

# **CAPACITY BUILDING, HERITAGE AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION: EXAMINING THE GAP BETWEEN GLOBAL APPROACHES AND LOCAL NEEDS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Capacity building is becoming an increasingly popular agenda in heritage studies with regards to good governance, decision making and developing strategies for a sustainable future. These strategies aim to enhance the current situation in World Heritage properties, and in many significant heritage sites, within the scope of various key themes including disaster risk reduction, sustainable tourism, heritage management, involvement of communities, legal and administrative frameworks and raising awareness.

On the other hand, these themes and general perspectives seem to remain slightly vague and inadequate in terms of site-specific practices, actors and managerial processes. The idea of empowering locally related communities and capacity building for autonomous decision making, for instance, is still a largely uncharted territory in heritage and management scene. Since some of the advised protocols for target audiences and areas fail to find a local response in existing dynamics of heritage sites, the gap between global approaches and local capacity needs requires further examination.

These contemporary practices demand systematic results that can be transformed into methodological agendas to support sustainable heritage management and positive social transformation. Within the scope of this paper, main methodologies proposed by institutions and organizations will be examined and alternative perspectives will be investigated. It is also aimed to discuss the possibility of a locally oriented capacity building approach for community participation that may contribute to the overcoming of the practical inefficacy of global discourse.

**Keywords:** Capacity Building, Heritage, Community Participation, Global Approaches, Local Needs

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Many systems can be placed somewhere in between clouds and clocks, just as Karl Popper<sup>1</sup> successfully suggests while referring to a spectrum of regularity, order and predictableness of things. Having decent amounts of formative elements from both ends, capacity building serves as a great model for these of hybrid nature.

Capacity building (or development)<sup>2</sup>, with its one of the most widely recognized definitions, is “the process whereby people, organizations and society as a whole unleash, strengthen, create, adapt and maintain capacity over time”.<sup>3</sup> What this definition really implies, however, leads to a very complex and grey area full of unknowns and not yet knowns. Dealing with inadequacies and creative possibilities at the very same time, practitioners, experts and academics are collectively assembling the pieces of a compelling puzzle.

That is mostly because, capacity building, has its roots in education and training, is an ever changing and evolving agenda with so many different dimensions. The conceptual predecessors can be dated back to 50s and 60s, when public investment for developing countries and institutional building were on the agenda, whereas from 80s, the focus of development started to be more human oriented.<sup>4</sup> Nowadays, fundamental human rights and accessibility to basic services are still a priority<sup>5</sup> while the approaches have a notably broader perspective.

Even though levels of capacity building are generally classified as individual, organizational/institutional and environmental/societal, the processes are essentially interrelated in a lot of ways. For instance, a well-designed process can be linked to human, scientific, technological, organizational, institutional and resource capabilities of countries at the very same time.<sup>6</sup> In the same way, for individual capacity, not only personal abilities, but also alternative combinations

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<sup>1</sup> 1972.

<sup>2</sup> The terms “capacity building”, “capacity development” and “capacity strengthening” are used in alternative forms in various documents. They have particular nuances. For example, “capacity development” is mostly used for cases where an initial capacity exists. On the other hand, “capacity building” implies creating or forming something from the very beginning. Within the scope of this paper, “capacity building” is preferred to be used for all situations.

<sup>3</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Lusthaus et al., 1999.

<sup>5</sup> The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals makes it clear that there is still too much work to do to combat inequalities.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations Economic and Social Council Committee of Experts on Public Administration, 2006.

of political, social and economic environment regarding that abilities become relevant.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, in a lot of situations, responsible bodies have to deal with several layers at the very same time.

Varying from educational planning, creating lifelong learning and training centres, supplying technical support and guidance to fostering welfare and good governance, capacity building also has so many faces and understandings. In this perspective, almost any practice that induce strengthening, increasing and/or enhancing existing capacities of the target, whether they be people, institutions or communities, has a relevance to the concept. Yet, these activities are generally expected to be sustainable as well as having long term and meaningful impacts. For this reason, they should have a well-planned structure with strategically measurable outcomes, rather than being accidental achievements.

