



The quick scan method for Historical Urban Landscapes

In November 2017, the Japan-Netherlands Architectural Cultural Association, together with the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (RCE) and Space and Matter, organised a *workshop* on the revitalisation of the historical core of the city of Hirado, in Japan. The Hirado ReDevelop & ReDesign Workshop was requested by the Municipality of Hirado, and carried out with a group of local universities, with the support of the Netherlands Embassy in Tokyo.

Based on the Historic Urban Landscape approach, this workshop aimed to define the development potentials of Hirado's historical core. To do so, it made use of a method known as quick scan. This article explores how this practical method is connected to the Historic Urban Landscape approach, and it explains when and how it is applied. Most importantly, it shows why it is a useful instrument for professionals working with historical urban contexts.

Setting the stage

Before delving into the quick scan method, it is necessary to consider UNESCO's *Historic Urban Landscape* (HUL) approach. It



Fieldwork with students near Hirado's waterfront (photo: Space&Matter)



View over the Hirado bay (photo: Space&Matter)

offers a more dynamic approach to the conservation of historical cities than usually practised, since it links heritage conservation to urban planning and development. This change stemmed from UNESCO's earlier observation that fast-paced and uncontrolled urban development in World Heritage Cities was rapidly transforming urban contexts, often resulting in the deterioration of heritage and community values. Earlier heritage conservation practices focused on the preservation of the physical environment had thus proven to be an insufficient strategy. This observation led UNESCO's 2011 General Conference to put forward the Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape.

The principles set out in this recommendation were not entirely new. Rather, the HUL can be seen as a redefinition of the earlier policy on Integrated Conservation, formulated in 1975 by the Council of Europe, in the *Declaration of Amsterdam*.¹ What the HUL introduced was the notion that heritage conservation incorporates a capacity for change. Meaning, the historical urban landscape is not seen as a static object, but as an active subject, continuously adapting to changing circumstances. This change is part of the historical identity and therefore, conserving historical urban contexts becomes a matter of managing change rather than of material preservation. Furthermore, in order to be sustainable, urban heritage needs a base of existence and a future perspective, hence heritage conservation enters the practice of urban management.

¹The concept of Integrated Conservation has, since then, evolved in several subsequent documents, most noteworthy the International Council of Monuments and Sites' (ICOMOS) *Washington Charter of 1987*.

Quick scan and HUL

Because the HUL-approach states that heritage conservation should be integrated in planning policies and practices, it encourages local authorities to draw urban development plans that consider the historical features of urban contexts. And this is where the quick scan method comes in – it allows one to investigate future perspectives for urban heritage, by providing data concerning the urban quality, state of repair and present use of the investigated area. It is not a replacement for an urban plan, nor an in-depth research method. Rather, it offers a quick and simple way to explain the structure of a historical inner-city and, based on the data collected, to formulate future development opportunities.

The quick scan should preferably be carried out by students from local universities because, on the one hand, they bring local insights and experience, on the other, young people are trained in examining historical urban sites as elements with development potential. As a first step towards a revitalisation policy, this method addresses decision makers. Once information gathered through the quick scan is compiled in a report or policy advice, it provides local authorities with the information needed to define future perspectives.



Intermediate design discussion during the Hirado workshop (photo: Space&Matter)

How does the quick scan method work?

To explain how the quick scan works, the *Hirado Workshop* will be used as an example. Hirado is a Japanese city located on an island near Nagasaki. Known as a trading place as early as the eighth century, it later attracted traders from all over the world, including the Dutch, who established there their first trading post in Japan.²

² Reconstructed at the beginning of the century, the Dutch Trading Post is today a landmark that symbolises the connection between the Netherlands and Japan.

In 1640, the Dutch were ordered to leave and were assigned Dejima as the new location for their Trading Post. At that time, Hirado lost its position as a favoured place for foreign trade, nonetheless, the city kept expanding through time.

