



Research Paper

Role of NGO in Heritage Conservation & Natural Resource Management

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Abstract: The 1980s saw a vigorous involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in economic, social and environmental facets of development work. This has helped fuel a growing international realization that partnerships and closer cooperation among and between NGOs, governments, international agencies, and other development actors are crucial for promoting environmentally sound and sustainable development. The paper aims to explore the role of NGOs in heritage conservation and resource management through their support for and use of tourism as a tool for positive change. Case studies from developed and developing countries are used to highlight how NGOs have focused on the four essential components – tourism related financing mechanisms for conservation, establishment of tourism industry and resource management standards and especially voluntary guidelines, research on the challenges facing the management of resources and the NGOs responsibility to address these challenges and education of respective stakeholders regarding solution for resource use problems. NGOs and other

civil society groups are not only stakeholders in governance, but also a driving force behind greater international cooperation through the active mobilization of public support for international agreements. In summary, non-governmental organizations are not a romantic accessory to the process of development, but are legitimate and powerful instruments that can play a paramount role in catalyzing social change, with the right institutional incentives provided to them.

INTRODUCTION:

NGOs working to advance heritage conservation and resource management goals engage in diverse activities. Imposing a structure on this fragmented and varied work enables a larger-scale understanding and analysis of NGO approaches. Furthermore, a broad conceptualization of the types of work in which NGOs engage is the first step towards understanding drivers of NGO approaches, as well as the outcomes of NGO engagement. Some of the roles outlined below will be relatively familiar. Nonetheless, the activities contributing to

each role are outlined in some detail, grounding the typology in specific examples of NGO work

NGO Topology:

Five NGO roles in heritage conservation & resource management were identified: advocate, enabler, expert, manager, and watchdog (Table 1). It is important to note

that these categories refer to roles played by organizations and should not be understood as labels for organizations themselves. While some NGOs may favor certain types of approaches and may even style themselves “advocacy” or “watchdog” organizations, most organizations engage in multiple roles, often simultaneously.

Role	Description	Sample Activities
Advocate	Drawing attention to or cultivating concern about conservation issues; rallying support for a conservation agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lobbying government and industry ▪ Participating in cross-sector collaborations as the voice of the environment ▪ Lawsuits ▪ Direct action ▪ Some education and outreach
Expert	Providing scientific input into conservation and management; increasing organizational knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Original scientific research ▪ Development of scientific conservation tools Providing solicited process or science expertise
Manager	Directly implementing marine or coastal conservation; engaging in hands-on conservation activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Land or easement purchases ▪ Management or co-management of protected areas ▪ Service provision ▪ Habitat restoration
Watchdog	Enforcing conservation agreements; preventing or stopping illegal activities, or activities seen as incompatible with a conservation agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monitoring compliance and publicizing infractions ▪ Direct action, including direct interference with targeted activities ▪ Lawsuits
Enabler	Empowering others to manage or provide input into management of their own resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Capacity building ▪ Funding provision ▪ Providing opportunities for stakeholder involvement in conservation activities ▪ Tool provision ▪ Process facilitation ▪ Network creation

Case Studies – Work Done by NGO's in India:

The main influence of the NGOs has been in exploring the insights of 'area conservation', planning urban heritage zones, and examining the role of deeply implanted cultural ties, in the resolution of contemporary urban planning issues. The major organizations involved are the Indian Heritage Society (IHS) and Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), both based in New Delhi. The IHS with its chapters in various heritage cities is pressing for preservation of the traditional environment under the guidelines of UNESCO's heritage site programs. It is claimed that the ASI has not been maintaining traditional conservation practices and was exceeding its brief by setting up unnecessary structures, and that the comprehensive heritage environmental plan has not been taken into account. The growing pressure of tourism and consequential development of built structures are a testimony to consumerism and to current economic gain which ignores the sustainable approach. There appears to be a weak coordination between ASI and IHS and the various organizations (private and public) dealing with the tourism industry. In its projects the INTACH emphasizes that, somewhere between historical continuity and acceptance of modernity, our living culture is being compromised and lost by default. The strategy for planning should therefore follow a middle path, maintaining the harmony of deeply implanted culture while, at the same time, taking account of future-oriented urban development. Use of the concepts of 'area conservation', 'heritage zoning', and 'heritage ecology' are some of the examples of this approach. The INTACH which operates in various cities (including Varanasi) is now acting as a pressure group

and has been successful in achieving some encouraging results in urban heritage planning whereby tradition and modernity can exist side-by-side. Some other one-city based societies like the Golconda Society, the Hyderabad Historical Society, and the Save Bombay Group, are also in operation.

