Since its beginning in 1945, the promotion of cultural diversity, cultural rights, and dialogue between cultures has been central to the mandate of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Placing culture at the center of development policy has been considered a precondition to successful globalization. Respecting cultural pluralism has been considered essential for avoiding segregation and cultural entrenchment and preventing conflict. Protecting the expressions of cultures—the cultural heritage, in broadest terms—has been considered the most suitable common ground for the promotion of cultural diversity and mutual understanding and enrichment between cultures (UNESCO website). Among the initial and so far most successful as well as visible, perhaps even extremely ambitious, instruments adapted for this objective is the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Property (UNESCO, 1972), under which UNESCO identifies and officially recognizes salient cultural monuments and natural sites around the world to be of bearing universal value and thus a part of global heritage and to be preserved for posterity. National governments can nominate sites within their national territory for inclusion on the World Heritage List, and UNESCO provides technical and professional assistance to safeguard the inscribed heritage. The Convention defines the kind of natural or cultural sites which can be considered for inscription on the World Heritage List, and sets out the duties of governments in identifying potential sites and their role in protecting and preserving them. These governments are encouraged to integrate the protection of the cultural and natural heritage into regional planning.
programs and adopt measures which give this heritage a function in the day-to-day life of the community (World Heritage Information Kit, 2000; UNESCO, 2005).

Celebrating global cultural pluralism, increasing cultural awareness and tolerance that transcend parochial boundaries, evoking civic pride in communities, and uplifting local economies have been cited as some positive effects of the World Heritage program. It has nevertheless brought in its own conundrums. Foremost among the challenges is the impact of the mass global tourism on the local places. A necessary evil, international cultural tourism has uplifted the local economies and perhaps promoted cultural harmony, while ushering in a range of problems that has, at varying degrees, affected the preservation effort and the social integrity of local communities. Local traditions and heritages are now invented, commoditized and/or packaged for global consumption (AlSayyad, 2001, Pocock, 2006). Gentrification, socially unacceptable behaviors, and loss of the familiar pace of local life have been some other cultural changes introduced by sudden global exposure (Good, 2005). Attention given to local heritages has also exposed unaddressed tensions between different local constituents. Furthermore, being primarily a practice dominated by professionals and academics, participation of local communities in the decision making process of the preservation of their own local heritage is largely unrealized. Placing local cultural heritage on a global platform has thus transformed these places into contested landscapes.

In addition to these concerns, there are some critical issues that lie beneath the very conceptual framework that directs the idea of World Heritage. These are questions pertaining to the underlying assumptions, values, and definitions of heritage as propagated by the Convention as well as to the historical development of heritage conservation and its current geo-political implications, which may have partly contributed to the negative ground realities mentioned above. This chapter is an attempt to provide an overview of these conceptual concerns and a theoretical approach, called Imageable Heritage, which may reconcile these contradictions within the disciplinary framework of Environment-Behavior Studies. It is primarily concerned with the notion of safeguarding cultural heritage, as this seems to be the most problematic, both in theoretical and pragmatic terms, as this chapter demonstrates.
The Forgotten Heritage

Article I of the World Heritage Convention divides cultural heritage into three categories: monuments, groups of buildings, and sites, all of which primarily consisting of architectural works; works of monumental sculpture and painting; and elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of these features. This exclusive focus on the physical structures of monumental scale has led to conceiving of cultural heritage merely in terms of perceivable architecture that is devoid of associational connotations and other dimensions of a culture. This is evident in the charters and training manuals written on the conservation of cultural heritage that simply covers the maintenance of the physical, visual, material, and structural integrity of buildings (e.g., Feilden & Jokilehto, 1998; Stovel, 1998; The Washington Charter, 1987; The Vienna Memorandum, 2005).

