

Integrating heritage management with development. Sustainable conservation and developmental guidelines for Ḥārat as-Saybanī, Barkat al-Mawz, Oman

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ABSTRACT: The paper presents the results of the Documentation and Heritage Management Project for Ḥārat as-Saybanī, a traditional mud brick settlement in the oasis town of Barkat al-Mawz, Central Oman. By culturally and technically informing Heritage Management Guidelines, revitalization of Ḥārat as-Saybanī has been advocated centred on education, training and skill development focused on traditional knowledge of the built environment and the crafts. The intention is to move away from an entirely tourism focused development towards a more sustainable alternative, where traditional and everyday activities may play an important role in the local economy. The guidelines produced for Ḥārat as-Saybanī take a holistic view of development, which goes beyond the idea of the settlement as an assemblage of built structures and artefacts to give specific attention to the present state of life and future aspirations of the inhabitants, ownership status of structures and the opportunity for public-private partnership.

1 SUSTAINABLE INTEGRATED HERITAGE MANAGEMENT: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

From the World Heritage Convention onwards the issue of the integration of heritage management with development has been pivotal to the international conservation doctrine. Initially the attention was focused, with the creation of the “World Heritage in Danger” list, on heritage assets under threat of disappearance due to accelerated decay produced by alterations, changes in use or ownership, abandonment, rapid urban and touristic development. The European Charter of the Architectural Heritage, commonly referred to as “The Amsterdam Charter 1975”, introduced the notion of “integrated conservation” as a strategy to prevent the destruction of heritage caused by economic pressures, land and property speculation at the basis of urban planning, misuse of contemporary technology, institution of transportation infrastructure, and from ill-considered and facile restoration. Crucially, it has underlined the necessity to see heritage protection as being integral to urban and regional planning. This is to be understood as reconciling conservation requirements with planning activities by attaching the same importance to values and interests of the historic built fabric as given to other factors in the planning process (Feilden & Jokilehto, 1998).

The subsequent step in the development of the concept has been to frame integrated conservation within the sustainability discourse. The starting point was the consideration that protection and conservation of heritage contribute to the sustainable development of societies and, therefore, sustainable development principles need to be integrated into heritage management systems. In this respect, the UNESCO Operational Guidelines refer to the “sustainable use” of World Heritage properties as “a variety of on-going and proposed uses that are ecologically and culturally sustainable”, on condition that this “does not impact adversely on the Outstanding Universal Value of the property”. They also refer to community and stakeholders participation in heritage protection as “necessary conditions to its sustainable protection, conservation, management and presentation” (UNESCO, 2011). To manage historic places sustainably means to

manage their use and change “so as to respect and enhance their value to society” (Worthing & Bond, 2008). This is done by:

- boosting community life and maintaining its identity and vitality through social inclusion and cultural diversity;
- empowering community action and reinforcing the sense of collective responsibility through participation;
- discouraging functional segregation and promoting mixed use;
- fostering the “ecosystem analogy”, that is functional diversity - balance between production, manufacturing and services - structural diversity - availability, variety and proximity of adaptable accommodation to meet changing functional and spatial needs - social diversity - balanced and self-regulating community structure (Rodwell, 2007);
- providing relevant policy frameworks to integrate objectives of conservation and sustainable development;
- minimizing the depletion of non-renewable heritage assets;
- defining the extent to which historic places can tolerate change and identifying the level of sensitivity to change, that is vulnerability to loss of heritage value because of change.

When envisaging public participation and addressing the needs of the local communities, integrated heritage management has proven to be an effective means of sustainable regional development. To sustain life within and around heritage properties means to think of heritage as a driver of socio-cultural development and economic growth. The ideal relationship between heritage and development is the result of a number of actions to be taken on five different fronts (ICOMOS, 2011). First, the selective preservation and reuse of heritage assets is to be practiced as a way of fostering socio-economic regeneration through the maintenance or revival of related traditional activities (agriculture and crafts), preservation and transference of skills and the provision of employment opportunities at the local level. Furthermore, the control of urban development is to be implemented through the enforcement of regulations which limit the extent and nature of new build within and around heritage assets. Secondly, a return to the art of building is to be fostered in the conservation and rehabilitation of built heritage by bringing back traditional skills and practices. Thirdly, heritage-based tourism needs to be developed by involving the communities in passing the social, cultural and human values of heritage onto visitors. Fourth, forms of economic growth are to be promoted whereby the revenue comes from heritage preservation and is reinvested in it, thus benefitting the local communities in terms of provision of employment opportunities, flow of funds, maintenance of traditional crafts and skills, improvement of living conditions and enhancement of social cohesion. And finally, research needs to be developed in the area of the monitoring of built heritage’s physical performance, measurement of its economic value and assessment of risks and opportunities associated with its preservation.

