



**2021 HERITAP WEBINAR ON CONSERVING THE HEARTS OF ASIA**

# RURAL HERITAGE

**November 18-19 2021, UTC/GMT+8**

**Theme 1:** Recognition of rural heritage, understanding relevant conventions and programmes and explore building synergies

**Theme 2:** Community empowerment and multiple stakeholders' involvement

**Theme 3:** Linking metropolis and rural areas

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United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织



World Heritage  
Convention

世界遗产  
公约



The World Heritage Institute of Training and  
Research for the Asia and the Pacific Region  
under the auspices of UNESCO

亚太地区世界遗产  
培训与研究中心

# Executive Summary

On 18-19 November, the World Heritage Institute of Training and Research for the Asia and the Pacific Region under the auspices of UNESCO (WHITRAP Shanghai) organized the 2021 Heritage Asia and the Pacific (HeritAP) annual meeting on “Conserving the Hearts of Asia: Rural Heritage”. Heritage practitioners across the world especially those from the Asia-Pacific region gathered together and shared their practices and experiences of rural revitalization. JING Feng, Chief of Asia and the Pacific Unit at the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, and Webber NDORO, Director-General at the ICCROM, delivered the opening addresses. Six regional representatives from UNESCO, IUCN, the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), WHITRAP Shanghai, the International Committee of Vernacular Architecture (ICOMOS-CIAV), and the ICOMOS/IFLA International Scientific Committee on Cultural Landscapes (ISCCL), presented keynote speeches. 14 presentations were delivered by the national representatives from China, Thailand, Japan, Vietnam, South Korea, Pakistan, India, Iran, and Malaysia.



*2021 HeritAP Poster*

In the webinar, members of HeritAP summarized the key characteristics of rural heritage, looked into the way that current international conventions and programs directly or indirectly contribute to rural heritage conservation, and finally shared experiences of rural heritage conservation based on case studies. These case studies reflect the **four key issues** that have been encountered throughout the practices: the building of synergies among the current conventions and programs; community empowerment and multiple stakeholder involvement; integrated development of industries and the balance among the social, economic, and ecological aspects; and the linkage of metropolis with rural areas.

This webinar was concluded with a proposed outlook for what WHITRAP can do in the future. HeritAP will continue to focus on rural heritage especially the four key issues in the following years. With the vision to conserve rural heritage, WHITRAP Shanghai has established five missions: to improve the quality of agricultural development through advanced technology; to promote green, resilient, and people-centred development of rural areas; to enhance rural culture and its revitalization; to respect traditional knowledge and provide assistance to the communities; to establish a harmonious urban and rural relationship.

We are expecting to see more exemplary cases across the Asia-Pacific region that will be presented in the HeritAP Webinars in the following years, and more advanced experience can be shared at a larger scale to contribute to the sustainable development of rural heritage.

# Summary of Annual Meeting

Based on the 2021 HeritAP Webinar on “Conserving the Hearts of Asia: Rural Heritage”, the summary consists of four sections. The first section identifies the characteristics and components of rural heritage. The second section sketches out the current threats and opportunities. The following section shows the webinar outcomes to address these threats and opportunities, centered around the four issues mentioned above. Each issue is unfolded by the relative case studies provided by the speakers. Based on such discussions ahead, the final section offers an outlook of what heritage practitioners and WHITRAP Shanghai can do in the future.

## 1. Key characteristics of rural heritage of Asia

The term ‘rural’ is often characterized in contrast to ‘urban’. A number of attributes associated with rural in Asia include low-density of population; an absence of industrial or white-collar employment opportunities; inferior infrastructure and public services; tightly knit social networks with strong identities, reflecting cooperative culture; landscapes dominated by agriculture, water courses and forests; frequently poverty. Rural also manifests itself in a strong interdependency between nature and culture.

Rural areas are a crucial reserve of cultural and biological diversity. They provide food across the world and are a precious inventory of ancient human settlement patterns, farming practices, and related local knowledge systems. Such Indigenous practices, which draw on sustained knowledge of local environment can become a powerful tool for addressing emerging crises such as climate change. They support rural livelihoods and can positively contribute to global challenges.

Rural can be heritage itself. Long periods of societal development over centuries have established socio-economic foundations, cultural products that may have spiritual dimensions, traditional knowledge systems and practices of land use that reflect populations’ world views. Rural heritage is embedded in the activities of communities that have shaped their livelihoods, living environments and cultural practices in relation to their territory’s natural conditions, biophysical habitat and resources. It demonstrates the continuity of human-nature relationship and is encompassed in places created in the past that continue to perform the original purpose for which they were established. Thus, the significance of rural heritage resides not only in the landscapes, agricultural systems and settlements created by communities, but also in the knowledge and wisdom that infuse their construction and maintenance, and in associated traditions, techniques, tools, and products.

