

Précis

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Cultural Properties in Policy and Practice

The World Bank has a long history and extensive experience with cultural properties dating back to the reconstruction of postwar Europe. Since then, the Bank's approach to matters of culture has evolved considerably through its work with environmental and social assessment and community-based activities. The Operations Evaluation Department (OED) evaluation takes stock of the Bank's experience with its policy framework and recommends actions to improve its effectiveness in its work with physical cultural properties.

What Has the Bank Done?

Because its work with cultural properties is often only a project component, information about the scope of Bank involvement and the implementation of Bank-financed projects involving cultural properties is not readily obtainable. To find out what has been done, OED developed a database of Bank activities in cultural heritage (see figure 1). It identified 217 Bank loans, credits, and grants that included cultural heritage activities. These activities vary in size, from a \$5 million loan to restore cultural properties in Georgia to a \$172,000 grant for a cultural inventory in Albania. They are distributed throughout the world, with no single Region dominating, although South Asia has notably fewer activities than other Regions, and the Middle East and North Africa accounts for the largest dollar share of the lending. The activities are in many sectors, but the urban, energy, and environment sectors account for more than half the total (see figure 2).

The projects and grants having cultural heritage activities are of five types: projects with "do no harm" measures (51);

projects implemented in areas with significant cultural heritage and where activities, if any, were not documented (31); cultural heritage components or subcomponents of larger projects (70); stand-alone cultural heritage projects (35); and cultural heritage grants (30).

The Bank's portfolio of analytic work in cultural heritage is neither large nor comprehensive; OED found only 26 such activities. Three of these were recent Regional sector strategy papers in the Europe and Central Asia, East Asia and the Pacific, and Middle East and North Africa Regions. Of 108 Country Assistance Strategies reviewed, only 16 mention cultural heritage, usually where it provides a large economic return. Tourism studies have been done for two countries (Costa Rica and Guatemala).

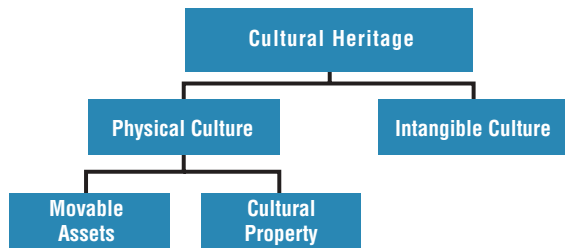
How Well Has the Bank Done?

The outcome of most of the Bank's 65 cultural heritage projects and grants is not yet known, as the only ones that have been completed are older projects focused on tourism. Moreover, typical cultural her-



Figure 1: What is Cultural Heritage?

Cultural heritage has both physical and intangible aspects, as shown below.



Physical culture includes monuments, structures, works of art, or sites of “outstanding universal value” from the historical, aesthetic, scientific, ethnological, or anthropological point of view. *Cultural property* comprises sites and structures of archaeological, paleontological, historical, architectural, or religious significance, and natural sites with cultural values. This definition is used in both Operational Policy Note 11.03, “Managing Cultural Property in World Bank-Financed Projects” (currently being converted into an Operational Policy) and in the *Environmental Assessment Sourcebook* (World Bank 1994), the main source of operational guidance on cultural heritage in Bank projects. The OED study uses the term “cultural heritage” to refer to both material and non-material culture and the term “cultural property” to refer to material fixed assets.

Source: UNESCO, International Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, Section I. “Definition of the Cultural and Natural Heritage,” Article 1.

itage activities in Bank-supported projects are small, and documentation of the activities is usually poor. To fill this gap in knowledge about performance, OED conducted fieldwork and asked task managers to evaluate cultural heritage activities in their projects. The results suggest that performance in cultural heritage is uneven, but better overall than the Bank average.

The average outcome of projects with major cultural heritage components is judged to be satisfactory based on OED ratings for completed projects and on project supervision ratings for ongoing projects. (Grants, which are not subject to the same evaluation regime as projects, are excluded from the analysis of performance.) The self-assessment exercise by task managers resulted in an outcome rating of satisfactory for 82 percent of the 44 project activities evaluated. This compares favorably with the Bank average of 69 percent satisfactory for projects. Other evidence is more mixed, however. For example, Bank task managers surveyed for this study estimated that only about 64 percent of relevant projects addressed cultural property issues in a technically professional manner. Other Bank studies have found weaknesses in the identification of potential effects on cultural property during the appraisal of Bank projects.

OED-sponsored field visits by cultural heritage specialists to 30 ongoing or completed projects found that 6 projects had been inadequately screened for cultural property, although the shortcomings generally pre-dated the Bank’s safeguard policy on cultural properties. Other shortcomings observed included a lack of satisfactory reconnaissance surveys before work was done, the use of inappropriate

construction materials in the historic areas, major construction in a national park zone, and road widening that resulted in the destruction of cultural properties.

