

## Community Participation in Urban Heritage Conservation

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### Abstract

This paper covers the issue of community participation in architectural conservation, and presents elaborately a project, which was initiated in Ahmedabad. This paper describes how the municipality made strategic interventions in heritage conservation in Ahmedabad, by involving the community and instilling a sense of pride and belongingness into them so that the futures of the sites are prolonged. It explains the mechanism of the project, which was an alternative and sustainable way of connecting conservation and community participation to revive cultural heritage. This methodology can be replicated in many old cities in order to conserve their cultural and architectural heritage. The paper presents the effectiveness of participatory guided walk as tools for urban revival and means of overcoming various constraints that are typical of many large cities of the developing worlds. It emphasises on role of the community and organisations in participatory conservation movement.

**Keywords:** Community heritage, Local support, Public participation, Strategic intervention for conservation

### 1. Introduction

Current development paradigms consider valuable historic architecture as inefficient, unproductive and inconvenient elements of development. Hence, they suggest replacing them with new buildings. Coupled with depressed economic conditions, this has led to decay and dilapidation of the traditional built environment, often forcing people to migrate to more prospective areas, bringing further decay of the environment. However, the identity and character of a city are the result of centuries of growth in the course of which new elements constantly juxtapose with older repository of wisdom and knowledge. Hence, such old cities, including those in South Asia, have areas with distinct architectural and urban character, full of life, vitality, wealth, power, enlightenment and culture.

In spite of being less aware of their customary built environment, citizens may be oblivious of its importance. Yet they develop a reciprocal relationship with it. Thus instead of just rebuilding the city, urban renewal restores people's relationship with it. As architecture and the urban form embody the community's tradition, heritage and culture, therefore people should look upon the old buildings and areas as assets, not as liabilities. Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) intervened strategically to conserve and develop its built heritage within the 'Walled City'. After a number of surveys, studies and pilot projects, it is now fine-tuning the replicable method. This paper explains an alternative way of linking conservation to community participation for a sustainable process of revival for Historic cities, and presents the initiatives in Ahmedabad.

### 2. Evolution of Traditional Urban Cores

Cities generally developed out of the necessities of its dwellers; not until today, planning intervention has taken place. Urban cores of many old cities in South Asia retained the character of spontaneous mixed use and shop houses as hub of activities, making versatile spaces with pedestrian circulation and less pollution, resource wastage, and congestion. Craftsmen usually have addressed the challenge of making climate-responsive buildings in such areas with narrow winding streets and low-rise built forms. Courtyards and openings ensured good airflow through buildings, many with terraces, and varieties of spaces adapted to seasonal variations in climate. Nevertheless, modern planning concepts segregated residential, commercial and working zones, rather than encouraging mixed land use. Such planning decisions for zoning had generated long travels for livelihood, services, leisure, and socialisation. Urban planning threatened the versatility and culture of the city. As a result, the neighbourhoods and the environment in traditional cities are losing familiarity.

Most of the old urban cores act as Business Districts. Yet these dense, intense and unhealthy areas are devoid of improved services and they are often compared to slums. These areas remain neglected and, in many cases, they are being abused. The areas that once provided the foundation of the city are now considered hindrance to development,

despite possessing wealth of heritage resources and a strong community network. The traditional urban and social fabric, under tremendous commercial pressure, is constantly transforming to accommodate and adjust to the new land use, industrial growths and transport needs, by subdivision and appropriation of housing, overloading infrastructure, overstretching commercial capacity, and bearing traffic problems. These result in a breakdown of the physical and social cohesion, awareness to and appreciation of traditional architecture, and long-established local governance systems.

Manmade disasters and obstacles too are responsible for the degradation of traditional areas. Non-participatory decision making and planning that do not response to the users' needs normally neglect rundown areas, and put priorities on components that often threat the survival of traditional buildings. Owners of such buildings gave in to alien uses to change the character of the place. Increasing land values and irrational reaction of the authorities to the needs of burgeoning population made habitable housing unaffordable for the majority. Yet a huge population continued to live in the old city in vulnerable conditions, to whom preservation of heritage, engulfed in all-pervasive commercialisation, becomes a non-priority.

