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## **Cultural Heritage: Development and Preservation with Chinese Characteristics**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Cultural heritage is passed on from generation to generation and refers to the customs, practices, places, objects, artistic expressions and values of a community; human activity can produce intangible cultural heritage or tangible representations of community-specific value systems, beliefs, traditions and lifestyles. Tangible and intangible heritage are inextricably bound up.
- China is a country rich in tangible and intangible cultural heritage. However, historical events, decades of neglect and recent developments (globalisation, commodification and urbanisation) have placed this rich heritage under threat of debasement.
- Cultural heritage is rapidly lost to natural disaster, over-development and over-commercialisation; old buildings are under threat from fire and erosion; high-speed urbanisation can lead to the demolition of historic sites and their replacement with profitable developments.
- Culture and cultural heritage preservation were pronounced a national priority and anchored as development goals in the 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2011-2015). Cultural tourism has been identified as a major pillar for future economic development.
- Current national and local policies seek to protect heritage, strengthen skills and capabilities and provide technical support to local authorities. However, implementing cultural heritage preservation at all levels of governance requires high levels of expertise and skills. Heritage agencies in China often lack the human and financial resources to protect heritage sites from dilapidation, despite the recent increase in investment.
- Cultural tourism can contribute to local development, but the state is a major stakeholder in its operation and local stakeholders are struggling to tap into the potential. Tourism and tourism-related infrastructure (transportation networks, accommodation, resource demand, etc.) can have adverse impact on the preservation of tangible cultural heritage and local culture.
- Sustainable strategies to strengthen the links between cultural tourism and cultural heritage preservation should propagate culturally, environmentally and economically sensitive long-term interventions that build on the thorough understanding of local conditions and involve local stakeholders.
- The EU and its Member States are highly qualified to provide technical assistance and know-how to China, drawing on their broad range of experiences with regards to cultural heritage preservation and economic development.
- Because cultural affairs and the preservation of cultural heritage are closely linked to other areas of interest in international cooperation, they should form part of EU-China dialogues

and actions around environmental protection or economic growth at the international, national, regional and local scales of governance.

- Successful strategies toward the preservation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage should include the provision of appropriate funding for knowledge exchange between representatives of the EU and its Member States and Chinese governmental and non-governmental agencies at the national, regional and local level.
- The EU's hesitancy to invest in knowledge exchange and cooperation with China on cultural affairs may result in the loss of the EU's current position of comparative advantage.

## **INTRODUCTION**

China is both a developing country and a major global player. The country has transitioned dramatically over the past three decades from a centrally planned economy to a leading economic power; this process has created new socioeconomic and environmental challenges as a result of imbalanced regional development, industrialisation and urbanisation and the concomitant increase in energy consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

Culture was recently made a national priority. In the 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2011 – 2015), the Central Government stated the explicit goals of prohibiting the exploitation of natural and cultural resources in protected areas; preserving cultural and natural heritage; and developing cultural tourism. The country is home to 45 World Heritage sites, over 4,000 key areas under protection, almost 800,000 registered cultural relics and 2,500 museums. The State Council plans to place up to 1,800 key historical and cultural sites under state protection by 2015 – a very ambitious undertaking which began in the late 1990s. However, financial and human resources are scarce and interest in the preservation of cultural heritage limited.

The European Union (EU) and China face similar challenges and share related goals with regards to the preservation of cultural heritage, and – although efforts for collaboration in this area exist – there is great potential to expand these efforts further.

## **WHAT IS CULTURAL HERITAGE?**

Cultural heritage is passed on from generation to generation and refers to the customs, practices, places, objects, artistic expressions and values of a community; human activity can produce intangible cultural heritage or tangible representations of community-specific value systems, beliefs, traditions and lifestyles.