What is forgotten here is the fact that historic landscapes are repositories of meanings, which are products of a certain cultural paradigm of a bygone era (Rowntree & Conkey, 1980; Rapoport, 2005). Symbolic content in historic places reconnects us to that past and that cultural paradigm. Since reconnecting people to their past is a primary objective of heritage conservation (Lowenthal, 1996), conserving symbolic integrity of historic places should then be an essential activity to be undertaken along with the usual practice of preserving their physical (formal, visual, material, and structural) integrity. In fact one of the objectives of strengthening the physical integrity of historic fabric should be to sustain the symbolic integrity and the cultural memory embedded in the historic place. Despite this significance of the symbolic dimension, it is the least understood and largely forgotten attribute in the contemporary inquiry of conservation.

Symbolic attributes of places can be defined based on the framework developed by US-based Australian architect and anthropologist Amos Rapoport (1990). Meanings in environments may communicate ‘higher-level’ concepts of sacred or religious symbolism, cosmological beliefs, spiritual significance, and other higher philosophical ideals. Places may have ‘middle-level’ symbolic dimensions that express social identities, social prestige, political ideologies, concepts of control and well-being, ideas of social rule and role system, and historical associations. Environments may also communicate ‘lower-level’ meanings of instrumental nature of places and things that may include taxonomical categories, functional use, social use, temporal nature, and simple physical properties of places and things. While these are more or less socially-
shared constructions, environments are also associated with affective meanings, more personal level of meanings, such as emotional memories, attachment, and preference (Silva, 2004). An example for higher-level place meanings is the World Heritage Town of Kandy in Sri Lanka, which is considered a sacred landscape by its residents (see Fig. 1). The main temple complex, where the Tooth Relic of the historical Buddha is enshrined is considered the ‘palace where the living Buddha himself resides’, and the city as the ‘abode of gods and the Buddha’ (Silva, 2004). Without these higher-level meanings (among others), the town and the temple complex would simply be a preserved set of monuments without a soul and any cultural, social, or emotional significance and relevance to the community.

Meanings historical places communicated in the past might or might not be similar or in some manner related to the contemporary meanings given by their present communities. Historical meanings may still continue, perhaps in some altered manner. In the case of Kandy, historical meanings have slightly changed; nevertheless they are still relevant as they have provided the basis upon which the contemporary interpretations were constructed: Historically the city was the ‘abode of a divine king sitting among a confluence of gods’, including the Buddha represented by the Sacred Relic (Duncan, 1990). This has undergone a change, as the rule of the ‘divine king’ is long gone, but simply replaced by the belief in the Sacred Relic as an entity of divine power. As the community still holds onto the historic symbolic attributes of the place, the community valued the physical preservation of the temple complex as a worthy effort.
In situations where historical meanings are forgotten yet still relevant and significant to the contemporary life, they can be reclaimed or reconstructed and the community can be informed, which will strengthen the value community has already associated with the heritage place. Historical meanings may not be relevant to the present situation, yet the community may hold the historic place with high regard due to contemporary symbolic associations it may have. Here, informing the community about the historic meanings may be educational and perhaps useful for preservation purposes. What is most critical are the values and meanings the community places upon the historic place at present, how these meanings may change in the future, and how those changes could be in some way mitigated for maintaining the continuing relevance of the historic place and its physical preservation effort.