City authorities across the globe made little or no attempt to preserve heritage, though they often designated monuments and properties as 'National Monuments' and formulated few laws. These laws on many occasions were however weak in protecting the monuments and buildings and met no need of the areas in terms of civic or social amenities, income generation, liveability, etc., a situation typical of cities across the world. The regulations and policies made it difficult to safeguard the heritage buildings, and rather encouraged new and massive constructions. For example in case of Ahmedabad, the permissible Floor Space Index, the policies disqualifying buildings older than 15 years for housing loans, the tax structure that does not favour heritage conservation, etc. are, to a large extent, responsible for this decay of historic areas.<sup>i</sup> Similar case is found in Dhaka where Building Construction Rules disfavour narrow winding streets, building on periphery by keeping interior courtyards, low-rise walk-up structures, etc.<sup>ii</sup>

### 2.1 Image, Identity and Participation

Historic cities and sites hold a vibrant and kinetic society. Their survival is dependent on coping with the present, burdened with complexities of burgeoning population, urban decay, and development challenges. Yet planning and urban development rules and regulations are disconnecting people from their heritage, who are unable to grasp the consequences of their homes and cherished familiar spaces becoming the public domain by gaining 'universal value'.<sup>iii</sup> The enticement of tourist-related wealth confuses the people's expectation and needs as it is romanced with concepts like 'cultural significance'.<sup>iv</sup> Value added by heritage related activities reduces the community's scope to determine its own future. Hence, a good heritage conservation strategy would be to build a strong identity, sense of belongingness and pride in one's own place, culture and heritage; this can provide a rallying point to work together.

A growing number of people searching for economic opportunities in the developing cities have a chance to improve their situation and build a sustainable life, which is a formidable challenge. Most decision-makers fail to see and exploit the people as a resource, though these people add colour to a city with their broad multi-cultural diversity. The lack of necessary economic opportunities has led to a culturally rich yet divided and anonymous society that cannot express itself. Providing them with scope to express culture, heritage and talent is an important component in a sound heritage conservation strategy. Many cities have reinvented themselves by emphasising their historical roots and cultural assets, traditional ambience and rich architecture, which give credence and justification to providing a distinct identity to cultural expressions and manifestations.

Heritage is much more than just physical or tangible asset, manifest in festivals, fairs, exhibitions, cultural and sports competitions, and other aspects of the culture and religion. These are an intrinsic part of the local cultural fabric, representing unique heritage value. Citizens Forums can highlight the importance of the assets they possess, and thus bring the community together, protective of their pride heritage. Transfer of skill related to traditional art and craft is also critical in this regard; it can occur in number of ways like apprenticeships under a master craftsman (who may be a *'living cultural asset'*), facilitated by such forums.

Urban neighbourhoods offering a wide range of familiar and historical landmarks that are important in creating and sustaining a strong sense of belonging and attachment to urban life are a key domain for the transmission of shared values and norms. In a rapidly urbanising and globalising world, these hold opportunities for valuing community and enhancing the city's cultural heritage and unique competitive edge. (Yuen, 2005) Instead of asking, the planners to

achieve development objective, range of stakeholders are often engaged to set choice(s), formulate modes, make decision and execute. For example, the public is invited to share and discuss how local cultural heritage assets can be protected. These offer scopes to reveal the assets that define the collective memory (Yuen, 2005).