This paper builds on the concept of heritage preservation as being strategic to the sustainable development of sites and communities torn between an understandable desire for modernization and a still weak consciousness of the importance of preserving their heritage.

2 BUILT HERITAGE CONSERVATION IN OMAN: ISSUES, APPROACHES, FUTURE CHALLENGES

Though occurring at different stages in the various countries of the Arabian Peninsula, the discovery of oil has been the major agent of rapid economic and social development which has made them part of the globalized world. Development has turned their socio-political structures from tribal organizations ruled by shaikhly groups to centrally governed monarchies, and their economies from subsistence economies based on agriculture, trade and fishing to market economies focused on oil exploitation.

Like in other developing countries, in Oman development proceeds at such a fast pace that urbanization exerts significant pressures on traditional oasis towns, both from without - as land development - and within - as alterations to the traditional built fabric. This takes place in three ways; through demolition of owner-occupied dwellings to make room for modern houses or parking spaces, in the form of adaptation of tenant-occupied dwellings to present-day needs, and through desertion of dwellings resulting in dereliction. Consistency of mass, scale, form, colour, texture and fenestration, along with the compactness and complex, maze-like street patterns

which are a common feature of traditional Islamic settlements, are jeopardized by modern encroachment. Buildings that bear no relation to the extant traditional ones, both in entity and content, threaten the authenticity of traditional settlements, while their abandonment by the inhabitants, due to prospects of better life and work opportunities offered by capital cities and regional centres, determine dilapidation with resulting loss of fabric and integrity.

The conflicting coexistence of tradition and change and the pressurizing development initiatives in the Arabian Peninsula are the manifestation of a typical reaction against traditional societies and patterns of living, as a result of globalization. People perceive the preservation of traditional towns and the valorisation of traditional customs as a barrier against modernization and the improvement of living condition. This explains why in Oman mud brick houses, which traditionally lack running water, kitchen and sanitary facilities, often get demolished and replaced with their modern counterparts in concrete, glass and steel, equipped with the latest technologies. At the same time, the commodification of life induced by economic globalization poses a major threat to traditional built environments. Underlying the heritage-modernity dualism is sometimes an inferiority complex of Islamic countries to Western cultures, which develops the belief that the artefacts of their culture are not worth preserving and traditional buildings are not of greater value than modern buildings employing Western technologies (Lewcock, 1980).

The clash between past and present, which materializes in the attrition between the heritage of the Middle East and the effects of globalization, explains why international regulatory frameworks are only partially applicable to this part of the world. On the one hand the UNESCO Operational Guidelines require (for the purpose of the nomination of a property for inscription on the World Heritage List) detailed descriptions of extant and potential development pressures that affect built heritage assets and would harm their authenticity or integrity. On the other hand, they assign to national and local regulatory measures the task of putting in place policies in order to assure the protection of heritage against development and change. In the case of Oman a fragmented operational framework, lacking coordination between heritage management and development planning, makes it particularly complex to implement protection strategies on endangered traditional settlements. The result is that, pending the establishment of wider coordinated policy, the present pressures on land for developing new housing, economic, social and civic infrastructure accelerate the rate of decay of heritage assets.

Indirectly threatening Omani traditional settlements is also people's lack of awareness of the tangible and intangible values associated with their mud brick dwellings, *sablaks* (men's meeting halls), mosques and *madrassahs* (Qur'anic schools), forts and watchtowers, defensive walls, gates and sentry walks, ablution blocks, wells and *aflaj* (irrigation channels). In the mind of ordinary Omanis these assets are associated with the remembrance of a past of scarcity of means, hard work, prayer and visiting routines, which have drastically changed over the last forty years, as well as of tribal strives in some cases (Eickelman, 1984). On the other hand, conservation strategies seem to be informed by a top-down attitude, which tends to approach heritage not as a "shared legacy, common responsibility"¹, but as a governmental business, where the government takes care of it and acts on behalf of the people.