The weakest areas of performance were sustainability and institutional development, both of which task managers reported as shortcomings. This is not unique to cultural heritage activities, however; the task manager ratings for both criteria are nearly identical to the 20-year Bank-wide average for all projects.

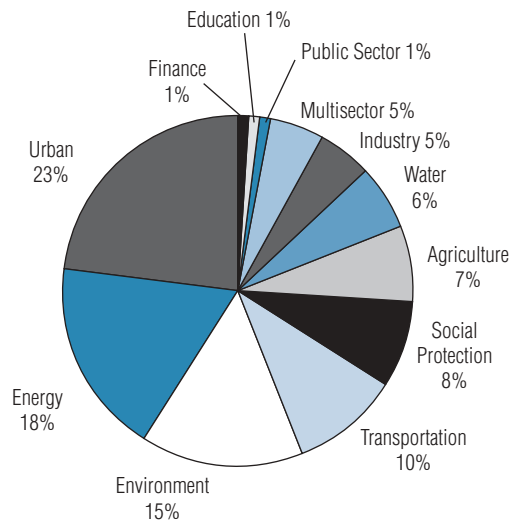
What Are the Lessons of Experience?

Identify Assets. The identification of cultural heritage sites is an important first step. A project is far more likely to do harm in a culturally sensitive area when the extent and nature of the cultural properties are unknown. World Bank guidance on cultural heritage (provided in the *Environmental Assessment Sourcebook*, particularly in Update No. 8, “Cultural Heritage in Environmental Assessment,” September 1994) recommends that Bank staff work with national or local cultural heritage authorities to review potential impacts on cultural heritage as part of the environmental screening process. Following this initial review, if warranted, qualified personnel should conduct an archaeological and historic sites survey. These procedures make sense, but several of them suffer from a lack of enforceable standards, which may explain why the OED study found that inventories are not routinely done.

Physical Development Planning. Integrated conservation planning, in use by conservationists since 1987, is a dynamic interdisciplinary process that shapes urban and regional planning at every level. OED found no evidence that it was systematically being used in Bank-sponsored projects. In urban areas, city-wide planning needs to take place. In Brazil’s Bahia/Salvador Urban Development Project, for example, work that was both geographically and socially distant from the historic district that was its main focus was also taken into account. Physical improvements to the historic city center include necessary infrastructure and services. But the project also addressed the maintenance of beaches and related facilities at the city’s edge. It was understood that increasing regional tourism potential would increase the return on investments in the city center; therefore, recreational activities throughout the region received attention, increasing the number of tourists and the amount of time they spend in the historic area.

Sequence Improvements. If infrastructure inadequacies prevail, they will do damage once the asset is restored. For example, irreversible structural damage to walls and foundations can result from water coming in from the roof or from the ground. In Georgia, water seeping into the basements of historic residential structures in Old Town Tbilisi was causing severe damage to the foundations. Until the seepage problem was solved, it was pointless to restore the buildings. The Bank-financed Cultural Heritage Project, however, had limited resources and could not have solved this problem alone. A solution was found by synchronizing

Figure 2: The Activities Are in Many Sectors



Note: Includes all projects (1978–2000) with a Bank-designated sector that is not cultural heritage. The environment sector includes 10 Global Environment Facility projects, some of which the Bank has cofinanced, others of which the Bank is only administering.

the efforts of the project with the ongoing Municipal Development and Decentralization Project.

Social Impacts. Bank-financed activities involving cultural property are ultimately intended to benefit the surrounding community. Good practice requires the anticipation and mitigation of negative social impacts that could result from efforts to conserve physical assets. In major Brazilian cities, for example, the trend toward service-oriented economies linked to global industry and tourism has increased the value of historic city centers. Most of the historic monuments and sites are in these centers. Housing other cultural and economic activities there can make central locations even more attractive. But what happens to the poor residents of these areas? Sometimes they voluntarily relocate. Rising property values provide an incentive to cash in and move on. In many cases, the revitalization of a neighborhood is part of a larger urban program that improves economic opportunities, leading to the relocation of jobs and better access to work that encourages demographic changes. Where involuntary displacement occurs, it is necessary to consider mechanisms for protecting the poor, the availability of alternative low-income housing, access to employment generated by the project, and incentives or access to credit for activities that can offer these alternatives.

Local Community Participation. Bringing together those who live near an asset and those whose actions are destroying it may be the best way to preserve physical and living culture, and to ensure ongoing use by the surrounding community. Field visits found many instances where an effort was made early in the project design to involve local government and communities. Projects prepared in a participatory manner were more likely to gain local support

and often benefited from locals' knowledge of appropriate technologies and their creative problem-solving capacities. Important physical assets often still exist because the community maintains them or they are in active use. This was the case in the historic Chinese city of Lijiang (in Dayan Old Town), where the Yunnan Earthquake Reconstruction Program restored and upgraded historic structures maintained through continuous occupation through the centuries.