Tangible cultural heritage includes the built environment (buildings, townscapes, etc.), natural environment (rural landscapes, coasts and shorelines, agricultural heritage, etc.) and artefacts (books, documents, objects, etc.). Safeguarding intangible cultural heritage (ICH) includes measures toward ensuring its viability (e.g., identification, documentation, preservation, promotion), transmission (through formal and informal education) and revitalisation. Tangible and intangible heritage are inextricably bound up.

## **CULTURAL HERITAGE AND DEVELOPMENT**

The four main approaches to conservation implementation are conservation, preservation, restoration and adaptive reuse. Conservation is an on-going process and should include the delimitation of the geo-cultural region under protection; preservation refers to the process of protecting cultural heritage from further deterioration; restoration refers to reconstruction works aiming to restore the original condition; and adaptive reuse refers to the adaptation of cultural heritage to contemporary use.

In general, cultural heritage preservation is deemed entirely compatible with the five principles of contemporary economic development: globalisation, localisation, diversity, sustainability and responsibility. Preservation fosters economic development in creating jobs, assuring job training and substituting import with locally produced goods; it can create sustainable and resilient opportunities for all communities which can draw on cultural heritage and can contribute to modernisation according to the needs of citizens. It can help communities to differentiate through the exploitation of their local character (branding) and creates and amplifies opportunities for tourism.

However, whilst in the past relationships between human economic activity and the environment led to ecological, socioeconomic and cultural patterns and feedback mechanisms that allowed coexistence, the speed and scale of current economic growth and human-centred development make it increasingly difficult for people and their environment to co-adapt. This poses challenges for the implementation of economic development as cultural heritage preservation and *vice versa*.

In this context, it is worth pointing out that approaches to preservation may differ between Western and non-Western countries. Western 'freeze-frame-methodology', for instance, may not be common elsewhere, where tangible heritage may be used and transformed by society. Western models may be out of scale in terms of infrastructure, resources and management. Issues may arise where a heritage management elite is allowed to take decisions based on values which are not aligned with those of the communities they govern. Therefore, keeping in touch with local conditions and priorities is imperative.

Lastly, many issues around the loss of cultural heritage in non-Western countries arise precisely because of the imposition of Western lifestyles and their association with notions of development.

#### **INTERNATIONAL REGULATIONS**

Internationally, culture and development are most significantly promoted and regulated through the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which created the notion of World Heritage to protect sites of exceptional collective value. As a Member State, China has ratified several international UNESCO treaties, including the following conventions:

- Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict
- Protection of The World Cultural and Natural Heritage
- Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity
- Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage
- Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions

#### **CULTURAL HERITAGE PRESERVATION IN CHINA:**

##### **ATTITUDES, POLICY AND PRACTICE**

The attitudes of leading officials on culture and the preservation of cultural heritage have changed rapidly over the past decades. Only ten years ago it was assumed that cultural heritage preservation comes at a high cost and that the transformation of traditional sites into modern cities and the adjustment of local cultures to modern lifestyles should follow the natural path of development. Currently, the Government embraces cultural heritage preservation as fully compatible with economic development. In 2011, China's former President, Hu Jintao, praised UNESCO's work and

promised increased collaboration with the Organization, particularly in the area of safeguarding tangible and intangible heritage.

Most recently, China's Minister of Culture, Cai Wu, stated that promoting the heritage and innovation of Chinese culture is a common wish among all Chinese people. The President, Xi Jinping, proclaimed that 'the great revival of the Chinese nation is the greatest dream of all Chinese people'. Xi has made it clear that cultural heritage, including traditional villages, must be safeguarded; he warned against unconstrained demolition and new construction processes that contradict the ideal of building a beautiful country. As a result, the Ministries in charge of cultural preservation are surveying and cataloguing the country in preparation of a long-term, nationwide preservation plan. After all, tourism was declared a strategic pillar of China's economy, and cultural heritage has an important role to play.