Be it the restoration of single monuments of universal and regional value or of entire settlements, the approach consists of acquiring the properties from the owners through compensation mechanisms and contracting a conservationist architect to carry out the works. A problematic and unresolved notion of the country's past lies at the root of governmental initiative. Heritage is perceived as one glorious past, that of Oman's once not inconsiderable naval power and resultant wealth, which is embodied in the number of castles, forts and towers that constellate the country. Current practice is to restore and rebuild buildings of historic importance as they were - or were perceived to have been - during a specific golden epoch in history, faithfully re-enacted for purposes of touristic appreciation and national pride building². This "museumification" approach, coupled with the financial impossibility of saving entire settlements from destruction, contrasts the internationally accepted idea of heritage as part of history and, as such, subject to change, and the belief that a site is never given but is understood incrementally through the consideration of wider spatio-temporal sites and contexts (Bandyopadhyay, 2007). Focused on monuments conservation, heritage management in Oman tends to overlook the interrelation between high status historic buildings - forts and mosques, with the continuous fabric of residential quarters and their interdependence with agricultural land. The local values, which communities attach to heritage properties, are embedded in the domestic, work, religious and social



Figures 1, 2, 3. Parking space has been created for tourist buses in front of Bahla Fort (top), by demolishing mud brick traditional structures. The modern *sablaha* in the foreground contrasts starkly with the Fort, which was still under restoration in February 2010 when the authors visited the site. Pending implementation of relevant conservation and management policy, the surroundings of the recently restored Friday Mosque (bottom left), which are part of the al-‘Aqr quarter, are a commixture of dilapidated traditional mud brick structures, unfinished modern construction and incompatible facilities (water tanks, bottom right).

activities which traditionally take place in and around them. These values, the recognition and appreciation of which is a pre-requisite of sustainable heritage management, are either disregarded or pushed into the background.

An example of the “museumifying the past” approach to heritage conservation comes from Bahla Fort and oasis, a World Heritage Site since 1987. Though subjected to a Management Plan³, which recognizes the importance of the site as an integral whole and the need to manage modern uses and development in order to preserve the integrity of its historic buildings and their prominence within the setting, the case of Bahla is food for thought on how socially and economically unfruitful heritage conservation can end up being. Major threats to the property have been identified by various expert monitoring missions. The latest mission reports the deterioration of the earthen structures of the Fort - built in the 13th and 14th centuries under the Banu Nabhan tribe - due to the adoption of inappropriate conservation techniques; the decay of many traditional components of the site, such as mosques, houses, *sablaha*s and irrigation channels, due to lack of maintenance, heavy alteration or inappropriate repair; the development pressures on the peripheral urban area leading to new constructions, which affect the visual integrity, the authenticity and the historical and aesthetical values of the site; the negative impact of the heavy traffic road crossing the oasis on the neighbouring structures; a lack of community consultation in regulating the physical, socio-cultural and economic development of the site, which could generate conflicts between the stakeholders (Michon & Guillaud, 2001). The “Bahla Fort and oasis restoration/rehabilitation project” was aimed at addressing those issues by looking at the whole oasis, but pending the adoption of the Management Plan the Ministry of Heritage and Culture of Oman (MHC) has put all efforts into the conservation of the ruined Fort (Fig. 1) and



Figures 4, 5. Original stone masonry sections (left) and carved ceilings (right) stand out against the purposely rendered surrounding surfaces.

Friday Mosque (Fig. 2) and has neglected the control of building pressures within the residential quarters (Fig. 3). As a result, the two monumental buildings, towering from their elevated location on a rocky outcrop, have been given back their original integrity in contrast to the surrounding severely deteriorated and altered built fabric, which has remained unmanaged. While the Fort and Friday Mosque, whose “outstanding universal value” has strongly motivated Bahla’s inscription on the World Heritage List, have been prevented from disappearing, the continuous fabric of *harahs* (residential quarters), whose tangible and intangible values have not been taken into consideration by the project, have inexorably dilapidated. This is an approach that negates the notion that universal and local values are part of a continuum, not a hierarchy, so they should be acknowledged as equally crucial in the sustainable management of heritage sites and, therefore, not taken into account separately⁴. Unlike Bahla Fort, where only one epoch has been unveiled, Jabrin Castle, built in the mid-17th century during the Al Ya’aribah dynasty as the residence of the Imam, has undergone a sound and genuine restoration. Great efforts have been put into the conservation of as many original testimonies as possible of the ancient structure - architectural elements, decorative features like the internal *juss* carvings and original building materials like the *sarooj* external plasters - and a clear-cut distinction has been established between original elements conserved and new intervention (Figs. 4, 5).