Meanings associated with historic environments are critical if these places are still habitations for considerable populations, where local communities still interact with the historic fabric in some manner. In addition, in most of these places, the significance of the historic environment to the life of the people goes way beyond a selected number of monuments, and at times encompassing the entire landscape, small structures, and many activities related to the physical environment. The above-mentioned World Heritage City of Kandy in Sri Lanka is a good example of this. The historic town of Bhaktapur in Nepal provides another excellent exemplar. World Heritage status is granted to monument ensembles surrounding three public squares in Bhaktapur. These monuments include the historic palace complex and several temples and shrines dedicated to some deities of Newari Hinduism (Fig. 2). Yet anthropological studies show that there is a significant cosmological order embedded in the cultural landscape of Bhaktapur, which goes beyond the monumental ensemble preserved under the World Heritage patronage both in terms of heritage zone’s territorial boundary and the number of physical structures associated with it. This cosmological order, dictated by the Newari Hindu belief system, is known to the Bhaktapurians and brought to life through everyday activities, rituals, and seasonal festivities (Levy, 1990; Vergati, 2002). Isolating monuments from this daily life and the embodied symbolism portrays the lack of understanding of the role the historic place plays in people’s contemporary life and culture and the conceptual limits embedded in the thinking of World Heritage program. Focusing primarily on the physical built fabric of a historic place is an attempt to fossilize it within a defined time frame which is out of the present context.
The fallacy of this monument-centric vision of the program has been challenged for quite a while especially by the non-Western preservationists, which led UNESCO to declare a special convention for safeguarding the ‘intangible’ heritages of universal value in 2003 (Aikawa-Faure, 2009, Schmitt, 2008). According to the Convention, the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) refers to the practices, expressions, knowledge and skills that communities recognize as part of their cultural heritage. It is also stated that ICH is usually expressed in the forms of oral traditions; performing arts; social practices, rituals and festive events; knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; traditional craftsmanship, and the like (UNESCO, 2003). Similar to the World Heritage List of monuments and sites, UNESCO maintains a Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, nominated by the State Parties (UNESCO Website). These were originally called ‘Masterpieces’ and the use of this term indicated the fact that the same monument-centric vision was in operation in seeing cultural practices and performances as ‘monumental’ elements (thus, masterpieces).

These representative ICH elements are, however, not seen as connected to the built heritage (or ‘tangible heritage’ as they are now called) or, for that matter, to the listed World Heritage monuments and sites. How these practices and traditions infuse life, meaning, and significance to the built heritage, as in the case of Bhaktapur, has not been addressed. It is surprising to see that ‘intangible’ events, practices, and beliefs related to the World Heritage places are not recognized, especially when one of the criteria for enlisting historic places as World Heritage is the explicit connection between such cultural practices and historic places. Criterion VI mentions that historic places of universal significance could “be directly and tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance (UNESCO, 1972).” For example, this is one of the
criteria under which Bhaktapur is enlisted as World Heritage, yet none of its living traditions and belief systems is identified as conservation-worthy.

This mentality of monumentality (including the notion of masterpieces formerly used) embedded in the global conservation thinking tends to delegate the heritage, tangible or intangible, to the past. This bent is problematic especially in the case of Intangible Heritage. Since it is about the ‘living’ cultural practices and events, formed and evolving as of now, the safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage could disregard their inherent transformative and evolving nature, thus making them vulnerable to fossilization and trivialization (van Zanten, 2004; Arizpe, 2004; Smith & Akagawa, 2009). Heritage frozen in time is a troublesome idea.

Dividing heritage into tangible and intangible divisions is nevertheless conceptually convoluted. Such a definition suggests that, firstly, the built heritage does not have any intangible properties. Secondly, it suggests that this so called Intangible Cultural Heritage cannot be ‘felt’ or experienced. Thirdly, it implies that the built heritage does not have connection with the rest of the expressions of a cultural heritage. Some societies do not even separate tangible from intangible forms of heritage (van Zanten, 2004). Intangible heritage should have been defined as the system of cultural values and meanings (which include the belief systems and knowledge systems) that are associated with the tangible heritages, which include all forms of material culture (built forms and artifacts) and practices (rituals, festivals, oral traditions, and arts & crafts). Conservation of tangible heritage should include attempts to safeguard the intangible heritage—the symbolic content—that was historically and is currently associated with the heritage site. As discussed above, historical symbolic content may or may not be relevant to the present conditions, but they still have an educational value in the latter.