Conservation should go beyond the monumental relics of church, state, and monarchy to include the process of celebrating the familiar and beloved cultural heritage in daily lives. Projects worldwide now holistically protect cultural resources rather than only monumental or architectural splendour. Sustainable heritage conservation depends on the involvement of local communities. In Singapore, local area conservation went beyond the physical dimension to conserve more of the built heritage and nature areas...*conservation should embrace not just buildings from the colonial and earlier periods but also more recently developed areas which are rich in culture and character* (The Straits Times, 24 Nov. 2000).<sup>v</sup>

Worldwide the traditional cities face the dilemmas, like, what needs to include or to exclude? How to preserve the sense of a place and sense of belonging within the context in which land uses suffer from growing demand in economic terms? What to do to retain the history, character, and vitality of old cities, as cities continue to grow and evolve with time? Too often government initiated conservation projects involve artificial replicas of the past, managed spectacles designed to impress, which are devoid of life and cultural memory. The current preservation schools recognise that the conservation must learn the social value and context of places from the community. Successful projects show that distinctiveness cannot be kept by statutory actions alone; rather it must embrace the community. The richness of places and people's attachment to them grows from their daily use. Thus familiar neighbourhoods, with its place-identity, constitute opportunity for a new definition of active heritage assets. They offer living cultural resources familiarised with social meanings invested in them by the workers and residents. These are important ingredients of collective feeling that 'this is our place'.



**Figure 01:** The historic Ahmedabad Jama Masjid  
Source: Debashish Nayak



**Figure 02:** Tin Darwaza on the old city wall

## 2.2 Efforts for Heritage Conservation

Urban Heritage represents an appreciation of the past, which may be more tangible than that illustrated in grandeur monuments. Such heritage elements, possibly, extend a social insight into the life of a previous era, and more often give a sense of identity and of belonging within physical surroundings responding to the human scale. It is not just through the actions of international heritage bodies, but also through the often-passive appreciation of the users and visitors that urban conservation is gathering momentum. For it to be real, a place has to present a meaning to its users and occupants. Towards this end, finances need to be available to initiate and realise urban conservation programs.

The citizens alone cannot initiate heritage preservation; rather the government agencies and the local government institutes should play a pro-active role for the realisation of the conservation goals by providing direction, legislation, protection, control and monitoring. It suggests that the involvement of a well-represented local government institute closer to the grassroots people is imperative to implement an integrated conservation program. The ultimate goal calls in for the empowerment and capacity building of the concerned authorities for the effective realisation of the conservation aim. A relationship needs to be established between the financers, the policy makers, and users, to achieve the satisfaction of both. There is a need for the dissemination of the ideas and experiences amongst the various cities and a practical replication of the same in their respective contexts.

The creation and spreading of awareness regarding the heritage resources through heritage walks, workshops, plays and skits, celebration of heritage festivals, etc. amongst the local inhabitants is an important aspect of the whole process. The mass media play an important role in raising awareness and educating the local communities on heritage issues and the representative value. Seeking their active involvement in the heritage conservation action will ensure that the local community is informed and involved in the activities. Thus, links to global information network can increase the availability and access to locally relevant information and tourism opportunities.



**Figure 03:** House to house rapport building by the architects of Urban Study Group



**Figure 04:** Discussion with community elders

Reference: A community conservation movement was undertaken in Sakharibazaar, Dhaka. Source: Taimur Islam

### 3. The Ahmedabad Initiative

Ahmedabad dates back to 10C town Ashava and late-11C town Kamavati nearby. The present Walled City was created during the 15C Ahmed Shahi period. A new palace and fort covering 500mx800m were built in Vadra. The city expanded outwards and strengthened fortifications in the 17-18C. It started to decline then as many parts of the inner city were abandoned and gradually deteriorated. During the British rule, political stability and beginning of textile industry resulted in economic growth and prosperity; diversified types of buildings were built. The wholesale markets, mechanised industries and worker's quarters on eastern suburbs, the Ellis Bridge, residential buildings and educational institutions were also established. The physical expansions resulted in congestion and decay of the Walled City, as economic activities grew unhindered. Fort walls were mostly pulled down towards the mid-20C.