Rural heritage, therefore, can be considered as a broad and inclusive concept that encompasses rural landscapes, rural settlements, farming practices and other customs that have been shaped and maintained by people and communities for which they have cultural meanings.

It includes the traditional techniques, skills, and land use patterns that have enabled human communities to exist in relationship with their natural environment.

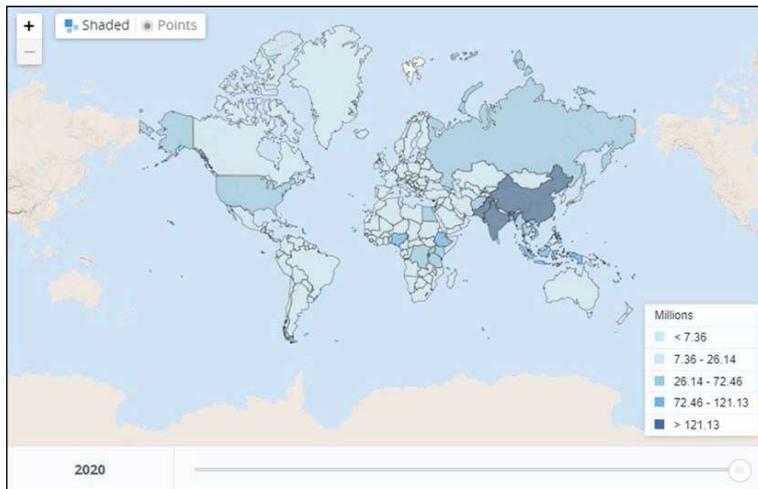
It additionally encompasses the products (plant varieties, local animal species, and farmed produce) resulting from this human-nature interaction and the objects and tools used to achieve and maintain these.

Finally, it comprises local languages (including toponyms, Indigenous names of flora and fauna), means of expression (music, oral literature, festive events, sports), and intangible practices (knowledge of medicine, meteorology, astronomy, etc.) that are also evidence of a community’s interaction with its rural territory.

Rural heritage is therefore inextricably linked to rural revitalization. It is dynamic, evolving, not frozen in space and time: any threats as well as opportunities must be approached in this knowledge.

## 2. Current situation: threats and opportunities

Asia occupies the largest rural population, while extreme poverty is concentrated mainly in rural areas (Figure on this page). Since the beginning of this century, massive changes have begun to occur, of which one of the most significant is a steady rural decline worldwide as populations move to urban areas. According to the 2018 Revision of World Urbanization Prospects produced by the Population Division of UN DESA, the world's urban population is expected to increase to 68% by 2050. This increase in urban living directly reflects rural decline. Conditions in different rural areas are unique to the local environment, but the challenges they face are common, including an ageing population being left behind, the abandonment and neglect of rural dwellings, and a drastic decline in the quantity and quality of services available to rural populations, such as education, health facilities, water and sanitation, recreational amenities, and public welfare. Rural areas have not been given much attention from the international development debate until recently. The accelerated urbanization process has driven national governments, international organizations and agencies to focus their attention on cities and metropolises and position them centrally within development strategies (e.g. UNESCO Creative Cities Network since 2004, UNEP Sustainable Cities Program since 2011, UN-HABITAT SDGs Cities Program since 2019). The threats are obvious when we put over-emphasis on urban at the cost of rural. However, there could also be opportunities while we plan and manage the metropolis linking with immediately surrounding rural areas.



*Rural Population / World Bank Data in 2020*

An unneglectable aspect of rural decline leads to the impacts related to the social, economic, and ecological fields. Rural revitalization has been highlighted in recent years (e.g., the ICOMOS-IFLA Principles Concerning Rural Landscapes as Heritage 2017, the International Day for Monuments and Sites 2019 on Rural Landscapes, and the World Social Report 2021 on Reconsidering Rural Development by UN SEDA). New opportunities are also emerging, including modern technologies that enable us to collect, process and visualize relevant data, the rise of the rural tourism industry, and a revolution of agricultural patterns, infrastructures, and renewable energy productions to meet world needs. Thus, how the current international conventions and programs may work together to mitigate the negative impacts, and some guidance for rural revitalization as well as rural heritage conservation, will be explored.