The Obscured Heritage

The notion of cultural meanings and values and significance of the present in heritage brings out another important dimension unaddressed in the heritage conservation thinking: the cultural ideology and its temporality embedded in place. Historic places, as part of material culture, are physical manifestations of the operative cultural paradigm of a certain historic time. Meanings they carry, therefore, are also a product of that past and may or may not be a part of the contemporary culture of
the communities who live in those historic places today. If meanings associated with a place today are in some manner related to those historically embedded in that place, the local communities would elicit them easily, understand their connection to the place and its past, and take pride in preserving their heritage. Disconnect between the historic and contemporary meanings of place could threaten the very existence of that place and the efforts taken to preserve it. Consequences of such cultural dissonance between the past and the present can be grave: The fate of the Bamiyan Buddhas in Afghanistan is an extreme example of such a scenario. These colossi had significant cultural value, meaning, and relevance to the people of the Bamiyan Valley during the time they were created in the 6th century. The contemporary belief system and the socio-political order did not see such value and relevance in them, which led to the destruction of these images. This reminds us of the importance of understanding the transformation of cultural meanings associated with a particular historic landscape in the process of preserving it for posterity.

As social and personal constructions, cultural values and meanings we associate with places are elusive and transformative by nature: Meanings could be idiosyncratic; they may be read differently by diverse groups in the same culture, and they change in tandem with cultural changes in society. Some values may last long without change, some transform slightly, some alter their semantics completely, and some vanish entirely from the societal memory (Rapoport, 1990). This complex, subtle and transformative nature of symbolic content and the resultant difficulty of preserving those does not necessarily justify their neglect in conservation, nonetheless.

This point gains currency when heritage conservation is recognized as a practice driven by a value-laden contemporary cultural and political ideology, whether it is related to that of the past or not. How we value our past and its representative spaces and how we conserve and interpret them as heritage is essentially an ideological discourse (Lowenthal, 1996; Smith, 2006). Gero and Root (1990: p.19) write:

“The way in which any group or people charts its past, and what is valued from that past, are social practices, embedded in a larger logic and broader sets of actions. Past is mediated and constrained by a contemporary social context which provides an ideology for interpretation. Interpretations of the past play an active function, a political function, in legitimizing the present context, naturalizing the past so that it appears to lead logically to present social practices and values.”
Examples for heritage management as a political function serving political objectives are abundant. Due to the complexities of Asia’s colonial experience, the post-colonial reactions to the colonial aspects of heritage have been diverse across the region. While some historic cities have accepted the colonial legacy as a vital part of their urban heritage, some have been ‘de-colonizing’ their heritage, simply destroying and replacing the colonial vestiges from their towns with their own versions of vernacular or contemporary buildings (Howe & Logan, 2002). Munasinghe (2005) shows how the World Heritage Town of Vilnius in Lithuania wishes to discard its Soviet image to be identified with a Western heritage. Discordant heritage places such as sites of trauma and atrocity are frequently managed through active neglect or through memorialization after removal (Spennemann, 2006). Spennemann (2006) cites the Mostar Bridge in Bosnia, which was inscribed in the World Heritage List, as an example: the bridge was an enduring symbol of the Turkish presence in the former Yugoslavia thus more an ideological target than a strategic military one for the Bosnian-Serb forces. Heritage is also used for identity politics and nation-building, at times effectively neglecting or marginalizing the heritage of minorities. Worden (2001) mentions how the construction of the political and religious traditions of the pre-colonial feudal Melakan Sultanate were presented as emblematic of the modern Malaysian nation, in which ethnic Malay and Portuguese Eurasian heritages are indigenized while ignoring that of the majority Chinese in the town of Malacca. Henderson (2007) points out how heritage, including that of communism itself, serves as economic, social, and political capital within a communist context in Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, and North Korea. Conservation of cultural heritage, therefore, cannot be simply relegated to a mere technical process. It is an active socio-political process of constructing cultural values and meanings in claiming what is heritage for whom.