The nucleus of activities at Vadra and Manekchowk, and the twelve gates on the wall, created a radial street pattern. Pol (micro mahalla) around residential streets entered through the gates from wider streets became typical. It would have at the most two gates that bar entry at night to a particular pol, which thus remains secured by a silent code of citizen's vigilance.<sup>vi</sup>

#### 3.1. Obstacles to Heritage Conservation

The AMC and the Ford Foundation studied the essential elements (history, form, wall, gates, pols, house patterns and the problems related to old fabric) required in the conservation of city's historical areas. A list of heritage buildings and precincts was prepared. Following those, a conservation policy and a demonstration project were also proposed. The AMC improved upon the report, as it found that the list was not intensive and not much explored and documented. It made a new list with about 15,000 buildings, which are now protected under a recently gazetted Heritage Regulation. Various obstacles identified in Walled City heritage conservation are as below.

##### 3.1.1 Regulations and Policies

During the British rule, 'Road Lines' were demarcated to keep right of way for future road widening in the Walled City. Hence, the facades falling within the line were not cared for. Low height and interior courts meant the traditional mahallas consume much less floor areas than permitted by 3.0 FSI in the Walled City. Multi-storied buildings on large amalgamated plots taking advantage of high FSI threaten the character and integrity of the existing form. The FSI was then reduced to 2.0 to allow only restoration and upgrading of the property. The tax structure disfavours retention of old structures. For example, Chabutaras (bird feeder) are taxed at commercial rate. Vacant properties have low tax, leading to buildings of heritage value locked up and let to ruin.

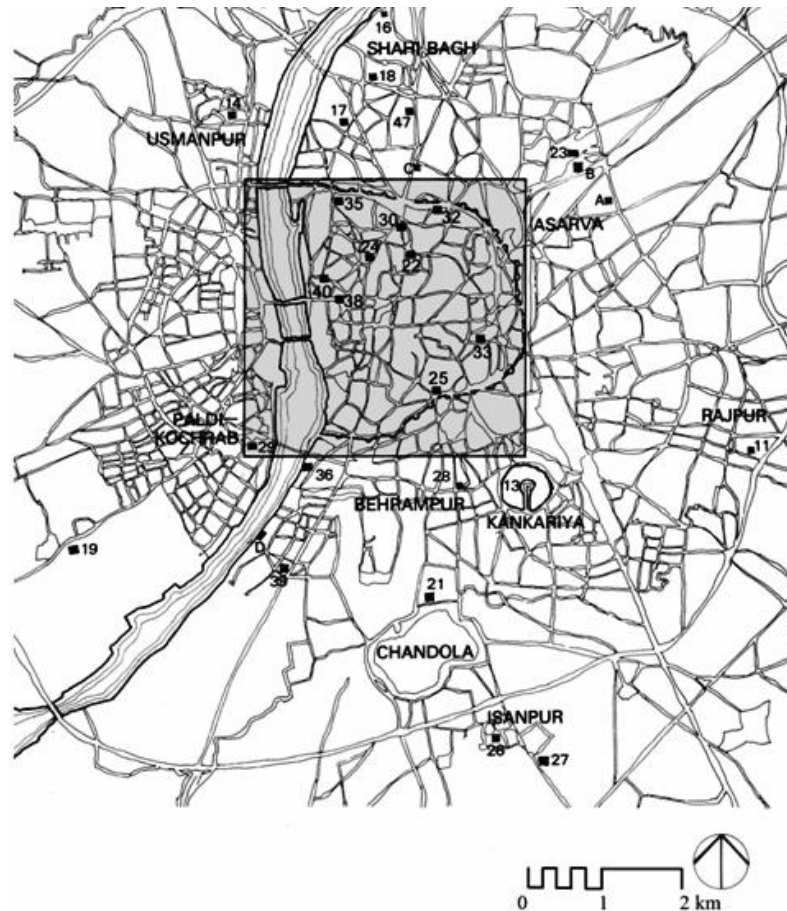


Figure 05: Map of the City of Ahmedabad showing the old walled city (inset) and historic structures

### 3.1.2 Economic Changes

Large parts of the Walled City residents were tenants working in the textile mills. With the mills closing down, they became jobless, and could not maintain the old buildings where they lived. However, the growing jewellery in the area attracted many skilled and unskilled people and traffic. The influx of outsiders destabilised the social fabric in the pols, and raised the crime rate; riots and communal problems forced many people to migrate. Other commercial ingress into the old fabric generated after the addition of the Relief Road, created alien and competing changes in the land use and price. Also new or converted warehouses disturbed the residential character.

