

SAFEGUARDING HERITAGE VILLAGES

Historical Cultural Landscapes could be ethno-centric constructs. There are 29 villages and the ancient Amaravathi Heritage Town in the cultural landscapes of the new Capital Amaravati. The local neighbourhoods are 'ethnoscapescapes'. Their relationship to their contexts or 'environmentality' is historical and dialectical. The transformations and production of contemporary localities through the land pooling process and the juxtaposition with the traditional neighbourhoods needs to be researched and understood as an integral part of the developmental process. Cultural reproduction in the safeguarding of historical cultural landscapes needs to be driven by the agency of various stakeholders. Reading the PAST is a critical journey. It is framed within the contemporary. It needs to be constantly interrogated. Integrated local area planning as envisaged in the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) Recommendation of UNESCO could be a critical tool for ensuring sustainable heritage development of the villages in Amaravati.

Achieving culturally sustainable development involves safeguarding the tangibles and intangibles – voices, values, traditions, folklore and ways of life. The process needs to be chalked out in each contextual village. Appropriate governance modalities need to be established through local communities. An entire community can be a dynamic living museum. This model of heritage conservation and responsible tourism can generate the momentum to address the UN Sustainable Development Goals. International standard examples from France, Korea and Vietnam are useful as demonstrations of the potential benefits of this approach.

There is potential for the completely planned capital Amaravati to set new international standards for safe, resilient and inclusive urban communities. The HUL Recommendation provides a framework for developing methods and modalities for new work. It needs to be grounded in practical experience, bottom up praxis driving the momentum complementing the standardization process of planning. There are lessons to be learnt from Asian countries that have provided demonstrated models for safeguarding their diverse heritage against the backdrop of rapid eco-

HERITAGE MATTERS



PROF. DR. AMAREWAR GALLA

a.galla@yahoo.com.au

Professor Dr. Amarewar Galla, an Indo Australian, is the Chief Curator of Amaravathi Heritage Town appointed by Government Order to guide its holistic development.

economic growth. The twin tools of Ecomuseology and Integrated Local Area Planning are being gradually tested in the historical cultural landscapes of Amaravathi Heritage Town. They could be applied to the 29 villages.

The challenge is to safeguard the rich, but vulnerable, historical cultural landscapes and heritage villages whilst simultaneously promoting the urban, economic and responsible tourism development that is essential to increase the GDP and build the aspirational greenfield capital. Traditionally, such a juxtaposition would have been considered as an 'either/or' issue and therefore frequently resulting in an impasse. The best way forward for sustainable heritage development is to bring together the APCRDA region and all the stakeholder groups into a participatory framework applying the Ecomuseum methodology. Partnerships need to be forged identifying the aims, interests and values that inform interpretations of community, local history and environmental values, including intangible heritage.