The Qualified Heritage

Seeing the conservation practice as a political function questions the validity of the value-based approach of heritage management laid down through the operational guidelines of the World Heritage Convention. In the current practice of value-based management, heritage is defined in terms of value categories, such as historic, aesthetic, scientific, archaeological, and/or ethnological significance. This way of articulating heritage clearly indicates that the values are defined in accordance with the UNESCO’s mission on education and scientific exploration. Moreover, it points out that the values are defined by professionals and academics, and not by the community
who live in these historic areas, whose every day decisions both individually and incrementally affect the historic fabric and the significance of it. It also suggests that the professionals and academics may come from the same country or community where the heritage sites are located and, therefore, may have an understanding of how local communities value and relate themselves to their heritage, yet they may simply disregard these local sensibilities, perhaps due to the authority held by UNESCO over the heritage management (Silva, 2006). This issue is critical in the context of “living” historic urban areas, which confront inevitable pressures for modernization, development, and growth. Communities want to see their living environments upgraded with contemporary amenities and represent social progress and the spirit of the time. The conventional manner of defining heritage significance and its embedded values seems to be too idealistic or abstract and far removed from this reality. They neither capture these socio-economic concerns nor offer solutions to them. The value-based approach thus needs to clearly delineate how heritage could foster the physical and socio-economic growth and *vice versa*. Identifying meanings people associate with their historic environments and defining the value of heritage based on what it means to local community is quite instrumental in successful conservation.

Even though UNESCO documents recommend community engagement to be a part of conservation programs, the nature and degree to which it occurs indicate that public participation seems to be considered another item to be checked in a technical checklist rather than an integral part of the conservation process. UNESCO guidelines talk about the ways of educating the public and promoting the heritage in communities, but not on how they can actively participate in the decision-making process (UNESCO, 2005; Feilden & Jokilehto, 1998). This shows that the underlying political nature of the heritage conservation either has not been seriously understood by the professionals who lead the heritage conservation programs or they have been deliberately oblivious to it or they lack the theoretical and methodological tools to conduct community participation effectively. The former is a result of the monument-centric and technique-oriented mindset, which has also led to the view that the public is uninformed about the value and techniques of heritage management. In some cases preservationists are all too eager to relocate communities away from heritage areas to maintain the ‘authenticity’ of the places. Miura (2005) cites how locals are relocated many times in order to ‘save’ the monuments at Angkor in Cambodia and how that practice has affected the livelihood of the local community and their interaction with their heritages, thus arguing for recognizing the monuments as ‘living’ heritage. Perhaps local communities should be informed on the value and ways of heritage
management before engaging them, but it seems that the preservationists should be
informed first on the importance of and ways of getting effective public participation.

Examples where local inhabitants are totally or selectively excluded from the engaging
with the conservation activity can also be found. A study by Worden (2001) in Melaka,
Malaysia cited above is one of them. Porter (2003) shows how the pejorative urban
attitude led the authors of the preservation campaign toward rural immigrants in the
World Heritage Town of Fez in Morocco to call for the removal of some of the city’s
migrant inhabitants and the alteration of the lifestyles of those that remained through
educational programs. The goal was to create a narrative of the Moroccan national
identity which is urban/Arab/textual Islam as opposed to rural/Berber/deviant Islam.

Situations akin to Angkor around the world have engaged the attention of professional
circles on the question of how to get local communities involved. This has become
more critical since the attention of global heritage movement fell on the intangible
‘living’ cultural heritage, which is considered primarily embodied in the community
rather than in the physical environment (Blake, 2009). In fact, the International Center
for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), the
institute created in 1959 to provide training to conservation professional engaged
in UNESCO programs, has started a program called “Living Heritage-Empowering the
Community” in order to provide both communities and heritage organizations with
tools to achieve greater public participation (Wijesuriya, Nishi, & King, 2006).