### 3.1.3 Lack of Information

Lack of appreciation of conservation among the common people is ascribed to poor awareness about the need, justification, and technique of conservation. Scarcity of long-obsolete building materials, technique, or craftsman for repair works due to lack of patrons and advent of often-cheap modern methods and products, caused delay in repair works, and led to inaction and deliberate decay of the building. Proper maps and drawings were often absent.

## 3.2 Strategic Partnerships

The success of intervention depends on a mutual understanding, strategic partnership, and widespread participation of a variety of stakeholders including the locals. In these activities, a proper role of media was important and integral to give publicity and create awareness among the commoners. In Ahmedabad, a series of activities in forms of consultation and participation at ground level were organised to elicit community attitude and desire. Attended by citizen groups, community representatives, renowned personalities and AMC officials, a meeting held in Khadia (Old City) discussed the problems, possibilities and strategies of conservation and development of the Walled City.

'Preservation of the Past and Glimpses of History' was launched at Desai-ni-Pol, which was involved in the freedom movement, as part of the 'World Heritage Week' celebration, jointly organised by citizen's groups and AMC to discuss

'Heritage'. The residents released a booklet to mark the Day, listing the historical houses, personalities, and a chronicle of important events. In another event organised on the 50th anniversary of Independence focused on 28 houses connected with the freedom struggle. The citizens led by elected and government officials visited these houses.

The AMC held more publicised Heritage Walks through the mahallas. The community came forward to help by keeping the route and the surroundings restored and maintained. Involvement of local volunteers and a rapport with the community is crucial to sustain such participatory programs. The AMC introduced a process of certification to recognise the role of the community and its members. The AMC put up nameplates and inaugurated them in the presence of AMC officials, locals, politicians and elderly persons.

Gandhi's birthday was also celebrated and buildings associated with his life and work visited. Netaji's birthday was celebrated in the 1905 Bengal Home where partisans stayed and trained the locals in revolution. The need for searching authentic history and associated places, and preserving the cultural heritage that includes all such events were stressed upon during a public meeting. Death anniversary of a local Kaviswar Nanlal Dalpatram was observed in Lambeshwer-Ni-Pol where he used to live, cooperated by literary organisations.

'Pol – Etale molun dahin ne upar katke gor' was staged to create awareness and instil pride in tradition, and to initiate a dialogue with the pol people. A collaborative effort among the CRUTA Foundation, Theatre Media Centre and the Ahmedabad Community Foundation, the play described the life and culture in the pols, and discouraged tearing them down. It also encouraged people to revive the traditional system of local governance (panch).<sup>vii</sup>

### 3.2.1 Inter Departmental and Public Private Partnerships

The AMC in association with the Archaeological Survey of India implanted landscape elements and street furniture around the fort wall and city gates. The ASI worked on the physical restoration, while the AMC worked on the landscape and lighting. The AMC with the assistance of state government, the ASI, citizen groups and the NGOs, is giving façade restoration grant (50% of the cost). One of the pole-mounted transformers located next to a Chabutara, designed by a local Architect to highlight the Chabutara and conceal the transformer, will be replicated in the future.

Dalpatram Memorial was proposed at the site of the poet's house. In absence of proper drawings and plans, the effort relied on the memory of the elders, and adjoining buildings comprising the original façade studied for an authentic memorial, Tulsi Manch and a large bronze statue. The statue of renowned local poet Akha Bhagat was installed at Desai-ni-Pol.

Swaminarayan Temple Trust supported a project to restore the remains of Manek Burj, the southwest tower of the Wall associated with the city's founding. A building near Panchkuwa Gate was restored and used as Ward Office. Inspired Collector of Ahmedabad requested the AMC to design a Heritage Gate for its complex and took up renovation of its buildings. City Museum was established with the help of architect BV Doshi.