Communities, on the other hand, are among primary targets of these practices. Being potential actors for a desired future, their awareness on fundamental issues seems highly important. However, as human beings and their relationships are at times very complex, any processes that concern individuals and groups of individuals can also be quite challenging. Although, the notion of participation has no absolute paths, practices aim to foster effective and purposeful involvement in line with active agency, responsibility and equal rights.

In this light, community-based planning, management and implementation along with participatory decision-making models are becoming increasingly popular. This approach enables empowering communities as well as enhancing their living environment on the way to reach social welfare and a sustainable future for all. Accordingly, it is possible to say that all human-oriented perspectives have a direct relationship with the fundamental origins of capacity building practices.

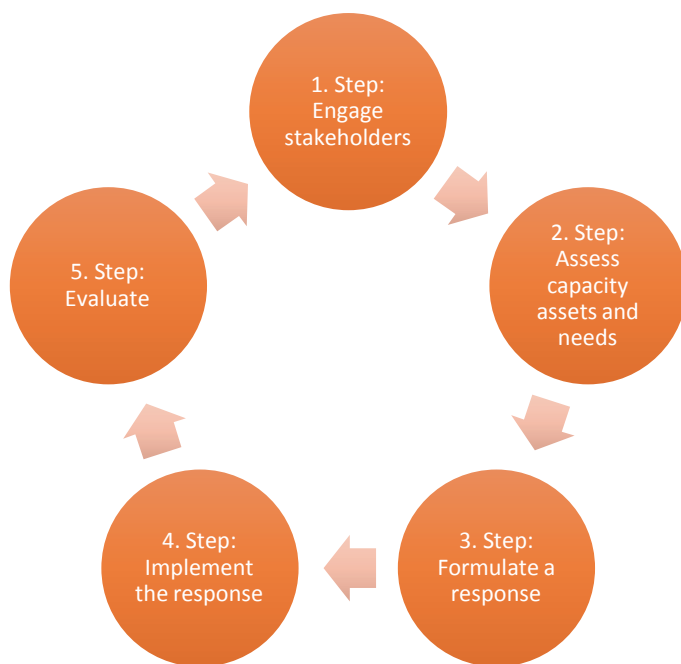
## **2. CAPACITY BUILDING AND THE METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK**

One of the main capacity building frameworks is proposed by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). UNDP's (2005, 2007, 2008) capacity building<sup>8</sup> scheme consists of five steps and they are adaptable for various assessments (Figure 1). It describes an ongoing and evolving process, through which, the suggested approach can be adapted and renewed through new outcomes and experiences.

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<sup>7</sup> Nussbaum, 2011.

<sup>8</sup> UNDP is using the term "capacity development" instead of "capacity building" for this framework. According to their definition (2009), Capacity Development is "the process through which individuals, organizations and societies obtain, strengthen and maintain the capabilities to set and achieve their own development objectives over time".



**Figure 1. UNDP's Capacity Development (Building) Process**

In this framework, the first step is defining and engaging stakeholders with the respective processes. This includes identifying the target group or groups including local dwellers, workers, communities, professionals, NGOs, CSOs etc., depending on the context. Setting the right target is the initial key to obtaining right answers with regards to defining capacity needs accurately. To whom and for whom the question of capacity has been directed to is a matter of utmost importance.

Assessing existing capacities and defining needs, being the second phase, is actually one of the most critical aspects of the process. Understanding and reflecting capacities demands facilitating a detailed investigation and scrutinizing a wide range of aspects. It may also require the implementation of a broad scope of data collection methods from examination of related resources to interviews with experts, decision makers or target groups. In this sense, addressing the vital questions regarding what capacity you are building as well as why and for whom you are building it is essential.