In a certain sense, preservation is a process of change: It is a misconception to believe
that conservation projects leave the local heritages and life preserved, untouched and
unaffected. Conservation activity changes the life in the community and, therefore,
the local communities have a right to participate in this process of change. Community
or certain constituents of community may resist preservation projects as they may
see the preservation plans either as hindering the socio-economic progress of their
community or as altering their preferred way of life. These resistances hamper the
preservation program. Whether these are based on imagined and/or real concerns,
the best way to deal with such scenarios is to have the concerned parties engaged in
the decision-making process of the heritage management. Furthermore, the arrival
of the outside heritage professionals with their own set of heritage values and the
involvement of the local community in the conservation process undoubtedly changes
the values and meanings the community associate with their cultural places and
practices. The local community might begin to see their heritage more as an economic
resource, since the heritages have now become geographies for tourist consumption, rather than a cultural source of identity and inspiration.

As argued above, heritage conservation is a value- and meaning-making discourse. While the technical preservation process protects the integrity and authenticity of the physical fabric of the heritage place, the conservation activity itself changes the intangible symbolic associations of the heritage. This raises a question regarding the authenticity and accurate interpretation of the cultural symbolism behind heritage. Heritage professionals should be aware of this situation. Engaging the local community in the process and informing them about these dynamics in the ‘heritage-making process’ is a better way to manage the negative impact in this inevitable change embedded in preservation activity rather than dealing with unengaged and ill-informed local groups. Nevertheless, there still are concerns over how communities should participate in managing their heritages, and the consensus seems to point toward greater autonomy to local communities in the process (Blake, 2009).

The **Dissonant Heritage**

The fundamental problem lies in the inability to recognize the dissonant nature of heritage (Smith, 2006). Heritage is not an immutable beautiful place frozen in time. The past is not an objective fixed reality, but a social construct, the interpretation of which is a dynamic process of making values and meaning. As Lowenthal (1985) pointed out, there are multitude of pasts, but the past we tend to preserve is often the sanitized one, the safe and the comfortable one. Past is thus ‘mediated and constrained by a contemporary social context which provides an ideology for interpretation. It is therefore a political function of legitimizing the present context, naturalizing the past so that it appears to lead logically to present social practices and values (Gero & Root, 1990: p.19).’ Heritage management should therefore be understood primarily as a cultural discourse between the past and the present rather than a mere technical process of maintaining physical integrity of the historic place.

Because of the dissonant nature of heritage, Smith (2006) argues that the idea of heritage is essentially an intangible construct and its material form devoid of any intrinsic value. Although this is correct, the physical form and attributes of historic places cannot be simply disregarded. For instance, Stonehenge cannot be seen as merely a pile of rock boulders; its very formal nature invites the construction of
associations and interpretations of its meaning. The material form and its preservation is thus as critical as the understanding of dissonant values of the place.

An approach that addresses these theoretical issues related to the tangible and intangible dimensions of heritage and that provides methodological tools for successful conservation outcome is consequently required as a way forward in the practice of heritage management.

The Imageable Heritage: A Way Forward

The idea of Imageable Heritage is derived from the notion of imageability, first introduced by US urban geographer Kevin Lynch (1918 -1984), which means that any given place has the capacity to evoke an image of that place in our minds. His contention was that the imageability of a place is based on the combination of visual, spatial, and symbolic attributes of that place (Lynch, 1960). Lynch as well as the followers of his theory focused primarily on the visual and spatial attributes of places and neglected the study of symbolic dimensions in the imageability of place. Rapoport’s (1990) work has been instrumental in understanding the nature of this forgotten aspect of meanings in the environment. Bringing these disparate theoretical ideas together, I argue that the imageability of a place is based both on its tangible physical attributes (objects, buildings, spaces, activities) as well as its intangible associational and symbolic dimensions (memories and associations of the place including belief systems, cultural values and norms). It is the quintessential experiential quality of a place. This sense of place is a phenomenon of the present, collectively generated by contemporary and historic vestiges of place attributes. This sense of place changes in relation to the transformations in its tangible and intangible attributes across time. As the idea of heritage is about the sense of the place as well as its associational connotations and memory, the conservation of heritage can therefore be defined as the process of maintaining the imageability of the historic place, including its physicality and symbolic value, thus the place could live in our memory evoking lasting images of it (Silva, 2004).

