



**Mr. Kenneth Li**

Moderator

# Session Summary 2

## **Sub-Theme 2: Urban Redevelopment and Heritage Preservation**

*Development is the engine of an urban economy but heritage and identity will always be the soul of a city.* Christopher Pound

The four speakers in Sub-Theme 2 discussed how the inherent conflict between these two concepts in the present age is being addressed; the efficacy of the monitoring systems in place for World Heritage Listed sites, and the attempt to progress from the protection of the physical fabric of heritage sites to the focus on ways of preserving or creating character diversity and identity.

Professor Herbert Stovel began the session by questioning the success of the conventional legal and planning instruments used to assess adequacy of management of conservation sites, particularly in World Heritage nominated sites, those in Asia being the most endangered. He suggested alternative frameworks for reviewing management effectiveness through first studying the forces guiding change throughout the centuries that brought into being the heritage places we seek to preserve. He then defined the key factors of success in the ability of historic cities to manage these processes of dynamic change.

From these he arrived at a number of subject areas in which indicators that might usefully be established for heritage conservation, and which can be used in the assessment of management effectiveness, could serve as useful guides in Macao's preparation for World Heritage nomination. He encouraged Macao planners to pay serious attention to the underlying forces and qualities that give Macao its essential character and to ensure that its planning and legal instruments are focused on maintaining these qualities.



## Sub-Theme 2: Urban Redevelopment and Heritage Preservation

Following on from Professor Stovel's discussion of historic transformational impulses in cities and how these can maintain a sense of continuity, Mr. Christopher Pound used the English City of Bath as an example to show that conservation need not conflict with development, and that development can respect the context or character of the area. Heritage pays, and creates employment in the hotel, tourist and retail industries. However, protection from excessive traffic and good management and presentation are essential. In the City of Bath conservation is part of the overall planning for the city.

He presented the view that heritage sites experience development in two forms. One is the replacement of fabric and the introduction of occasional buildings. This might mean interpretation centres in archaeological sites or infill in cities. The other involves growth due to the economic climate. He supported the concept that appropriate building architecture and urban design promote cultural continuity by ensuring the character and legibility of the city. Urban design is a complex discipline that relies on a continuing dialogue between the many people interested in the design, development and use of a place. Good contemporary architecture that respects the context and enhances or promotes the character or the appearance of the area can be successful as attractions, and contribute to the regeneration of inner city areas. He cited the example of the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain.

He maintained that the Management Plan required for World Heritage Sites is more than a conservation plan. It is a wide-ranging corporate approach to an historic site and its environs. It is a basis for taking a long-term view on bringing together the complexity and diversity of a heritage city.

Professor Wu Lianyong then discussed the effect of the strong global culture on the weaker regional cultures, and the necessity of dealing with this by understanding and making full use of the best in regional culture. The Master Plan of Macao, that serves as a general development guideline, should also take into account Macao's particular circumstances and unique traditional Macanese architecture, which should be analysed to find its inherent patterns and architectural motifs. These should be adapted and used in the new, larger, urban developments of Macao making them harmonious with the historic environment. He ended by stating that architects should, through persistent creative exploration, pursue a better understanding of the most outstanding artistic ideas of the architecture of both the East and the West.



In his paper “From Architectural Heritage to Identity in Singapore”, Dr. Heng Chye Kiang briefly surveyed the conservation efforts in Singapore and discussed recent developments associated with the Identity Plan.

Singapore has moved from planning for physical development and the demolition of significant landmarks and entire districts to a planning strategy now directed at enhancing the quality of Singapore’s environment through “preserving a sense of place, history and belonging in the context of intensive use of land”.

This change in direction in the planning of the URA came about as a result of a drop in the numbers of tourists that was thought to be partly due to the destruction of many of the old parts of Singapore due to wholesale development. This resulted in a loss of Singapore’s old world charm and character and indeed in many cases, social and cultural ways of life.

For a time after this, the conservation effort concentrated on the preservation of monuments and the adaptive re-use of vernacular buildings leaving the market forces to decide the new traditions that emerged. Through this method, the social and cultural continuity of many places was severely compromised. It was only in 2001 that identity and links to the past were given recognition as being important. The collective memory, community life, distinctive lifestyle and cultural traits that give a sense of rootedness, identity and sense of belonging were considered in seven key proposals, that for the first time were put forward for public discussion through the formation of focus groups. The findings were exhibited for public feedback.

Dr Heng concluded that Singapore’s experience of fast large-scale development echoes the problems inherent in the planning and development process the world over, in which without consultation, all traces of local specificities are obliterated. This results in environments that are comfortable and efficient but devoid of memory and significance.