The public representatives elected at various levels usually have direct contact and rapport with their constituents, often with profound influence. Hence, they were taken into confidence for support and involvement. The AMC allocated US\$ 125,000 to start Heritage Cell to look after related activities and policies.

### 3.3 Collaborations

Helped by the AMC Heritage Cell, heritage walk and other initiatives were contextually adapted in many Indian cities like Amritsar, Pondicherry, Baroda and Jamnagar. The experience of the participatory heritage revival activities were shared with smaller Gujarati towns. The AMC officials helped them to prepare comprehensive plans for improving physical conditions and heritage conservation. This will hopefully lead to regional small town development initiatives. In 1999, the AMC signed an MOU with the French Government for a scientific study of the walled city. A French team along with AMC staff is working jointly in the project. The Dutch had a small presence in Ahmedabad in earlier days in connection with trade and commerce; restoration of a Dutch factory and graveyard, and an interpretation booklet exploring the related history are underway, through collaboration with the Dutch government.

Inclusion of Walled City of Ahmedabad in the List of Endangered Heritage Sites by the World Monument Fund intensified the activities and generated international attention. In 2000, the Housing and Urban Development Corporation approved investment for heritage exploration; an MOU was signed between the AMC and the HUDCO to detail its financial implication.



**Figure 06:** Distributing Certificate of Appreciation to local volunteers  
Source: Debashish Nayak



**Figure 07:** A scene of the street drama on Pol

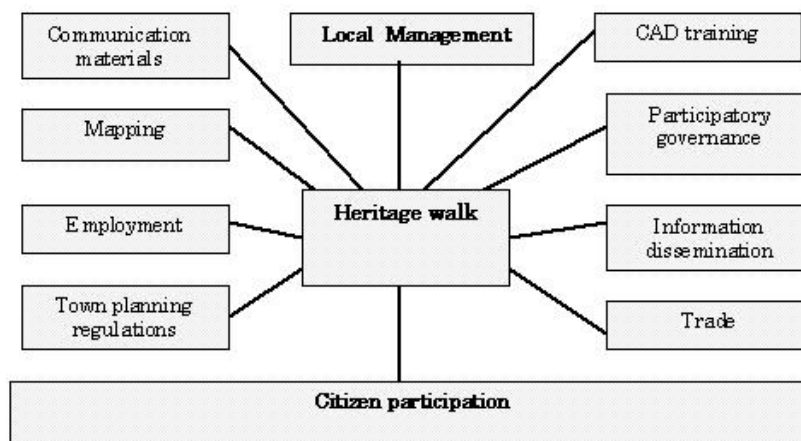
#### 4. Heritage Walk: a tool for urban revival

Heritage Walk is an effective tool whereby the architectural heritage, cultural heritage and the craft heritage of the inner city are explored. The walk takes the people following specific routes ambling through the traditional settlements, exploring the heritage resources, such as the beautiful temples, historic buildings, ornate structures, pols, shops, traditional socio-cultural activities, and a lot more.

##### 4.1 Role of Organisation

The exploring and exposing of the inner areas of the Walled City required action by the AMC, to provide basic infrastructure like paving, street cleaning, street lights, signage, public amenities, etc. The walk brought a positive change in the land use pattern of the area, by putting a number of the heritage buildings into serving the tourists who can get the feel of the place by staying within them. The revenue influenced the area's economy positively. Below is a list of heritage conservation essential for a municipality:

1. Make strategic intervention,
2. Start with and optimise the use of available resources,
3. Elicit support of local architects, other professionals, NGOs and CBOs,
4. Get support of local people, individuals, formal and informal groups,
5. Identify both short-term and long-term implement-able projects,
6. Involve elected representatives and bureaucracy,
7. Coordinate with other government and non-government agencies and institutes,
8. Establish a heritage unit in the local government,
9. Inform and sensitise all agencies about heritage work, and
10. Recognise and cooperate with International bodies and coordinate their actions.