The concept of Imageable Heritage provides more than a redefinition of heritage conservation as a practice of managing the place imageability. It clearly distinguishes between the tangible and intangible heritage attributes and delineates what aspects in a historic place should be considered intangible attributes. Yet it is an integrative
construct, which combines the tangible heritage attributes with intangible heritage attributes and emphasizes the interdependent nature of the two types of attributes in evoking a strong place image. No longer do we need to focus primarily on the physical features of historic places, considering cultural traditions and practices isolated from their physical environment, and totally neglecting the elusive symbolic dimensions in places and practices. The Imageable Heritage encompasses all within a single construct. This conceptual clarity is its major contribution to conservation theory.

As the notion of Imageable Heritage combines both the tangible and intangible attributes of a historic place, it delineates the extent to which different tangible and intangible attributes contribute to the evocation of place image. It helps professionals understand that historic places without physical monumentality could be highly imageable because of the symbolic values people associate with it and, therefore, that those places are heritages of significance to that community. Similarly it explains why certain historic monuments are neglected by local groups as those places do not bear any symbolic relation to the present community even if they may be iconic and thus perceptually imageable. It also describes which contemporary tangible and intangible attributes are vital for the lasting memory of a place and how those contemporary elements are connected to the historic attributes. Such knowledge is necessary to guide the heritage management activity to focus on certain contemporary elements as well because of their contribution in highlighting some dimensions of the history of the place. These situations call for a better understanding of the temporal transformations of the values associated with historic places and the degree of relevance of the past to its present community. Knowledge of such dissonance facilitates the design of appropriate measures for preservation and interpretation of heritage places.

Since the Imageable Heritage is identified through the study of mental images people have of a given historic place, it provides a key opportunity for initiating a meaningful participation of the local community in managing their heritage. The image one holds of a place may be different from the image another holds, yet certain aspects of both images could be shared. As the image of a place could vary among groups in the society and across time, primarily in its symbolic dimensions, the notion of Imageable Heritage brings the dissonant nature of the heritage to the fore. It forces the preservation pragmatics to deal with the contested images of the place - between the professionals and the local community and among the different stakeholder groups within the community - addressing the meanings and values placed upon the heritage by those to whom it mostly matters and thereby controlling impulses to impose the
authorized and sanitized versions of heritage.

People’s place images are not necessarily sanitized, celebrated versions of the place: they invariably also include the unpleasant aspects of the place. They represent both the perceived physical and social disorder of the place; they demonstrate the negative associations and memories attached to the place and the effort of the community and/or the individual taken in dealing with such tensions. A careful analysis of place images indicates which place dimensions seem to be essential to the positive image of the place and what dimensions pose a threat to that positive image. Managing the imageability of a historic place then could also be defined as a balancing act of fostering the essential imageable dimensions while alleviating those threats to the positive place image for locals (Silva, 2004). Place images also provide clues to people’s aspirations for their society’s social, economic and political progress. Since heritage management should also be concerned with its role in the socio-economic development of the place, the notion of Imageable Heritage affords the opportunity to identify how people see their socio-economic progress in relation to their heritage, and consequently provide the opportunity to make a heritage more relevant, meaningful and valuable to its community (Silva, 2006). The concept of Imageable Heritage, therefore, provides a framework for integrating historic preservation with the future development of a place.