Nowadays, however, Hirado is coping with a shrinking and aging population (c. 18.000 people), and an increasing amount of vacant real estate. At the same time, there is a growing interest in Hirado as a tourist destination, due to its historical city centre, its natural surroundings and local food products famous in Japan. The aim of this workshop was thus to identify the development potentials of Hirado's historical features. How could these contribute to the city's contemporary needs? And vice-versa, what new impulses could provide a base of existence and future perspective for these historical features?



Participants of another workshop (Ternate, 2012) mapping out existing urban structures (photo: Jean-Paul Corten)

The workshop began with a spatial and a historical analysis of the city, to consider why and how Hirado developed the way it did. This was followed by a socio-economic analysis, which helped identify important characteristics of the city today. A second phase involved surveying and mapping Hirado's existing buildings. This was done according to: 1) historical identity, 2) state of repair and 3) function. Through this exercise, it was possible to identify the main areas and respective buildings in need of repair, in order to maintain the historical features of the cityscape.

After the mapping exercise, the group carried out a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis. This allowed the group to identify the areas with development opportunities and areas with development risks. With the information gathered, the group considered what could be adapted and/or created in order to enhance certain aspects of Hirado's historical centre. Based on this workshop, the participants developed a plan with recommendations for development. Because the workshop included Dutch experts and Japanese

students, ideas and experiences from both contexts were exchanged, thus broadening the participants' view of the possibilities for Hirado's revitalisation.



Map showing how Hirado's existing buildings contribute (red), are neutral to (yellow) or disturb (blue) the historical identity of the city (Hirado Workshop 2017)

Sharing expertise towards a joint future for shared cultural heritage

Integrated Conservation as a strategy started being applied in the Netherlands during the last quarter of the twentieth century, to revitalise the country's many dilapidated historical city centres, including Amsterdam and The Hague. The main goal was to

improve living conditions while using the existing building stock. Social needs were at the centre of these revivals and of conservation efforts, which represented a change in the paradigm of heritage conservation. This strategy proved successful – today these city centres are in better shape than ever before. This experience helped develop the quick scan method since, at that time, a simple 'quick scan' started being used to identify and calculate the rehabilitation needs and respective costs.

Besides the workshop in Hirado, Jean-Paul Corten and other RCE experts have given several workshops where the quick scan was applied to investigate future perspectives for heritage in different contexts. Requested by local parties, these workshops involve a collaboration with the Shared Cultural Heritage programme (SCH) of the RCE, since they integrate a physical legacy of a shared past with the Netherlands.

Take the island of Ternate (Indonesia), where a workshop was carried out in 2012.³ During the seventeenth century, this island was an important trading post for the Dutch East India Company (VOC). Like many other cities around the world, today Ternate's historic inner-city is under great pressure due to over-development. The realisation that vulnerable urban qualities were at stake resulted in the challenge to re-create the city centre in a way that it would become attractive again for living, working and leisure. The SCH Programme of the RCE supported the workshop by providing its unique expertise in regards to the quick scan method. In 2016, the RCE published a *brochure* on the outcomes of this workshop.

³ Executed by students of the Faculty of Architecture of the Khairun University of Ternate, the Ternate Conservation and Development Workshop was initiated by the aforementioned university, as well as the Ternate Heritage Society, in collaboration with the Planning Board of the City of Ternate.



The Dutch Fort Oranje in Ternate (Indonesia), recently restored (photo: Maulana Ibrahim)



Participants of the Ternate (2012) workshop and Jean-Paul Corten (RCE)
(photo: Maulana Ibrahim)

About the expert

Jean-Paul Corten was one of the main organisers of the Hirado workshop (2017). He obtained his degree in History at Utrecht University (the Netherlands), after which he specialised in planning. He began his career as a researcher in the history of technology at Eindhoven University and later became research coordinator at the Netherlands Institute for Industrial Heritage. Jean-Paul is currently working at the RCE as senior policy officer. There he is the coordinator of one of the three themes of the Shared Cultural Heritage Programme – *Heritage & Spatial Planning*. Furthermore, he is positioned part-time at the Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies (IHS), at Erasmus University Rotterdam. As an expert on integrated conservation, linking heritage conservation to urban development, he is involved in many international urban regeneration projects.



Questions?

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