### **CULTURAL HERITAGE PRESERVATION GOVERNANCE**

The constitution of the People's Republic of China states that the 'state protects places of scenic and historical interest, valuable cultural monuments and relics and other important items of China's historical and cultural heritage' and the country has a range of policies and regulations in place which aim to protect and preserve its cultural heritage. It is a provision of the Chinese Constitution that all ethnic groups 'have the right to preserve and reform their own folkways and customs', including clothing, decorations, food, drink, lifestyle, weddings, festivals, ceremonies and funerals. The protection of cultural heritage may fall under the auspices of the national, provincial, regional or local levels of government.

The Ministry of Culture is China's highest administrative organ in charge of art and culture. The State Administration of Cultural Heritage (SACH; previously known as the State Bureau of Cultural Relics (SBDR)) under the Ministry of Culture heads three functioning departments: the General Office; the Department of Museums; and the Relics Protection Department. Among other duties, the latter administers research and instructs relics protection and rescue work; stipulates quality standards; examines and supervises key state relics protection sites and projects; and coordinates relations with international organisations. Affiliated centres include the Chinese Cultural Relics Circulation Coordination Centre, the China Cultural Relics Exchange Center; and the China Relics Research Institute. The China Cultural Heritage Protection Center promotes cultural exchange and coordinates cultural heritage preservation. The Chinese Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Center protects the country's intangible cultural heritage, including the performing arts, cuisine, rituals, festivals and others.

In 1982, the Central Government issued the Cultural Relics Protection Law as an institutional guarantee for the protection of cultural heritage. Later on, SACH and the China branch of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) issued protection regulations, supported by local regulations. The Law on Regional Autonomy, adopted in 1984, supported the preservation of nationality, historical and cultural heritage and the dissemination of literature, print and broadcasting news, films and television in the languages of the Autonomous Regions. The Central Government issued the Bylaw of the People's Republic of China on Protection of Cultural Relics (2002), which sets out regulations on:

- export, import, registration, maintenance and protection of areas and goods;

- the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law of the People's Republic of China on Protection of Cultural Relics (2003);
- the Regulation on Protection of the Great Wall (2006);
- the Law of the People's Republic of China on Protection of Cultural Relics (2007);
- Administrative Rules for Examination and Approval of Entry and Exit of Cultural Relics (2007);
- the Regulation on Protection of Famous Historical Cities, Towns and Villages (2008);
- the Intangible Cultural Heritage Law of the People's Republic of China (2011)

The term 'intangible cultural heritage' was introduced to China only about ten years ago, when UNESCO passed a convention on safeguarding cultural heritage. The law aims at strengthening the protection and preservation of ICH according to the principles of authenticity, completeness and inheritance and promoting social harmony and sustainable development.

#### **CULTURAL HERITAGE PRESERVATION STRATEGIES**

The preservation of cultural heritage is supported by efforts to strengthen the skills and capabilities in China's provinces and to provide technical support to local authorities where necessary.

Traditionally, imperial China as it existed prior to 1949 was an agricultural country with a large and poor rural population. Over the past sixty years and particularly since the Opening up the West campaign from 1999, the Central and local governments have sought to increase financial flows toward minority areas which are concentrated in middle and western China. Highways were extended into the poorer areas in western China in order to facilitate economic development. The prevailing guideline of the past, 'Assistance for Preservation', was recently readjusted to 'Support for Development'. Simultaneously, the 'Develop the West' campaign was launched to protect the environment and includes policies and measures restricting tree felling and afforestation. Under this programme, affected farmers are being issued with grains in compensation for their diminished yield – in effect altering their lifestyles and depriving them of traditional livelihoods.