**Figure 08:** Linking Heritage Walk with other Strategies

The AMC, helped by the Conservation and Research of Urban Traditional Architecture Foundation, set up a Heritage Cell in 1996 to create awareness among the citizens and develop a comprehensive plan for conservation of the Walled City of Ahmedabad, the first of its kind among the Indian municipalities. The AMC Heritage Department works under the supervision of a Deputy Municipal Commissioner helped by the CRUTA volunteers and deputed AMC staff.

The Heritage Cell is creating awareness of and initiating actions to guard heritage. The objectives were to enable people to take pride in their building tradition and get involved in its revival through a sustainable policy; people's involvement was imperative to continue with such an action. The innovative and interactive process was self-sufficient to conserve architectural and cultural heritage in many old city centres. The walks display the unique heritage of the city to the locals and the visitors. The list of heritage buildings within the walled city area was used to start restoration projects gradually. Street theatre and pol-day celebration generated spontaneous public participation celebrating their culture and belongingness, and made them realise the potential of their heritage.

### 4.2 Fall-Out

The Heritage Cell in the AMC was a pioneering effort. Since the initiation of its programs, many restoration projects spontaneously undertaken by the owners are in progress along the heritage route. Old spaces are being renovated in accordance with new techniques, without disturbing the historic character, under the guidance of the Heritage Cell. Thus, the Cell grew the capacity to provide consultation in preparing restoration works and on-site assistance. The agreement between the French government, AMC and HUDCO, under which the buildings older than 15 years can get loans for restoration activities, indicates a national policy that now appreciates the value of architectural heritage conservation.

With heritage issues integrated in the development agenda, the unique concept created a wider impact on the nearby towns and cities. The Gujarat City Manager Association organised a Transfer Seminar in 2001 when many cities participated, and awarded the AMC experience as a 'Best Practice'. Following its example, Jaipur, Amritsar and Delhi are also taking steps to protect and preserve their heritage through community participation.

After several initiatives through Vibrant Gujarat, the government as Urban Development Year has declared the year 2005, and the Gujarat Urban Heritage Institute for training and promoting conservation initiatives in the State was set up. Gujarat today has a strong heritage conservation movement; the inclusion of Champaner as a world heritage site provided an impetus. Significant efforts have resulted in many conservation projects being taken. The number of trained professionals and active volunteers has also increased.

## 5. Conclusion

Despite a wealth of heritage resources and a strong community network, historic urban settlements are succumbing to rapid urban changes. Much effort by the authorities to reverse the decline of these areas that are vital for the local identity and continuity is absent. This calls for an alternative way of utilising community resources and initiatives through participation of the community and CBOs for managing, regenerating and redeeming the quality of these areas.

Participatory advocacy planning helped ignite the heritage conservation movement in many places.<sup>viii</sup> However, this was often institutionalised to such an extent that people became cynical; yet many termed the efforts as token. Nevertheless, it did not diminish participation as a valuable means for a historic town to tap an extraordinary array of resources, commitment and support. It was indispensable to the success of the conservation movement, dependent on the degree of personal attachment to the goals shared by the community.

The conservation efforts in Ahmedabad intended to build capacity of the community and facilitate its involvement in the revival process so that it could assume the ownership and keep the efforts going. The energy mobilised by the involvement of communities facilitates many developmental interventions. People themselves can take responsibilities for many projects, which could be carried out with funds raised by them.

The government or non-government organisations have an enormous role in reviving the inner cities, by preserving its heritage, but not the resources needed to accomplish it isolated. Sustainability cannot be achieved unless heritage conservation finds relevance in the lives of the people seeing it as their responsibility. Heritage Walk convinces them that there is a need for social, cultural and architectural revival. Such participatory approaches can enable people to take pride in preserving their culture and heritage.