In conjunction with the collected data, a proper response to the existing situation can be formulated. Yet, revealing the above-mentioned needs, or "capacity gaps" as they are alternatively called, requires completing another task: setting a target. Therefore, in order to make a proper capacity assessment, actually three interrelated analyses should be performed instead of one:

identifying existing key capacity elements and/or areas, defining target capacity and addressing the capacity gaps.

The next aim is to bridge the gap between current and future capacities. Therefore, a response to the existing situation should be given. This response may involve actions that produce estimated and measurable outputs. A capacity building response is actually a foundation that serve as a basis for continued development, and therefore it should try to combine short- to medium-term initiatives with quick-impact activities.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, the last phase is called evaluation. For nearly all of the cases, perpetual modification and enhancement is vital after the implementation. Optimization of any process will be necessary since there will be practical inconsistencies with the estimated feedbacks. As a result, this requires regular and systematic monitoring and reporting for the evaluation of the ongoing practices and their outputs. Through steady revisions that almost lead to a cyclical behaviour, a suitable capacity building mechanism can be revealed.

### **3. ADAPTING HERITAGE STUDIES TO THE CAPACITY BUILDING FRAMEWORK**

Heritage is essentially a social practice where related communities collectively value and give shape to their irreplaceable and ever-growing cultural accumulation. That being the case, building capacity for such a significant involvement, both as a fundamental right and responsibility, can be another complex and perplexing agenda in itself. To further interpret this complexity, two approaches proposed by prominent heritage institutions should be examined.

#### **3.1. UNESCO's Perspective**

In correspondence with the 5Cs<sup>10</sup> of the World Heritage Convention, capacity building is mentioned as "promoting the development of an effective capacity building mechanism for the understanding and implementation of the World Heritage Convention and related instruments." As a key objective to ensure success regarding the other four, this definition remains vague in many terms.

However, what this explanation tells us is that: By the end of 20th century, what needs to be initially developed was the mechanisms that build capacity within the context of conservation and management of cultural heritage. In the meantime, adopting general principles from the proposed methodologies and

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<sup>9</sup> UNDP, 2008.

<sup>10</sup> Five strategic objectives: Credibility, Conservation, Communication, Capacity Building and Community. First four is mentioned in Budapest Declaration on World Heritage (UNESCO, 2002) while the fifth 'Community' is added in 2007.

re-evaluating broad implementations in the context of conservation as well as identifying existing issues have seemed to pave the way for following studies.

By 2011, World Heritage Committee declared two substantial paradigm shifts: stepping beyond training to adopt capacity building approach within a broader agenda and connecting this agenda for cultural and natural heritage.<sup>11</sup> Simultaneously, disaster risk reduction, sustainable tourism, heritage impact assessment, management effectiveness, involvement of related communities, strengthening legal and administrative frameworks, better awareness of the World Heritage Convention and better integration of World Heritage processes are listed as key themes for capacity building.

Three main target audiences are identified in this framework. These include practitioners -including individuals and groups who are directly involved in the conservation and management of heritage-, related institutions such as heritage organizations, NGOs, Advisory Bodies etc. and finally communities and networks (Table 1). The main goal is for all actors to become active, responsible and capable agents regarding conservation of cultural and natural heritage through various practices with diverse contemporary aspects.

**Table 1. Target Audiences and Principle Learning Areas as Listed in World Heritage Capacity Building Strategy**

<b>Target Audiences for Capacity Building</b>	<b>Principal Learning Areas</b>
<i>Practitioners</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of the Convention</li> <li>• Conservation and management issues: planning, implementation and monitoring</li> <li>• Technical and scientific issues</li> <li>• Traditional conservation processes at the site level</li> <li>• Resource utilization and management</li> </ul>
<i>Institutions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legislative issues</li> <li>• Institutional frameworks/issues</li> <li>• Financial issues</li> <li>• Human resources</li> <li>• Knowledge</li> </ul>
<i>Communities and Networks</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reciprocal benefits and linking with sustainable development and communities</li> <li>• Stewardship</li> <li>• Ongoing sustainability of traditional conservation processes</li> <li>• Communication / Interpretation</li> </ul>

<sup>11</sup> World Heritage Capacity Building Strategy requested by UNESCO World Heritage Committee was adopted during 35th COM in Paris.