The Central Government has been investing in the protection of cultural relics since the 1990s and has spent some RMB 700 million (app. EUR 85,5 million) on 1,000 projects. Over the last two decades, China has taken up USD 1.33 billion (app. EUR 985.5 million) in loans from the World Bank to finance 12 important conservation projects which aimed to integrate cultural heritage conservation in infrastructure upgrading and urban regeneration. Over 100 cities were listed as national key sites and RMB 15 million (app. EUR 1.8 million) per year was allocated for their protection between 2001 and 2005. Between 2006 and 2010, RMB 570 million (app. EUR 69.7 million) was invested in the protection of cultural relicts in Tibet alone. The investment in cultural heritage preservation has increased over the past years: in 2008, for instance, the Government's total budget for conservation amounted to RMB 31.2 billion (app. EUR 3.8 billion), split between 1,200 national level sites and more than 1,000 museums. In 2012, expenditure on culture, sports and media amounted to almost RMB 49.5 billion (app. EUR 6 billion).

In addition to the presence of rich tangible cultural heritage, a recent national survey revealed over 800,000 items of intangible cultural heritage in China. The Central Government is taking measures to safeguard intangible cultural heritage by adopting, for instance, UNESCO's Living Human Treasures (LHT) model. LHTs are 'persons who possess to a high degree the knowledge and skills required for

performing or re-creating specific elements of the intangible cultural heritage'. Currently, China's LHTs receive RMB 10,000 (app. EUR 1,220) per year from the Central Government to guard and disseminate their art. This stipend is supposed to be matched by local governments, which is often problematic in impoverished areas of the country.

In summary, an obvious difficulty with the current structure of cultural heritage preservation governance in China lies in the fact that only the National People's Congress has the right to pass laws; local regulations, documents, notices etc. relating to heritage preservation are not anchored in formal legislation and do not bear the force of law. As a result, local authorities may find it challenging to enforce and implement cultural heritage preservation.

### **Developing Cultural Tourism**

Among others, the China-World Bank partnership has contributed to strengthening the links between cultural heritage conservation and local economic development, most notably through the adaptive reuse of historic buildings and the development of cultural tourism. Encouraging privatisation in this area may lead to entrepreneurship at the local community level, thus promoting cultural sensitivity and encouraging active participation. However, the state is a major stakeholder in the operation of China's tourism and owns or operates hotels, restaurants, souvenir shops and transport infrastructure. Therefore, international tourism feeds largely into the state sector, and local operators are struggling to tap into the potential.

The total number of international tourists visiting China was almost 58 million in 2012, up from less than 38 million in 2002. This rapid increase can have negative impact on preservation when the number of tourists exceeds the carrying capacity of a cultural setting. In 2005, the China National Tourism Administration announced goals to develop tourism to an exceptional level and Yunnan, Sichuan, Shandong, Hainan, Guizhou and Heilongjiang received World Tourism Organisation technical assistance to develop their respective tourist industries. The development of Yunnan province as a major tourist attraction is exemplary: receiving less than 30 million visitors from home and abroad in 1998, the province surpassed its own ambitious goal of welcoming more than 100 million visitors by 2020 already in 2009, when it attracted over 120 million visitors. This development has brought about major cultural and environmental changes linked to globalisation, modernisation and urbanisation: global food chains are beginning to replace traditional local food; transport and accommodation are developed to cater to tourism needs at the expense of environmental protection and biodiversity loss; tourism-centred economic activities are beginning to displace traditional livelihoods.

Taking into account fragile ecosystems and crumbling manmade attractions in addition to the fact that China is already one of the world's top tourist destinations and that its domestic tourism market is the world's largest, the task of protecting cultural heritage sites appears challenging, at best.

### **CULTURAL HERITAGE PRESERVATION IMPLEMENTATION: CATASTROPHES AND SUCCESSES**

The rise in land value and high density urbanisation led to the demolition of historic parts of cities and counties and to ruptures in the landscape. Old neighbourhoods are being replaced by commodity housing and other developments; cultural landscapes are razed. Heritage sites are in continuous danger of destruction or disrepair because heritage agencies lack the human and



financial resources to protect these sites from dilapidation. Sometimes, interventions intended to preserve ecological and cultural heritage or even constructing model cities of ecological sustainability fail miserably.