### 3. Outcomes of 2021 HeritAP Webinar

Faced with the current threats and opportunities, the international community needs to participate in discussions and reflections on the contexts, functions, and prospects of rural revitalization. The 2021 HeritAP Webinar on “Conserving the Hearts of Asia: Rural Heritage” focuses on the four key issues below:

#### 3.1 The building of synergies among the current conventions and programs

Although the current conventions, programs and tools don’t directly deal with rural heritage, they provide leading experience for rural heritage conservation. The safeguarding of rural heritage as an interdisciplinary practice requires the joint efforts of multiple conventions and programs. HeritAP presents the 1972 World Heritage Convention (WHC), the 2003 Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention (ICH), the Programme on Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS), the Connecting Practice Project, the International Scientific Committee on Cultural Landscapes.

In FAO’s program on GIAHS introduced by Professor MIN Qingwen, 40 of 62 agricultural heritage systems designated so far are in Asia and the Pacific region. The holistic description of GIAHS site as ‘a compound heritage that integrates the characteristics of natural, cultural, and intangible cultural heritage, and a typical social-economic-natural complex ecosystem composed of economic, biological, technological, cultural and landscape components’ provides an instance of the integrated conservation of rural heritage. A specific case is the Hani Rice Terraces, a Chinese heritage site listed on World Heritage and GIAHS. The excellent performance of its “Forest-Village-Terrace-River” landscape and the water system to survive the severe drought in 2009-2010 demonstrates the resilience of traditional ecological landscapes and thus the superior value of rural heritage.

- > The concept of GIAHS is **distinct from, and more complex than,** a conventional heritage site or protected area/landscape.
- > A GIAHS site is a **living, evolving system** of human communities in an intricate relationship with their territory, cultural or agricultural landscape or biophysical and wider social environment.



*GIAHS: A Legacy for Future / MIN Qingwen*

**Reasonable landscape structure**

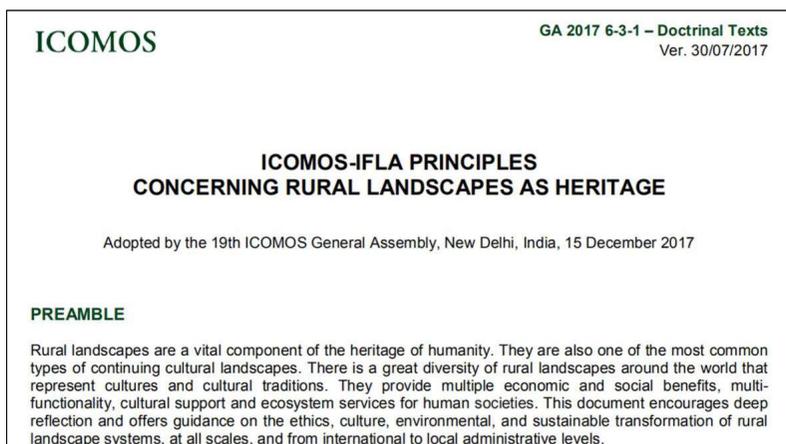
The forest, village, terraces and river compose the typical ecological landscape which is called “Four-in-One Model”.

Gamini WIJESURIYA, Special advisor to WHITRAP Shanghai, introduces the 1972 World Heritage Convention. He emphasizes that the Convention of 1972, though without specific reference, still applies to rural heritage. Many rural villages in China, Japan, Korea are identified as World heritage sites, which could function as flagship cases. He also mentioned series of partnership between the World Heritage Centre and its advisory bodies including ICCROM, ICOMOS and IUCN: the Connecting Practice (Linking Culture-Nature), and the Course on Promoting People-centered Approaches, etc. Heritage has no boundaries, and these programs can be referred for rural heritage conservation.



*The Relationship between the 1972 World Heritage Convention and Rural Heritage*  
/ Gamini WIJESURIYA

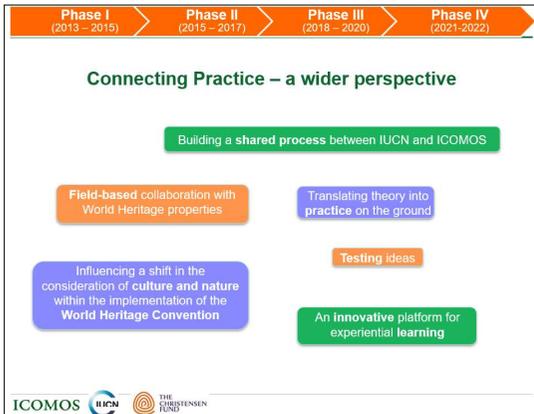
HAN Feng, Vice president of ICOMOS-IFLA ISCLL, provides a cultural landscape approach to rural heritage. She introduces the international trend on the synergy of nature and culture represented by the establishment of Cultural Landscape as a new category of World Heritage since 1992. Rural landscape, as the most common type of evolving cultural landscape, therefore, receives increasing attention from the international community. The ICOMOS-IFLA Principles Concerning Rural Landscapes as Heritage published in 2017 is an important document in this regard. Professor HAN finally reiterates that the protection of rural landscape is also a critical factor to promote the contribution of world heritage to sustainable development.