Timely Institutional Assessment. Effective development of national institutions responsible for cultural heritage is a long, slow process, but is essential to improving performance in the sector. One problem is that the weaknesses of these institutions are often discovered too late because the specialists responsible for initial analysis and recommendations are often not involved in project implementation and monitoring. Site visits in some countries also found an obvious lack of communication between agencies responsible for cultural heritage and related sectors, such as tourism and public works. The capacity needs of national cultural institutions include: forming or revising legal and regulatory structures; evaluation of cultural resources; analysis of conservation requirements; priority setting; coordination with line ministries; and public information and education policies.

The Future of Culture in the Bank

The Bank cannot avoid involvement with cultural properties when it is lending for infrastructure, urban revitalization, and rural development—activities that almost always have an impact on physical culture assets. Similarly, environmental and emergency reconstruction projects may have important consequences for physical culture. Hence, the Bank needs a minimum core of competency to deal with cultural properties. The Bank is currently working to increase its attention to cultural heritage in the projects it finances. Yet the Bank's work in cultural heritage has suffered for lack of a thorough analysis of its comparative advantage. Without clear guidance regarding when the Bank should get involved, it is impossible for the Bank to be selective about its interventions. Without clear guidance on good practice, it is impossible for the Bank to ensure adequate protection of cultural properties.

The state of knowledge about cultural heritage in the Bank is improving, but several gaps need to be filled. Bank staff need to be familiar with standard practice in the conservation field. Many countries do not have inventories of their cultural assets, and where they are available, task managers are often unaware of their existence. Finding information about cultural elements in Bank projects (and their costs) is often difficult. Information about the history, cultural assets, and legislative/institutional framework of a country needs to be collected systematically, and local project area data need to be made available to project managers. Cultural heritage concerns also need to be reflected in Country Assistance Strategies and National Environmental Action Plans. In-country institutional capacity to imple-

ment heritage plans needs support. Bank-supported measures to enhance borrower capacity should accompany improved and borrower-managed procedures. While the Bank's Environmental and Socially Sustainable Development Network is providing advisory services to help Bank staff address these gaps, much more support from specialized partners is needed.

The Necessity of Partnership. Partnerships in support of country cultural programs work best when there is an agreed policy framework “owned” by the borrowing country, when sector professionals clarify the Bank's core competencies and comparative advantage *vis-à-vis* partners, and when the Bank establishes businesslike alliances (that benefit both parties) with appropriate sharing of responsibility. The utility of partnerships depends on their potential efficacy and quality. To work in cultural heritage, the Bank needs to work in collaboration with UNESCO, but UNESCO cannot be the Bank's only partner. The Bank also needs to seek out national partners with complementary strengths.

Continuous Evaluation. The data collected and analyzed by the OED study will not be the last word on the Bank's strengths and weaknesses in cultural heritage. Recent experiences with mainstreaming culture should be evaluated when a sufficient number of projects has been completed.

Research on Culture and Development. If the Bank is to contribute to meeting the Millennium Development Goal of halving extreme poverty by 2015, it will need to explore the importance of culture to achieving that goal. But the connection between cultural heritage and poverty is under-researched. Ongoing research by the Bank should contribute knowledge in this area. Documenting the poverty reduction impacts of the Bank's work with culture and identifying the types of support for culture that have the greatest poverty reduction impacts will improve the poverty reduction stemming from investments in cultural assets.

Management Response

Management was in broad agreement with the report's findings and recommendations, including the need to focus more systematically on assuring that projects financed by the Bank would do no harm to physical cultural property. Because of the contextual and site-specific issues involved, it was their view that a Regional approach was most appropriate. Management also noted that the conversion of OPN 11.03 to OP/BP 4.11, “Physical Cultural Resources,” was well advanced, and would be key in providing clarity to staff.

Executive Directors' Perspective

The Committee on Development Effectiveness (CODE) thanked OED for a comprehensive review of this difficult but important issue, and voiced overall support for OED's findings. The Committee noted that although cultural heritage is not a corporate or global priority under the Bank's strategic directions framework it is still important to address it as part of the Bank's work in the context of poverty reduction. The members added that the Bank's approach to cultural resources should generate awareness of the context in which the Bank operates, and not address cultural heritage as a single, separate corporate priority. CODE agreed with OED on the need for the Bank to address the “do no harm” aspects of cultural resources within the scope of the Bank's safeguard policies and to provide more practical guidance to staff with respect to applying “do good” aspects. But members cautioned against extending the scope of such “do good” activities, except under circumstances where they clearly contributed directly to poverty reduction.



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► This *Précis*, written by William Hurlbut, is based on *Cultural Properties in Policy and Practice: A Review of World Bank Experience*, Report 23369, by Ronald Parker, Senior Evaluation Officer, Sector and Thematic Evaluation Group, OED.

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