### **Cultural Tragedies**

Of the 12,000 traditional villages in China, only 5,000 are valuable from a preservation point of view. As villages undergo modernisation, their traditional characteristics are threatened; villagers move away to find employment in China's cities, the local population decreases and the interest in preservation and ability to preserve dwindle. Many wooden buildings are continuously under threat from fire and erosion. Recently, one of Asia's most famous covered bridges burnt down in Chongqing. Dukezong in Shangri-la County lost nearly two thirds (300 houses) of its historical housing stock to a blazing fire. In response, many local governments have now prohibited the use of fire crackers within a certain radius of traditional buildings.

The destruction of areas that reflect rich cultural heritage for the sake of urban expansion, profitable modernisation or urban redevelopment goes hand-in-hand with the country's swift urbanisation; in Dongguan City, for instance, a 150 years old garden was recently demolished by the local government to make way for a new infrastructure development. Regulations which require that construction companies carefully research prospective sites before beginning work are rarely followed and hardly enforced. In Hangzhou (Zhejiang Province), redevelopment of a listed historical site from the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279) continued on without permission for over a year. A much-documented tragedy is the disappearance of the Beijing Siheyuan and *hutong*. In 1949, their number was 7,000; this dropped to 3,900 in the 1980s; and it is estimated that up to 600 *hutong* disappear every year. Only 2.3 per cent of the estimated 4,200 construction projects completed in 2007 and 2008 in Beijing followed cultural relic preservation regulations.

The loss of authenticity is another obvious risk under urban redevelopment. One well-known example is the redevelopment of Xintiandi in the centre of Shanghai, where local residents were displaced, the majority of original buildings demolished and only a limited number of original facades preserved, often away from their original location. The majority of buildings in the quarter were newly constructed to resemble traditional Shanghainese architecture and local character and house expensive boutiques, restaurants and coffee shops. Xintiandi is now a favourite destination for visitors to Shanghai who are led to believe that they encounter traditional Shanghainese architecture and lifestyles. Meanwhile, cities throughout China have commissioned the construction of their own Tiandis (e.g., Xihu Tiandi; Wuhan Tiandi; Lingnan Tiandi; Chongqing Tiandi). Chongming Island instantiates the gap between vision and reality: the Island used to be the world's largest alluvial island and home to precious wetlands and migrating birds before a globally active British engineering firm was commissioned to design an eco-city on the Island, Dongtan. Focusing almost exclusively on environmental sustainability, the project largely neglected political, economic and social factors. Eco-tourism was to play an important role in the economic development of the Island. In order to facilitate tourism and improve accessibility, nearby Shanghai's municipal government completed the construction of a bridge-tunnel to the Island in 2009. Consequently, the Island was swamped with visitors (up to 500,000 during the first ten days since the opening of the bridge-tunnel) and areas designated for agriculture and/or protection were quickly transformed into parking lots or

entertainment areas. Many local farmers found themselves forced out of business; like local culture, wildlife habitats are under the continuous and growing threat of extinction.

Another instance of centrally planned development gone astray is Kashgar (Xinjiang), which features 2,000 years of history preserved in local architecture and customs. However, ancient structures are not only at risk from increased annual rainfall and the lack of solid foundation, but also the Central Government's ambitions redevelopment program. In 2010, the city was designated as a Special Economic Zone, similar to Shenzhen and Shanghai. An estimated EUR362 million have been poured into redevelopment in the hope of turning Old Kashgar, once the most important trade centre along the ancient Silk Road, into a new regional hub. Up to 85 per cent of Old Kashgar was slated for demolition, and 50,000 people are said to have already been relocated. Locals claim that a large part of their culture has already been lost forever.