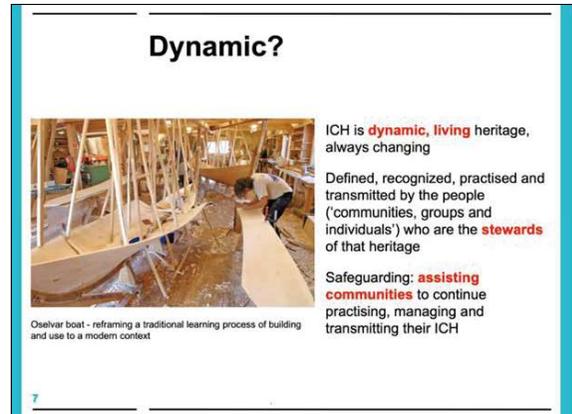
*ICOMOS-IFLA Principles Concerning Rural Landscapes as Heritage*  
/ HAN Feng

Whereas the above presentations list various programs, Mrs Maureen THIBAUT, Communication and Project manager of ICOMOS, elaborates on the 'Connecting Practice' jointly initiated between IUCN and ICOMOS. This project aims to bridge the gap between nature and culture in the implementation of World Heritage Convention and beyond. Starting from field studies, it tries to promote biocultural and community-based approaches to site management. Maureen introduces four phases of this project since 2013 including the phase I of exploration and shared learning, phase II of transforming lessons learned into practice, phase III of focusing on organically evolved cultural landscapes, and phase IV on pastoral transhumance landscape. Within each phase, 1-3 world

heritage sites are chosen to explore and practice new nature-culture linked ways of heritage conservation, among which some are typical rural heritage sites such as Cultural Landscape of Honghe Hani Rice Terraces (China). Since the next year will see the end of this project, it is expected that we will see more toolkit, lessons, and experience from the final evaluation result.



*The Connecting Practice of IUCN and ICOMOS  
/ Maureen THIBAUT*



*The 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding  
of the Intangible Cultural Heritage / Cecile Duvelle*

Another convention related is the 2003 convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), shared by Cecile Duvelle, the former secretary of the Convention. The traditional practices mentioned in ICH are very much related to rural contexts. Not only that rural heritage has intangible components, but also the philosophy embedded in ICH applies to rural heritage. The first is that the community should play a decisive role in defining what is intangible heritage for them. The second is the idea of safeguarding instead of protection. While protection is to keep as it is, to safeguard is to maintain a dynamic life. As rural heritage has the same characteristics as being dynamic and evolving, the idea of safeguarding is also useful for rural revitalization. In brief, an understanding of these relevant conventions and programs can lead to building synergies and facilitate practices that work towards cultural and natural sustainability in rural areas.

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### 3.2 Community empowerment and multiple stakeholder involvement

In the last decade, the heritage discourse has been experiencing a social turn. The most notable event may be the 40th anniversary event of World Heritage Convention which calls for the role of community for sustainable cultural development. In the context of rural heritage, community empowerment and multiple stakeholder involvement are even more important given that rural people may have closer connection with their environment.

Hatthaya SIRIPHATTHANAKUN, specialist in Cultural Heritage Conservation in SEAMEO Regional Centre for Archaeology and Fine Arts, introduces a participatory learning approach to engaging with the local community. The project “Defining Value to Enhance OTOP Villages for Sustainable Tourism” aims to facilitate the progress of under-developed villages in the ‘One Tambon, One Product (OTOP)’ programme. The OTOP programme is a national economy-driven policy in Thailand targeted at rural areas to develop a sale product that is unique and reflecting cultural identity of each village. The participatory learning methodology is to gather the educators, heritage professionals, community developers, landscape architects, product designers, social media experts,

university students and most importantly, villagers together in the workshops. The stakeholders explore the local cultural identity, add cultural values to the products and village landscapes and promote the village as well as the products on the social media. Hatthaya particularly mentions that with the help of university students, it is easier to win the trust of the local community. This project has achieved positive outcomes in enhancing the community's solidarity and economic profits.