Within the scope of above-mentioned key themes, the areas that need to be strengthened derive from diverse aspects. In a participatory context, conservation, management, planning, implementation, technical and scientific issues as well as financial, legislative and regulatory ones, education, knowledge and various resources are involved within the list of principle learning areas. These areas in line with related target groups, aim to bridge the capacity gaps in World Heritage Properties with the help of global, regional and national strategies.

### **3.2. ICOMOS CIF's Perspective**

International Council on Monuments and Sites International Training Committee (ICOMOS CIF) is a particular group of experts within the council that aim to promote international cooperation in the field of training and education in the protection, conservation.<sup>12</sup>

The first "Guidelines for Education and Training in the Conservation of Monuments, Ensembles and Sites" was adopted by the ICOMOS General Assembly in 1993 in Colombo, Sri Lanka. By 2013, another framework document was submitted by the Committee. It was called "Principles for Capacity Building through Education and Training in Safeguarding and Integrated Conservation of Cultural Heritage".<sup>13</sup> In line with the World Heritage Strategy, the change from Education and Training to Capacity Building was a reasonably foreseeable paradigm shift. Since the general understanding and perception has changed and the number of related heritage groups has increased, a broader perspective was needed. In this light, concepts like awareness, management, knowledge and skills, fundraising, building networks are also mentioned within the recent documents.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> ICOMOS CIF's mission statement. URL-1, 2020.

<sup>13</sup> In the most recent document submitted by the committee, in order to maintain an integrated and holistic approach, "Natural Heritage" was directly added to the scope as well.

<sup>14</sup> ICOMOS CIF 2013, 2018.

**Table 2. ICOMOS CIF's Capacity Building Practices for Target Audiences**

<b>General Target Groups</b>	<b>Capacity Building Requirements</b>
<i>Communities and the General Public</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding the importance of heritage</li> <li>• Education and awareness</li> <li>• Improved management</li> <li>• Repair and maintenance knowledge and skills</li> <li>• Documentation and transfer of traditional knowledge</li> </ul>
<i>Non-Governmental Organizations</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical framework</li> <li>• Managerial framework</li> <li>• Fundraising</li> <li>• Institutional capacity</li> <li>• Communication skills</li> </ul>
<i>Governmental Authorities and Institutions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical framework</li> <li>• Managerial framework</li> <li>• Fundraising</li> <li>• Administrative and institutional capacities</li> <li>• Communication skills</li> </ul>
<i>Property and Site Managers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elements of history and theory conservation</li> <li>• Knowledge of the heritage site and its context</li> <li>• Leadership skills regarding site planning</li> <li>• Management of conservation, maintenance and monitoring</li> <li>• Management of relations with communities</li> </ul>
<i>Conservation Project Managers/Leaders</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific qualification elements of the history of conservation</li> <li>• Technical characteristics of construction and methods of work</li> <li>• Programming of conservation activities and the implementation of projects</li> <li>• Knowledge of the materials, traditional and innovative proven techniques</li> <li>• Documentation of the works</li> </ul>

The principles identify general target groups while broadly reviewing the capacity building requirements for each audience (Table 2). Following this, many specific professions including architects, planners, engineers, technicians and specialists are highlighted in a very detailed way as the roles and possible responsibilities of all actors are mentioned without diminishing. The needs and



suggested actions to fulfil them are quite elaborative and well defined in terms of improving their active role within the context.