Ecomuseum is a process for bringing



Images: International Institute for the Inclusive Museum

Performances are part of the intangible heritage of Village life

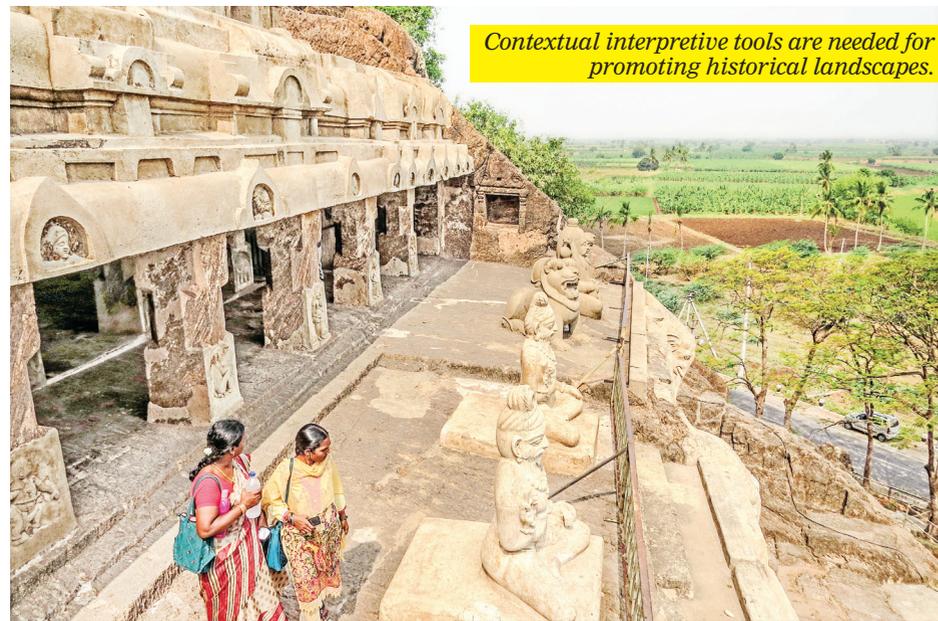
people and their heritage together. It seeks to establish a mutuality of interest and a sense of common ownership through the establishment of a far broader stakeholder base, involving communities, groups and organisations, in the management of the heritage villages and their hinterland. Through interpretation it raises awareness and understanding of both heritage values and the developmental planning. Better understanding of the critical importance of both conservation and development softens the polarisation of the debate and enables the two issues to be addressed together; an approach taken in addressing the UN Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals.

There are significant heritage resources in the new capital region with only a few recognised until now largely using the colonial discourse of antiquities. The 33,000 acres are an aggregation of a series of cultural landscapes and waterscapes that include the 29 villages and the Amaravathi Heritage Town. The mobilisation of heritage resources for economic benefits is envisaged to be driven by respectful community engagement and public-private partnerships. The heritage of the region extends over at least two millennia and the remaining heritage villages are several centuries old. The built environment is reflected by the social structure, as buildings have been occupied by the same families over several generations, keeping their cultural practices relatively intact until recently. This is manifested in economic activities (such as crafts) and lifestyle practices (cuisine, customs) and activities which provide both cultural and economic outcomes (such as festivals). The density and richness of living heritage within the heritage villages constitutes a grassroots community resource that needs regulatory protection to enable compatible development. Through a systematic cultural mapping process, an integrated local area plan for holistic development with embedded cultural planning, with periodic windows for review and development needs to be developed

Scoping has begun with the 15-acre village of Lingayapalem. The former Sarpanch Anamolu Satyanarayana brought

together people in the village. Women's participation has been equitable. The momentum has begun to develop a framework for safeguarding the village heritage in the capital region. It is critical as an intergenerational ethic that enables the future generations to experience what it is like for their parents and grandparents in the village 'atmosphere'. The heritage villages need adequate infrastructure to welcome future visitors of all kinds: school children for education purposes, people in the new Capital to visit them as part of their recreational spectrum; and domestic and international tourists who want to experience village life. Safeguarding this knowledge through living heritage and values will be a benchmark for the sustainability of Amaravati, the people's capital.

The establishment of the new capital Amaravati will be a mile stone for the history of architecture, planning and design in the world. It must be the first fully planned capital that is conscious of the culture and heritage of the primary stakeholder population. The biggest challenge is the safeguarding of the village 'atmosphere' and historical cultural landscapes that carry the signature/s of Andhra people. We must underline the word safeguarding and go beyond the catalogues of kings and queens, antiquities decontextualized from the associated meanings, stories, traditions and intangible heritage. Now we have a fantastic opportunity to critically reflect and move forward on all those things that inform our heritage consciousness as Andhra people and be proud of a capital that is reflective and revealing of our layers of heritage values through contemporary creativity, design, architecture and interpretive possibilities.



Contextual interpretive tools are needed for promoting historical landscapes.

NEXT WEEK

Heritage Matters will focus on the postponed column on Vietnam and its national approach to benchmarking Sustainable Heritage Development against UNESCO standard setting instruments.