However, in case of Ahmedabad, individual voluntary efforts could not be scaled up due to the continued apathy among the public. One has to strongly propagate that Heritage preservation does not oppose development, but can be parallel to it. Instead of being nostalgic in a world where established beliefs and social structures are increasingly challenged, an understanding of the past provides a perspective on the present, a means to understand and make sense of it. Thus, heritage has a much wider power to inspire and move people towards the progress and development of their community.

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- <sup>i</sup> As against these, Building Rules in some parts of India, like Chennai, allow higher Floor Space Index (building more) for additions or improvements made to existing structures without demolition compared to new structures. Thus, the owners of heritage buildings are discouraged to pull down structures and building new as that will mean a loss of floor area.
  - <sup>ii</sup> However, the 2008 Building Construction Rules for Dhaka for the first time mention heritage buildings, maintaining their list, safeguarding/honouring historic areas and heritage structures, controlling mass, colour, offset, height etc. in historic areas or sites bear historic structures.
  - <sup>iii</sup> Value is a social association of qualities produced through cultural-social processes; outstanding is the best and most representative example. Considering the global scale, this is not limited to local community. In addition to cultural and natural properties, the World Heritage List includes properties with both outstanding cultural and natural value. A feature of the World Heritage Convention is the protection of heritage of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), which transcends national values and has an importance to present and future generations. While OUV is defined in the Convention's Operational Guidelines, discussion of its meaning and application continues to maintain an appropriate threshold of value for the selection of World Heritage properties to uphold the credibility of the List. A heritage resource will obtain universal value if it is a true and authentic expression of a particular culture, considering history, art or science of monuments or groups of buildings, and from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological points of view.
  - <sup>iv</sup> Cultural heritage value means possessing historical, archaeological, architectural, technological, aesthetic, scientific, spiritual, social, traditional or other special cultural significance, associated with human activity. It describes what is important about property with respect to heritage listing, forming the basis of conservation of any kind to retain cultural significance of the property. An integrated approach emphasizes the retention or enhancement of cultural significance balanced with other relevant property management concerns so that it is achievable and add to the longevity and viability of the property. The 1981 Burra Charter developed conservation principles that include comprehensive definitions of items, and introduces the concept of cultural significance, the 'aesthetic, historic, scientific or social value for past, present and future generations', and requires this to be defined for each place, and conservation plans to be established and justified prior to any intervention. Burra Charter, describing conservation processes for good practice, is well established in Australia, and is used by other countries too.
  - <sup>v</sup> The Singapore Master Plan 2003 shows that locally based identities are important to most people; collective historical memories play a strong role in their sentimental attachments to places and community identity. In an increasingly placeless world, urban neighbourhoods can play an important part in people's personal and social identity. Singapore's search for identity in conservation underscores a common first principle of participatory development: the primacy of citizenship – a key strategy in the making of a distinctive city, making use of not just quantitative analyses of the urban fabric but also people's personal views and feelings, to identify the underlying qualities of the sense of place and attachment to locality.
  - <sup>vi</sup> The 18C Pols are quaint honeycomb-like community dwellings enclosed by a wall and protected by huge gates. They stand out in their architectural finesse and appeal –richly carved woodwork and stone facades nurtures within its folds, unwritten pages of history and the warmth of communal harmony. Narrow lanes crisscrossing pols terminate in squares characterised with the presence of community wells and carved wooden *chabutaras* for feeding pigeons. Numerous Jain and Hindu shrines dotting these lanes testifies the amicable life these communities traditionally enjoyed.
  - <sup>vii</sup> Like many traditional towns of South Asia, a civic committee consisting of five elders were formed in Ahmedabad, in order to take care of local problems through community initiatives and resolve conflicts through arbitration. A similar system (*Panchayet*) existed in Dhaka during the Mughal rule, which was later revived in the late-19C on behest of Nawab Abdul Ghani.
  - <sup>viii</sup> The community action groups got engaged in downtown revitalisation programs across USA in the 1980s, and the government started to consult public to ensure adequate community input into the decision-making process.

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