Recent principles also offer four modules for different stakeholders and widen the horizon of previous education and training approach by involving alternative kinds of initiatives such as seminars, publications, manuals, videos, computer programs, podcasts along with hands on experiences and demonstrations. These practices combine both traditional and contemporary learning approaches and allow related groups to obtain new skills while benefitting from the opportunities of new technologies.

#### **4. DISCUSSIONS ON LOCALITY AND CONTEXT**

Having examined the general perspectives on capacity building, locality of the issue still offers an interesting case. It is a reasonable consensus that good capacity building practices share some common characteristics such as dealing with capacities at several layers, following holistic approaches, working with intersectoral partners and being adaptable to local conditions.<sup>15</sup> However, there is not a singular and well prescribed way for all circumstances, since an approach that is suitable and useful for one situation may well not work in another, so that specific capacities, needs and priorities must be articulated<sup>16</sup>.

In other words, any capacity building processes may have situation and context specific elements that need to be taken into consideration carefully. They may be particular to the culture, time period, community and/or the place itself. Hence, what Kaplan<sup>17</sup> states explicitly with regards to organizational capacity is actually valid for all levels and dimensions:

- a) even though they (organizations) may share similar features, each example/case is unique
- b) while the framework may describe the elements of capacity or their togetherness, it cannot predict the change process definitely
- c) the interplay between capacities may add to existing complexity and eccentricity

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<sup>15</sup> Stiles Associates Inc, 2007.

<sup>16</sup> Bester, 2015.

<sup>17</sup> 2001.





Various solutions and scenarios should be further developed for different alternatives.

For this reason, communities as well as their effective participation become the key elements for capacity building. Communities reflect values that do not feature in selective identification processes performed by experts, and moderation of top-down and bottom-up perceptions is, therefore, needed.<sup>23</sup> Local people, their dynamics, values and potentials that play a formative role in the process may ease overcoming the above-mentioned complications. In addition to ensuring the sustainability of communities and their values by taking local needs into consideration, empowering related groups with necessary skills and capabilities may also help experts with naturally expanding their existing understanding on the issue.

## **5. WHILE CONCLUDING**

OECD<sup>24</sup> states that even though our experience on the subject have been deriving from a series of successful evaluations, this cumulative process of capacity building has been relatively slow. After nearly fifteen years of more experience, this argument still seems to be partly legitimate. Especially for new fields of capacity building, such as inclusive conservation of heritage sites with active participation of the regarding communities, the path seems to be long and compelling.

It is an undeniable fact that the pioneering efforts until today have absolutely been inspiring and encouraging. However, what is known about capacity building is still the tip of the iceberg compared to what can be discovered. Based on existing experiences, functional tools, which are able to overcome the current capacity gaps for the actors of different situations, can be developed. In order to achieve this, the current approach, which usually predetermines/pre-connects the target audience, key capacity areas and capacity building practices should be taken one step further.

In this sense, one of the most fundamental requirements is the successful implementation and particularization of capacity building frameworks for many study areas, including heritage studies. It is necessary to ensure that the existing knowledge and previous experiences are carefully integrated while a healthy balance between hard and soft edges of hybrid methodologies is maintained. As in many well-designed processes, there is a different mixture of various indicators that lead to success, unleashing future capacities becomes even more

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<sup>23</sup> Rodwell, 2016.

<sup>24</sup> 2006.

significant. Accordingly, while importing fundamental principles from global practices or experts, locally oriented and place-specific paths should also be discovered. Especially for heritage sites and their effective conservation in the long run, just as for any other discipline, a functional guidance for capacity building should be nourished from the very environment, and the existing know-how should be blended with local expertise.

“The right approach” should, therefore, embrace all ends in a flexible, yet holistic manner. Highlighting the importance of community participation once again, building capacity on this basis may naturally result in developing an autonomous, self-sufficient and effective mechanism. A mechanism that can hopefully provide consistent outcomes in the long run and transform societies. Since it is an undeniable fact that capacity building and community participation are integral prospects of conservation, as well as all other disciplines, a healthy balance between the global scope and local needs should be established.

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