**The project entitled  
“Defining Value to Enhance OTOP Villages  
for Sustainable Tourism”**



**GOAL**

**Participatory Learning Methodology to Enhance OTOP Villages for Sustainable Tourism**

- ❖ 6-month project owned by the Community Development Department (CDD), Ministry of Interior, Thailand
- ❖ 12 least potential villages were selected as case studies
- ❖ Collaboration among Educators, Heritage Professionals, Community Developers, Landscape Architects, Product Designers, Social Media Experts, Students and Villagers

**Concept Notes**

- ❖ Cultural identity interpretation and presentation
- ❖ Enhanced landscape of the villages
- ❖ Cultural products
- ❖ Online-communication skill

**Outcome**

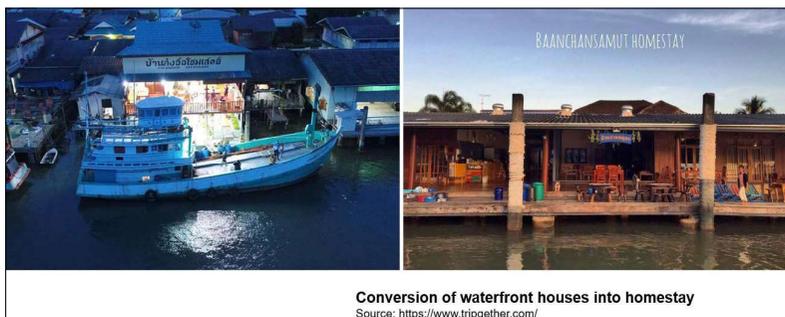
- ❖ Cultural identity interpretation and presentation
- ❖ Enhanced landscape of the villages
- ❖ Cultural products
- ❖ Online-communication skill

**Impact**

- ❖ The participatory learning methodology will be implemented to other low potential OTOP villages

*Participatory Learning Approach in Conserving Rural Heritage in Thailand  
/ Hatthaya SIRIPHATTHANAKUN*

Another case is also a village in Thailand named Prasae shared by Yongtanit PIMONSATHEAN, associate professor of ICOMOS Thailand. The local heritage revival program in this fishing village includes the conservation of native plantations, traditional timber houses, and the promotion of homestay activities and local foods and products. Since this program starts from the local, it recognizes the heritage outside the national regulations. All the revival activities are solely operated by the local community and funded by private companies through the local coordination with corporate social responsibility programs. This case shows that the community-based organisation is a powerful entity in rural development, and that the community-led approach is beneficial for the resilience and sustainability of rural revival projects.



*Local Heritage as a Solution to Resilience in the Fishing Village of Prasae, Thailand  
/ Yongtanit PIMONSATHEAN*

Similarly, the study of Parastoo ESHRATI, assistant professor in the University of Tehran, Iran, reveals the prominent role of private stakeholders and local communities. These non-government stakeholders make the main contribution to the ecotourism development through the adaptive use of rural houses and historical buildings, the social media promotion of rural heritage and the development of rural small businesses.



*Traditional Element in Clothing Design Promoted on Social Media / Parastoo ESHRATI*

Wajahat ALI, UNESCO Heritage Award winning architect from Pakistan, shares two community-based restored projects of historic buildings. At the initial stage, the restoration adopts a participatory development process through community meetings. The projects turn out to benefit local people in various ways: direct employment opportunities, promotion of local craft skills, technical training opportunities and the increasing awareness of heritage ownership and cultural identity.



*Community Meetings / Wajahat ALI*



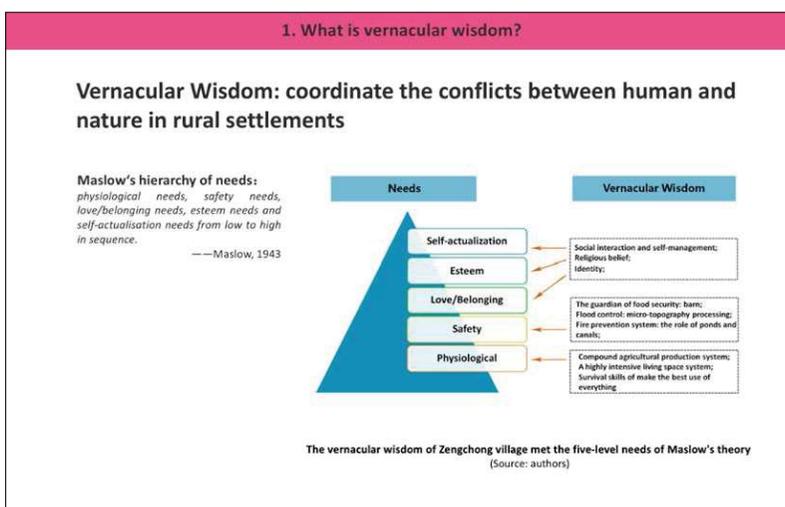
*The Benefit of Local Communities in Various Ways / Wajahat ALI*