### **Heritage under Threat**

Some 70 per cent of nationally registered historic cities in China have vanished over the last twenty years. About 44,000 ancient ruins, temples and other cultural sites are said to have disappeared, with Shanxi, Hunan and Hubei provinces most severely affected. Urgent intervention is needed across the country, for instance:

- Hakka Enclosed Houses in Southern Jiangxi: originally home to rich Hakka families, Hakka Enclosed Houses were listed in China's World Cultural Heritage Tentative List in November 2012. However, only two of the 600 houses are currently protected as state-level historic sites
- Ji Ming Yi (Cockcrow Post Town): between Datong and Beijing, the town was constructed in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, but suffered damage during the Cultural Revolution. Remaining inhabited buildings are in a state of disrepair and almost half of the 17 temples are in danger
- Qikou Town in Shanxi: the town was left mostly uninhabited when the rail system was introduced, leading to economic decline. Much of the original fabric of the city remains intact, albeit poorly maintained. The town is now threatened by easy accessibility owing to new highways and an emerging tourism industry
- Tianshui Traditional Houses: dating back up to 350 years, only ten of 55 original houses in the 'Historically and Culturally Famous City' were landmarked in 1994 and all of them are under threat due to the lack of financial resources and technical skills.
- Tuanshan Historical Village in Yunnan: founded in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the walled village compound is a favourite tourist destination and the target of invasive conservation schemes which have left it damaged and threatened by uncontrolled development

### **Some Successful Interventions**

Despite the overall grim outlook, schemes that succeed in combining the aims of cultural heritage preservation with economic development and cultural tourism, in particular, exist (see Figure 1). For instance, the Zhejiang Urban Environment Project in 2,500 year old Shaoxing was supported by the World Bank and benefitted 26,000 local residents through a controlled increase in tourism and

income. The project strengthened wastewater collection and treatment and improved urban infrastructure services whilst connecting inner city neighbourhoods – with original buildings constructed up to 700 years ago – to sewage, electricity and telecommunication systems.

Located close to Ningbo, 2,400 year old Cicheng decided to restore its splendid past despite the mistakes of more recent urban interventions. Cicheng's aim was to preserve local heritage in a way that makes the city attractive – and liveable – to its modern residents. Cicheng followed the idea of 'Putting People First' and avoided resettling local residents in the name of tourism. In addition to the preservation and restoration of its precious built environment, the city curates exhibitions, projects and workshops around traditional local handicrafts, such as cloth weaving and Chinese knotting. It is now home to 14 dedicated museums and 28 design studios – a creative hub *par excellence*. The town won the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Award for Cultural Heritage Conservation in 2009.

Pingyao Ancient City has been protected as a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1987. The city is home to 400 intact Ming- and Qing-era courtyard buildings and provides an outstanding example of cultural, social, economic and religious development in China. Shanghai Tongji University prepared a Master Conservation Plan in 2007 which builds on a comprehensive survey of tangible and intangible cultural resources and the identification of appropriate adaptive reuse of historic buildings in Pingyao, and the Global Heritage Fund and local government collaborate to implement the plan. A courtyard – restored as part of a careful pilot project – is now used as a training centre on local history, traditional building crafts and conservation techniques.

What these success stories have in common is that they are rooted in a thorough understanding of local specificities, taking into account the characteristics and long-term needs of local residents and how they inhabit their local environment. In order to assure the success of cultural heritage preservation schemes, it is therefore necessary for governments at all levels to build links with potentially existing non-governmental organisations; to involve and utilize the competence of academic experts from a range of disciplinary backgrounds at home and abroad; and to favour schemes which build on careful, minimal interventions and gradual change.



**Figure 1: In Guangdong Province, SoftGrid Architects and Urban Planners (Shanghai) proposed the Lianping Tourist Resort, featuring the 'Hakka Garden' as a central element of cultural and social transformation from Hakka farming village to high-end tourist resort. Golden landscape icons have been inserted into the remaining, undisturbed agricultural landscape in reference to a unique linguistic expression in Hakka culture. Remaining open to the general public (including the former village population) the central Hakka Garden serves as a spatial framework to collect and make accessible moments of traditional daily lifestyle. More importantly, it conveys, addresses and activates socially inscribed rituals, myths and stories in a variety of personal sensual encounters using existing spatial features (tree grove, riverbed, old bridge) to embed golden calligraphic stories on trees or assemble traditional flagpoles in the market square. In a remote rural area with tourism as its major economic prospect and with a famous cultural heritage but no original architectural structures left, it was the central aim of this project to lend the new resort a sense of specific locality by means of aesthetic transformation, cultural derivation and social participation. Illustrations: Rolf Demmler/Softgrid Ltd (Shanghai).**