The importance of Imageable Heritage approach can be demonstrated through a case study. In the World Heritage City of Kandy in Sri Lanka, I found that certain city features, both historic and contemporary as well as man-made and natural, played critical roles in evoking a very strong image of the city in its residents’ minds (Silva, 2004). Their shared image of the city indicated what city elements should receive the greatest preservation attention. While the tangible perceptual characteristics certainly are instrumental in the imageability of those city features, the study found that they have become more imageable, to a greater extent, due to the symbolic values the community has placed upon them. Meanings that were historically associated with the city and city features are still known to the people, yet in a fragmented manner, and the contemporary meanings are constructed based on those fragments and transformed to make them relevant to today’s life in the city. This socio-cultural change in the Kandyan society has occurred in a positive manner that facilitates the continuation of the historical symbolism, even in fragmented form, and contributes immensely to the community’s appreciation of their heritage as a relevant aspect of their life, identity, and civic pride, and
consequently to their intention for safeguarding the city heritage. Residents’ images indicated what historical facts, myths, beliefs, and contemporary rituals and activities in the city have become instrumental in generating and keeping these symbolic associations alive, facilitating the preservation efforts to focus on preparing plans to manage those historical memories and contemporary activities. The study also demonstrated the ways in which the images of the city held by the professionals and the city residents differ and converge, making it clear which aspects of this dissonance could be detrimental to the endurance of the city image and its heritage. Particularly, the images of the city indicated what place dimensions seem to be indispensable and which dimensions seem to be damaging to the city image and the city sense. The quintessential place dimensions included the senses of secrality, historic solemnity, scenic serenity, and well-being. The place dimensions that seem to risk this essential sense of place included congestion, unacceptable social behavior, city’s ailing bureaucratic system, and ethno-religious tensions within the community. An analysis of literature related to the city’s real estate market and tourism industry suggested that these economic activities are based on those indispensable place dimensions. This finding suggested the way to balance the city preservation and city development: in both these activities, the dimensions central to the city image should be fostered and promoted and those that are harmful should be controlled. The idea of Imageable Heritage thus provided an integrative approach to linking city preservation with the city development of Kandy.

The Imageable Heritage as conceived here is essentially a phenomenon of the present, in which the contribution of both the past and the present in the creation of it is recognized, along with the transitory nature of its tangible and intangible attributes over time. The maintenance of an imageable heritage therefore goes beyond the need for the conventional technical preservation of a historic place; it acknowledges that this is an on-going socio-cultural process in which the meaning and value of heritage is constantly interpreted and negotiated depending on the cultural change occurs in the society. Technical preservation of a historic place in itself cannot be a one-time practice either: as the historic place ages, timely technical intervention is required to maintain its physical integrity. Similarly, the values and meanings associated with a historic place change and timely intervention is necessary for their sustenance. The transformations in intangible heritage attributes are more ephemeral and capricious than those in the tangible attributes. While this makes the safeguarding of intangible attributes a difficult task, they make a heritage a living, breathing part of society. This transient nature of intangible attributes, therefore, requires constant
study, determining the effect of those changes on the contemporary significance and relevance of historic place, and the means of mitigating any negative impact on the way a heritage becomes meaningful to a community. Informing the community through educational and other awareness-building programs on these symbolic attributes, collecting oral histories, and safeguarding other cultural traditions and practices that embody, transmit, and communicate these meanings are important in maintaining the relevance and significance of intangible attributes of cultural heritage.

A periodic survey of the public image of historic place facilitates an ongoing involvement of the community in the heritage management process. It also provides the opportunity to evaluate how the demographic changes in the place over time may affect the heritage value system. People’s images of heritage places can be empirically elicited and analyzed using a combination of multiple methods, including interviews, surveys, sketch mapping, and free listing task. Methodologically, identifying the shared image of the historic place is, therefore, not difficult.

The construct of Imageable Heritage consequently provides a useful framework to resolve some conceptual convolutions in the global heritage management discourse and affords a practical method to achieve what has been discussed so far in theoretical terms. Nonetheless it is not presented here as the only way forward: It is another way forward, but a promising one to derive better preservation results.