The case in China is introduced by Shen Han, Professor from Fudan University. She explicates the villager training system of three rural hotels in China. The training is led by either the Chinese government at all levels or the corporations in the travel sector, or sometimes by the cooperation of both. The training content includes the business skills, service skills and management skills. This presentation concludes that government-led training covers a larger scope of general skills training, whereas enterprise training may offer more complex skills but is limited only to their own employees. Government-enterprise cooperated projects are thus recommended, if the governance capability and industrial development permit, for good performance in both quality and scope. The case of Prof. SHEN Han, therefore, provides experiences of community training and empowerment in the field of rural tourism.



*The Training System of Villagers / SHEN Han*

Professor SHAO Yong from Tongji University evidences the important role of local community by highlighting the value of vernacular wisdom. The case of Dong village Zengchong in Guizhou, China, demonstrates how the vernacular wisdom coordinates human and nature conflicts in three aspects: the wisdom for physiological needs reflected in the highly intensive compound agricultural system; the wisdom for safety needs reflected in the barn



*Vernacular Wisdom: Coordinate the Conflicts between Human and Nature in Rural Settlements / SHAO Yong*

system, fire prevention system and flood control system; the wisdom for social-emotional needs reflected in the cultural identity and self-management. This study thus calls for deep exploration and full respect towards the communal wisdom in village revitalization.

Cuong NGUYEN VIET, chief of the Relics and Monuments Management Division in Vietnam, introduces how the national policy of Vietnam pays attention to the interests of the local community, and conserve the registered ancient villages. The Vietnam governments particularly try to reach a balance between the tourism development of traditional villages and the improvement of the local community life in sociocultural and economic aspects.



*Ancient Villages in Vietnam / Cuong NGUYEN VIET*

While the presentations above introduce good practices, Sujeong Lee, a research staff from the Cultural Heritage Administration of Korea, introduces the negative impact of rural tourism on the residents. In the cases of two rural World Heritage villages in Korea: Hahoe and Yangdong, it is revealed that the tourism development has a positive effect on visitors who expect a unique experience and on neighboring communities who expect upgraded surroundings but a negative effect on residents, because the family traditions, the intrinsic ways of life and other intangible heritage have been compromised for tourism's sake. This study thus suggests a revised management framework of the villages where the benefits of local heritage owners are considered in the first place.

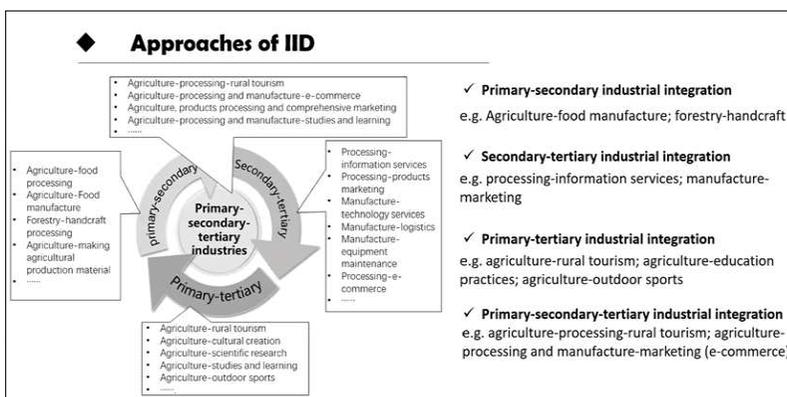


*Intangible Values being Compromised / Sujeong LEE*

### 3.3 Integrated development of industries and balance among the social, economic and ecological aspects

As rural heritage permeates into every aspect of life, it is important to seek the cooperation of various industries and find a balance between the social, economic development and the ecological environment.

ZHANG Yongxun, Assistant Research Fellow in the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences, introduces two cases of rural revitalization in the Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (IAHS) in China. Both of them adopt an industrial integrated approach: the integration of agriculture and tourism in Longji terraces in Guangxi, and the integration of agriculture, products processing, e-commerce and tourism in Hani Terraces. This industry-integrated approach offers employment opportunities for locals; the e-commerce marketing strategy builds the brand of agro-products, ensures a relatively higher and worthy price that encourages farmers to insist on the traditional agricultural methods, and thus boost the economy of rural areas without compromising the ecological surroundings and cultural traditions.



