important thing is that it came up with, it could come up with the World Heritage list and also the list of World Heritage in danger because you remember you know the Convention it also talks about that how and why the threatened spaces the vulnerable spaces also need to be identified because they are the sites you know which can be, which should be categorized under heritage in danger. So, and also it means that they are the priority areas where work needs to be done to make them you know like to make them viable and to craft the transition from vulnerability to viability. So, and now like the interesting news is that in the world heritage list there are around like I think, 250 cities

which are there in the list and there are execution plans about how heritage management and preservation can be done. Similarly, like Article 16 of 2003 Convention it talks about a same like another representative list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity and the map of Constellation that I showed you there. So, this actually you know kind of displays some of the intangible cultural heritage from certain areas of the globe. Then again Article 17 from 2003 it also talks of the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage in need of urgent safeguarding, because it is it has maybe some of these are getting endangered and if not protected now then they will become extinct and with extinction we then you know completely lose them even if it is not there like for example, if it becomes endangered and if it gets erased from our collective memory then that is a major problem because the world loses that tradition forever.

So, then apart from these there are other activities which were like, which are part of this formation and you know the functioning of the convention. So, the formation of committees for example, there is this World Heritage Committee which was formed including several experts from different parts of the world and then there are like international and national mandates and some rules and regulations and UNESCO is also working with some of the national government, some of the municipal you know governments and groups to where they are together you know they are, they are collaborating to safeguard some of the like some of the sites and centers and intangible cultural heritage artifacts as well. And one good thing about this conventions are that they also recognize, they also prioritize needs of developing countries. So, I must mention ICOMOS. So, International Council on Monuments and Sites because it is the only global NGO which is dedicated to promote the application of theory methodology and scientific techniques to the conservation of architectural and archaeological heritage and another important thing is that like as I mentioned about you know this committees, formation of committees. So, world heritage committee as you know is was also formed in when this 2001 Convention was adopted by the UNESCO. So, and ICOMOS is one of the three advisory committees which is part of this world heritage committee who because committee, because they evaluate and they assess some of the projects, some of the very important projects and programs. So, ICOMOS is an official partner it is part of the advisory body of the you know of UNESCO and which plays a very important role in identifying, but also evaluating you know the performance in terms of heritage preservation and conservation in different parts of the world and across different aspects tangible, intangible and all other aspects that are part and parcel within the concept of heritage this is a broader and larger concept of heritage. So, ICOMOS is it has that strength because it really has that eligibility because it is a network of interdisciplinary experts and where exchanges, debates and lot of brainstorming you know take place between or among the historians, architects, town planners, engineers, designers, sociologists, anthropologists, different kinds of practitioners and who not. So, in that sense it is a very

rich organization actually and the members they contribute to improving heritage preservation the standards and the techniques for each type of cultural heritage property, but property is still the keyword. So, buildings, historical cities, landscape cultural landscape and archaeological sites and these are some facts and figures to make you know how big and how important you know ICOMOS is. So, there are like 1000 sorry 10,891 members from 132 countries and territories of the globe and there are 248 institutional members, 130 national committees and 30 international scientific committees. And again I would of course, encourage you to visit the ICOMOS website and see some of the projects and it is a very fascinating website actually. Now so, till now we had discussed all the positive points and because they are actually positive because all these things are happened. So, we should not ignore you know like the developments that had occurred in the last few decades, there is a last 2, 3 decades or little more if we take the trajectory from 1972. So, these are the developments that are already taken place, but there are some criticisms from the social scientist, from architects and from people who you know pursue critical like scholarships where urban scholarships actually, where they say that you know still urban cultural heritage you know these concept, till date is or you know has not been fleshed out by these conventions and charters and that is where the limitations that is where the inadequacies are. So, they say that you know there is, there is an inadequacy in terms of the fact that city or urban still does not appear in these conventions. So, mainly I am also quoting from two articles which I find to be very very significant and relevant. So, one is by Serageldin and the other by Sadowski. So, they say that you know still ok, there has been a move from a property to performative arts to living traditions, but still you know property remains the key word. So, it means that you know there is some kind of capitalist push and this ultimately, these projects become you know technocratic projects where you find the same story of heavily capitalist laden investments and little voice to the poor to the more marginal. And so, that is why they say that and that is why they say that you know still property is the key word still property is the key term and so, there is lack of reference to urban cultural heritage. So, then they also provide their own understandings and you know perspectives about what they understand by city, what they understand by urban cultural heritage and why and how this should find where this should find a place within these conventions and charters. So, for example, this is from Serageldin, and Serageldin this is like, thick and dense argument, but I think this is important, everybody is important in this quote because if you really need to engage with the critical perspective and you need to engage with that. So, Serageldin says that you know cities are where the future is invented ok. So, he is glorifying cities, he is not saying that you know cities are like they are exploiters because they grow by swallowing you know ecological infrastructure. So, that is he is not saying that. So, what he is saying is that they are very important that they are important spaces they are important platforms and avenues where the future is actually invented. So, cities are also where the legacy of the past lives on the history to inspire dreams and to stimulate new thinking the urban tissue of the cities. So, I

like this a lot you know this that urban tissue you know then you know the concept of mesh is formed. So, the urban tissue of the cities the successive layers of their built environment. So, how the city had grown you know layer by layer and strata by strata and this show. So, if you identify these layers then you also come across multiple temporalities that had shaped and in turn got shaped through the city building process ok. So, the layers of their built environment are a veritable palimpsest again a very important keyword of their rich and glorious history. However, it is not just the individual monuments that remain as landmark in our urban landscape that are deserving of protection. It is a very atmosphere of historic areas the essence of historic urban character that still marks the city. Our urban cultural heritage tangible and intangible is a major contributor to the sense of place and historic continuity that contributes to forming contemporary cultural identity okay. So, the sense of place understanding place-based understanding has to be there that is his argument all about. So, we need to really have lot of discussions about what a city is it a geographical boundary is it an administrative you know connotation or an entity or much beyond that, across space time and cultural heritage right. Then Sadowski who is like more direct in terms of criticizing the charter, these two charters actually.

So, Sadowski is saying that clearly the lack of acknowledgement of the big picture of cultural heritage, the big picture, the big picture of cultural heritage which sometimes as in the case of urban cultural heritage may be composed of the entangled and I like this word of course, entangled. So, entangled tangible and intangible elements makes it much more difficult to protect such spaces what do we understand by intangibility, the way I am understanding intangibility do you understand intangibility in the same way. So, these are the questions that need to be asked. So, as a result the protection applies only to their certain elements never seeing them as a whole and that is why and that is where seeing the big picture becomes important. So, this much for now in this lecture and as I mentioned that I would encourage you to go through these sites I have also put some of these slides in the references. So, they are the fundamental sites they are the primary sources of information please go through them learn more about you know these conventions and charters learn more about the context it is quite interesting and also go through some of these articles and reports where you will be able to then have a better understanding of this, the historical context and the notion of heritage, cultural heritage urban cultural heritage gradually making way by expanding and broadening and strengthening itself and making us better aware about our past and interconnections between past present and posterity. So, to conclude we have discussed the historical context and you know the context broadening the concept of heritage incorporating built natural and living traditions of the world. We have also explored the activities of dedicated agencies like UNESCO, ICOMOS to facilitate heritage conservation and management to the adoption of global convention and charter and we have studied the limitations of these approaches as well, awaiting more comprehensive and robust tools on heritage preservation.