## **EU-CHINA RELATIONS: WIDENING AREAS OF COLLABORATION**

China is transitioning toward a prosperous society and maintains favourable international relations and lively exchange on culture and cultural heritage preservation. China's strategic development goals are set out in the country's current 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2011-2015). These include, in relation to culture and cultural heritage preservation: prohibiting the exploitation of natural and cultural resources in protected areas; preserving cultural and natural heritage; and developing cultural tourism.

The EU aims at providing support for China's reform programme; assisting the country to address concerns over environment, energy and climate change; and providing support for human resources development (e.g., higher education exchange). A recent review of strategic aims stresses the importance of a dialogue-based relationship with China. It recommends shifting the geographical focus of development interventions from high-profile flagship programmes in Beijing to poorer provinces in middle and western China. Currently, the EU is in a comparatively advantageous position in that it can draw on the width and breadth of its Member State experiences in the areas of cultural heritage preservation and economic development.

### **DIALOGUE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS**

In 2007, the EU and China signed a Joint Declaration on the strengthening of their cooperation in the field of culture. Both parties declared their intentions to set up a structured policy dialogue on cultural affairs for the promotion of cultural diversity, cultural industries and other relevant issues. The year 2012 was declared the EU-China Year of Intercultural Dialogue, aiming to promote cultural exchange as well as people-to-people contacts and mobility. Ten projects in the fields of the performing arts, cultural heritage, new media technologies, library, architecture, design and applied arts were selected for co-funding, amounting to more than EUR 1.5 million. At the EU-China Mayor's Forum in 2012, a side event was held, discussing cultural heritage as a key resource for the sustainable development of cities.

Having identified cities and regions as important for the development of cultural sectors, later in 2012, the European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, Androulla Vassiliou, and China's Minister for Culture, Cai Wu, re-confirmed their intention to deepen cultural relations and strengthen collaboration in the fields of cultural industries, heritage and contemporary art in a Joint Declaration. They declared that closer attention should be paid to the involvement of regional and local stakeholders and other relevant public agencies and that direct cooperation and joint projects between all levels of cultural institutions, organisations and actors should be encouraged. An important step toward the implementation of these targets was the establishment of the biannual EU-China High Level People-to-People Dialogue (HPPD) in the same year, which includes, among others, the Policy Dialogue on Cultural Affairs. This Dialogue is an opportunity for intellectuals, cultural practitioners and cultural policy makers to strengthen cultural cooperation within creative industries and develop people-to-people relations. However, only a few new initiatives toward exchange and cooperation between European and Chinese civil society have since been supported under this umbrella, and there is great potential to encourage new partnerships and consolidate existing ones through sustained European funding in the future.

China has recently stressed the importance of culture and innovation as a main area of future growth. It aims to increase the proportion of its service sector to 45% of its total trade by 2015. China's Minister of Culture, Cai Wu, emphasised the importance of cultural preservation and innovation, referring to the national Revitalisation Plan on Cultural Industries. The plan aims to revive and develop those cultural industries which are rooted in traditional Chinese culture through integrated strategies at the local, regional and national levels. The EU – one of China's main trading partners in the Creative and Cultural Industries (CCIs) – has significant experience which can contribute to the development and expansion of Chinese policies in CCIs, including cultural development strategies and trade; import of cultural service and protection of domestic culture; and EU-China cooperation within the international system. Accordingly, the EU-China Seminar on the Role of Culture and Creativity for Local and Regional Development (A263-0C1) was held in Beijing in July 2013, as part of the EU-China Trade Project II. The aim of the seminar was to share policies around the promotion of local, regional and national cultural industries and cultural diversity as developed and implemented by the EU and its individual Member States.