*Industry Integrated Development Approach / ZHANG Yongxun*

**Case Study : Shiramine Industry Inc. (Established in 1972, Hakusan city)**

*Kuromoji* shrub (*Lindera umbellata*) naturally grown in Japanese cider plantation forest

Storage of *Kuromoji* branches in unused pool at closed local elementary school

Processing the branches and leaves by the local elders

- New utilization of *Kuromoji* shrub (*Lindera umbellata*) proposed by medical plant researcher of Kanazawa University
- Business to Business collaboration for new essential oil product development with local venture company
- Utilization of closed local school facility and local elderly human resources for the processing

*New Industry enabled by Innovated Technology in Shiramine / Yoshihiko IIDA*

Yoshihiko IIDA, associate professor at the University of Tsukuba, provides several Japanese cases of watershed landscapes. The social-ecological approach he proposes echoes with the industry-integrated development. The first case is the citizen participatory planting project of Kunugi oak, where people reuse the abandoned national

agricultural land for charcoal production. The industry in Shiramine as the second case highlights the advanced technology which enables a new utilization of Kurumoji shrub (*Lindera umbellata*, a kind of plant essential oil). The processing of the oil product also utilizes the closed school facility and local human resources. In another case of Wajima city, the local stakeholders organize a citizen conservation school of forest management and local livelihood. These cases in general provide environmentally friendly ways of rural sustainable development such as field reuse, technique innovation and social education.

Another case in point is the award of Best Practices of China’s Rural Heritage Hotels, introduced by YAN Haiming, director of Secretariat of ICOMOS China. The integration is first demonstrated by the diverse backgrounds of the evaluation experts committee including heritage conservation, sociology, agricultural heritage, hotel management and operation, tourism marketing, and cultural promotion. Following the World Heritage mechanism, the award team also adopts six criteria, which could function as the guidelines for other rural revitalization projects, including cultural inheritance, technology innovation, sustainable development of humanity and culture, social and economic progress, multiple stakeholder participation, and excellent hotel operation.

**six criteria**

- be key vehicle to interpret and present rural heritage, **inheriting and passing on excellent rural tradition and cultures.**
- showcase the **technologies, principles and implementation methods** to reshape, reuse traditional towns and villages, historic architecture.
- represent the way to enjoy the culture that combines humanity and nature, and conform to **a model of sustainable development** that blends culture and tourism.
- enhance social and economic progress in local rural areas, drive industries around, generate more jobs, and **promote rural revitalization.**
- establish long-term mechanism to effectively protect and manage rural heritage, engage **different parties to participate.**
- **examples of hotel operation.**

*Six Criteria of Best Practices of Rural Heritage Hotels / YAN Haiming*

### 3.4 The linkage of metropolis with rural areas

**3. 规划策略**  
**Planning Strategies of Space**

**1. 修复蓝绿空间**  
Restoring blue (waters) and green space



**2. 重塑水乡河网交通**  
Reshaping waterways and river transport between water towns



**3. 建设水乡文旅风景道**  
Constructing scenic byways for cultural tourism

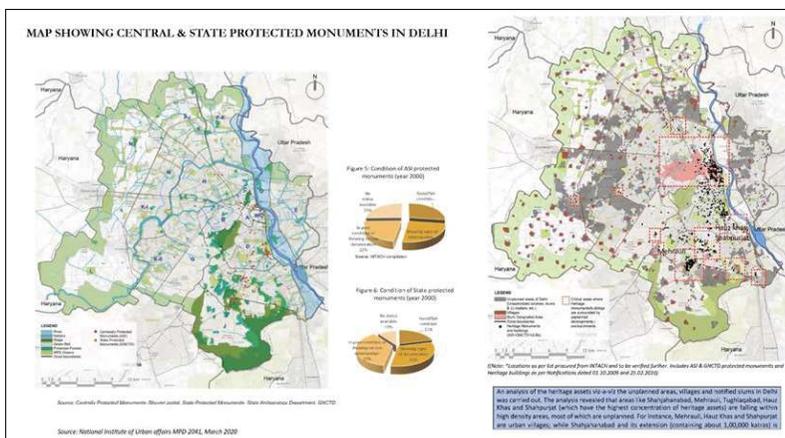


**4. 传承江南水乡景观**  
Inheriting traditional water-town landscapes in south Yangtze River region



*Planning Strategy of the Yangtze River Delta Region / ZHOU Jian*

In considering rural development, it is vital to place it into the broader picture of urbanization and integrate it into territorial planning. Professor ZHOU Jian, Secretary-General of WHITRAP, presents a rural-urban co-development plan in his report of Study on Heritage and Tourism Spatial Strategy in “Yangtze River Delta green and integrated ecological development demonstration zone”. The premise for territorial development of the south area of the Yangtze River is that these places share similar ecological and cultural landscapes of water towns. Such shared regional cultural heritage is utilized as the resource, driving force and foundation for the integrated development of cultural, touristic, and agricultural industries. The planning strategy covers four aspects: natural restoration (water and vegetation environment), waterway transportation, scenic byways of cultural tourism, and traditional water-town landscape inheritance. This unified urban-rural scheme requires that the rural areas and the modern metropolis complement each other, and meanwhile maintain their own characteristics.