Another recently founded NGO, the Society of Heritage Planning and Environmental Health (SHPEH), based in Varanasi, also serves as a think-tank and eco-action movement in urban heritage planning emphasizing the exploration of heritage ecology and environmental healing. SHPEH perceives the sacred territory and urban heritage environment as being akin to that of 'landscape as temple'. It has started programs to promote pilgrimage tourism for geo-spiritual experiences which do not depend on the materialistic consumerism which degrades the heritage environment. This approach is designed to promote sustainability and a harmonic order. Under the 'fundamental duties' mentioned in the Constitution of India, it Singh, Rana P.B. 1997. Urban heritage in India; in, Contested Urban Heritage, eds. Shaw & Jones: 101-131. 4 is noted that 'it shall be the duty of every citizen of India to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture'. In the light of this principle the NGOs are currently strengthening their programs in heritage planning. Promoting tourism on other lines are trade and business organizations such as the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI). A national level organization, the Indian Tourism Council (ITC), has been proposed 'to unite all organizations, directly and indirectly engaged in tourism and to function as an apex body of the industry'. This proposal does not make any attempt to bring about coordination with ASI, INTACH and the other NGOs dealing with

the conservation of urban heritage. A resolution adopted by the State Tourism Ministers Conference in 1991, and also mentioned in the central government's 1992 tourism action plan, calls for a national level coordination committee with representatives from the tourism trade as well as from the central and state governments (The Times of India, 14 May 1996: 8). In an integrated approach towards culture and heritage, in the Ninth Five-Year Plan (1996-2001) the government of India has proposed a 'National Council for Culture' (NCC) which would serve as a central institution to interact with the ASI and similar organizations and agencies. The NCC will develop a mechanism for the conservation of heritage and for environmental cleanliness (The Times of India, 29 May 1996: 5). The formation of the NCC at least indicates increased awareness of culture and heritage conservation and of the need for community participation at a national level. Sterling Holiday Resorts (India) Ltd., based in Madras, has operated a package tourism program 'Heritage India' since 1995, promoting visits to pilgrimage destinations (30 selected sites) and 'Indosights' (25 selected sites). Special emphasis is laid on 'luxurious accommodation' and 'yoga and meditation training' in a unique combination of comfort and convenience with cultural and spiritual insights. This may prove to be a good program to highlight and promote 'urban heritage tourism', but as it stands it is more likely to attract foreign tourists and rich locals. While tourism is about people and heritage places, entertainment and education, economics and employment, it is also about morality and understanding, experiences and civic sense. Tourism has a crucial responsibility balancing development with conservation under the ethics of maintaining harmony between natural environment and human culture in the

celebration of local culture, history and heritage landscapes. A strong relationship between the resources of the preserved past and their uses as commodity and place identity can be depicted in a linked system related to three units; (a) heritage contributing towards political identity; (b) heritage supporting heritage tourism and; (c) tourism in general, and heritage tourism in particular, all contributing towards the educational and socialization functions of a place (Ashworth, 1995: 68). Awakening mass awareness of old cultural values could promote a new movement for the sustainability and conservation of heritage. However, such a revival need not turn into fundamentalism and damage social harmony. As Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of our Nation, has warned us 'nature has enough for everybody's need, not for everybody's greed (Dwivedi, 1990; 211).

CONCLUSION:

We have identified three factors that facilitate NGO enabling of heritage conservation and resource management: organizational trust; a commonly perceived problem; and aligned interests. A preexisting perception among stakeholders that the enabling organization is trustworthy and has relevant expertise is seen to facilitate enabling across conservation contexts. Visible, easily identified problems that directly impact stakeholder quality of life were found to be particularly powerful in motivating stakeholder acceptance of NGO involvement. Aligned interests around conservation and management were found to facilitate NGO engagement across sector divides. Organizational trust Interviewees from large NGOs working across varied contexts emphasize that a widely recognized and respected brand opens doors and facilitates access. Previous studies of NGO power in international standard setting have

identified the power of organizational branding and a public perception of trustworthiness as an organization's "symbolic power". In some initiatives, the above facilitating factors may be either entirely lacking or insufficient to meet the full suite of encountered challenges. We have also identified 5 groups strategies that organizations use to ease enabling engagement: cultivating trust; collaborative problem definition; working across boundaries; establishing clear communications; and sharing responsibilities. Stakeholder trust may be cultivated in both place-based and non-place-based contexts through connecting with existing leadership or established networks. Organizations working on the ground also build trust by maintaining a long-term local presence and hiring locally. Collaborative problem definition is seen as a way to gain access and ensure inclusivity; the latter goal also motivates work bridging existing divides between stakeholders or sectors. Clear internal and external communication ensures a shared understanding of the goals, means, and 50 limits of NGO engagement. Sharing responsibility is found to address resource and capacity issues, especially for small NGOs.

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