### **CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES**

Cultural heritage is closely linked to a variety of sectors in a society; its preservation depends on the understanding that these sectors are interlinked. As such, cultural heritage preservation should be part of all EU-China policy dialogues. Like the protection of the environment and the implementation of sustainable development, it can only be achieved if it is integrated in trade, service and exchange. EU policy is already committed in areas such as climate change, development cooperation and regional cooperation and cross-cutting issues such as environmental issues and gender equality. In order to implement successful cultural heritage preservation and economic development as outlined above whilst avoiding loss of cultural heritage to urban and infrastructure development and cultural tourism, collaborative efforts will have to take into account recommendations and progress in the related fields of climate change adaptation and mitigation, environmental protection, etc. The China-EU 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation identifies innovative, inclusive and sustainable development as an important common task for the EU and China. Parties have indicated their intent to address climate change; protect the environment; promote transparent international energy markets; and facilitate resource-efficient, far-reaching, socially inclusive and low-carbon development policies. The Strategic Agenda sets the goals of promoting conservation and sustainable use of forests and biodiversity and implementing the Strategic Plan 2011-2020 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

### **IMPLICATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

The EU and its Member States are highly qualified to provide technical assistance and know-how to China and aid the country in the development of relevant policies and regulations toward the implementation of cultural heritage preservation at the national, regional and local levels of governance. Stakeholders can provide practical advice and contribute to knowledge exchange and skill building. However, the current extent of EU-China collaboration and exchange in the area of culture and cultural heritage preservation is far from sufficient. Despite existing attempts at EU-China collaboration on cultural heritage preservation – such as the EU-China Year of Intercultural Dialogue or the promise of a EU-China High Level People-to-People Dialogue – remarkably little funding is available for research and knowledge exchange activities in this area. Other Asian states

and North America are already forming close relations with China and thus urgent action is required if the EU is to build on initial efforts.

A successful strategy should include the provision of appropriate funding in order to provide opportunities for knowledge exchange between representatives of the EU and its Member States; Chinese governmental and non-governmental agencies at the national, regional and local level; and between EU and China researchers, practitioners and policy makers involved in research on and implementation of cultural heritage preservation. Especially with regards to the CCIs, the EU can draw on the rich experience and expertise of its Member States. People-to-people knowledge exchange in this area should be encouraged, especially in view of abundant investment and engagement opportunities for EU businesses.

The links between cultural heritage preservation and cultural tourism should be strengthened because they can lead to economic development. EU policy on investment and cooperation in cultural tourism should therefore be implemented with caution and fully respect the limits to growth so that it can be fairly distributed and remain culturally and environmentally sustainable.

The EU should assist China in maximising economic benefits whilst minimising risks, such as the further degradation of the natural environment (including loss of biodiversity), vanishing of tangible and intangible cultural heritage and, ultimately, losing the driver of economic development. Sustainable strategies should propagate culturally, environmentally and economically sensitive long-term interventions that build on the thorough understanding of local conditions and involve local stakeholders. The support of culturally sensitive research and cooperation at a local level can reveal and unpack indigenous knowledge and thus aid economic development.

Lastly, it should be noted that culture and the principles and aims of cultural heritage preservation are closely, albeit not explicitly, related to other areas of interest in international cooperation. Because the preservation of cultural heritage and resources is linked with the preservation of natural and socioeconomic resources, culture and cultural heritage preservation need not be regarded as stand-alone areas of cooperation and exchange. They should form part of dialogues and actions around environmental protection or economic growth at the international, national, regional and local scales of governance. A successful strategy should seek to integrate the aims and processes of cultural heritage preservation with those of socially, environmentally and economically sustainable development, taking into account fully the complexity of this undertaking.