*Territorial Planning of New Delhi Area / Radhika DHUMAL*



*Restoration Projects in Urban Villages / Radhika DHUMAL*

The second case is in the context of India introduced by Radhika DHUMAL, principal architect of an independent architect studio in India. She looks at the urban-rural linkage through the cases of “urban villages”, which refer

to villages in the newly urbanized area around New Delhi. These historically-rural “urban villages” tend to be of heritage importance and thus need a mix of regeneration and conservation strategies. From an architectural perspective, Radhika shows how the modern and traditional styles are blended in the restoration of historic buildings in the area and how such restorations untap the potential of recreational functions of these places.

Nobuko INABA, Professor Emeritus at the University of Tsukuba, explains the inextricable relationship between the urban and the rural by going through the Japanese national policies. The migration of rural people to urban areas from 1945 to the 1970s made the elderly rural residents start a movement of village protection, which led to the establishment of the cultural heritage law to protect historic villages in 1975. The years from the 1980s to the present have seen the policies skew towards the rural development, from the self-supporting mechanism demonstrated in “One Village and One Product Movement” in 1980, the land-use policies supporting the economic revitalization of rural and small urban areas in the 1990s, to the rural area as a development policy target since 1999 driven by the economic recession and ageing society. Most related is the demographic improvement policy in 2009 which provides financial and administrative support for young people to help them settle in rural areas. These policies of deurbanization overall reflect the importance of balanced development of urban and rural areas and the way that national policies may work to reallocate the resources.

**Demographic improvement policy - how to move people from urban to rural areas – *Chiikiokoshi Kyoryokutai***

In 2009 the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications introduced a **community revitalization corps project** (officially entitled the "Community-Reactivating Cooperator Squad" project) to provide financial and administrative support for young people (aged 20 to 45) to enable them to move to rural/local areas, aiming at helping them to find ways to settle in those areas.

The members dispatched under this program are paid by the government with full salary for up to three years while working for the revitalization projects as part-time staff members of local governments, and they are expected to find settlement in the communities that they have been working in. The local municipalities also receive financial support for their administrative and project-related costs.

*Demographic Improvement Policy / Nobuko INABA*



**Adaptation**

<https://mylifemx.com/archives/6199>

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*Adapted Ancestor Worship Activities / Ming Chee ANG*

The final case discussing the urban-rural linkage is provided by Ming Chee ANG, general manager of George Town World Heritage Incorporated in Malaysia. She introduces how digital technology prompts the synergy of rural and urban lifestyles. During the COVID-19 conditions, high technology enables urban dwellers to conduct cultural heritage practices with rural characteristics in the urban context. ANG's presentation shows the way that intangible cultural heritage with rural origins adapts to the cities and continue to shape people's cultural identity. In the meanwhile, she calls for the need to document the dynamic transformations of intangible cultural heritage in the fast-developing contemporary society.

#### 4. Way Forward

This webinar closes with a panel discussion about the way forward for rural heritage. For future activities, the steering group has given three suggestions. First, while facilitating the standardization of rural heritage, we need to consider the diverse contexts of the Asia-Pacific region and try to be inclusive as much as possible. Second, the documentation needs to be done timely and properly due to the unavoidable impact caused by the conservation and management practices and the dynamic feature of rural heritage. Third, it is important to strengthen the collaboration and implement the training at all levels (international, national, regional, local administrations, site managers and local communities), among which the benefit of local communities is the final goal.

As for the outlook of what WHITRAP Shanghai can do, with the vision to conserve rural heritage, in line with the four key issues, five missions have been emphasized: to improve the quality of agricultural development through advanced technology; to promote green, resilient, and people-centered development of rural areas; to enhance rural culture and help it flourish; to respect traditional knowledge and provide assistance to the communities; to establish a harmonious relationship between the urban and rural.

HeritAP will continue to focus on rural heritage in the following years. It is expected that more exemplary cases will emerge, and experience can be shared at a larger scale to contribute to the sustainable development of rural heritage.