Recently the MHC has established an inventory of about 400 vernacular settlements of which 86 have been identified for immediate attention; only a handful of these - Bahla, Nizwa and Adam - have heritage and development management initiatives in place, although none have been *actually* adhered to. Such a woefully inadequate situation testifies to the Government’s awareness of the need for a no longer deferrable intervention and is certainly an important step forward in the direction of safeguarding heritage. However, it is felt that this is only the first stage of a long and complex process, which has to reverse the current practice, that is shift from a “top-down” to a “bottom-up” approach. This plays on existing material resources - the historic towns and their buildings - as well as human resources - their present and erstwhile inhabitants and the socio-economic community they form, without which cities can neither exist nor function (Dennis, 2007). Despite the wide advocacy of public participation in decision-making in heritage management through several international charters, in Oman communities are rarely consulted. Only by integrating heritage into the life of the community and creating public-private synergies will heritage be understood by the Omani people as a common legacy to preserve for future generations and not just the profitable and myopic focus of Omani tourism trade. The involvement of the various stakeholder groups, which make up local communities, should occur at different levels: the general public should be informed through seminars and public meetings; actors, concerned groups and the general public should be asked to provide feedback and express opinions through the consultation process; actors and the general public should actively participate in the decision making process (Barillet et al., 2006).

It is also reckoned that the present lack of widespread information campaigns, education and training initiatives on national heritage are major hindrances to a fully successful implementation of conservation plans and policies, which implies the need for enhanced public awareness



Figure 6. The eastern fortified boundary of Hārat as-Saybanī with the soaring watchtower at the top.

and capacity building. Public awareness is raised by educating, sensitizing, involving, consulting and making people feel responsible, as individuals and members of the wider community, for the destiny of the country's heritage. Educational programs, designed to popularize heritage by addressing various age groups separately as well as collectively, have the effect of revitalizing the local culture and, so, reinforcing pride. Legislation and capital assets alone cannot safeguard heritage if not backed by a grassroots belief in the need and socio-cultural as well as economic advantage for preserving and conserving it (Lewcock, 1980). Capacity building, which is key to the maintenance and passing down of traditional know-how, has to be promoted through formalized training opportunities for craftsmen such as silversmiths, gunsmiths and locksmiths, farmers, professionals and tradesmen working in the field of conservation, such as conservation architects and mud brick manufacturers and bricklayers.

Built heritage conservation in Oman poses, in addition, a range of pragmatic problems. Labour skilled in traditional construction techniques is lacking; whenever needed it is therefore imported from North Africa for extended periods, making it very costly. Furthermore, foreign labour is not necessarily experienced in local construction methods and architectural styles, for Islamic architecture is not uniform across Muslim countries. To revive the traditional crafts is a process that requires not only people willing to learn an ever less attractive job, but also time and financial resources. Furthermore, a lack of political will to support long-term applied research on the innovation of mud brick construction, for its use in combination with modern materials and languages, is responsible for an outdated approach to architectural conservation, where no effort whatsoever is made towards unveiling the past through the means and sensitivity of the present.

3 HĀRAT AS-SAYBANĪ, BARKAT AL MAWZ: GUIDELINES FOR THE SUSTAINABLE INTEGRATED CONSERVATION OF A TRADITIONAL OASIS SETTLEMENT IN CENTRAL OMAN

A one-year research project funded by Nottingham Trent University, with additional support from the MHC, aimed to document Hārat as-Saybanī, in the oasis town of Barkat al-Mawz (Oman) (Fig. 6) and deliver a Heritage Management Plan (HMP), has provided an invaluable opportunity to develop models, methods and guidelines for Omani traditional oasis settlements which risk disappearing due to abandonment and alteration. The significance of the site ensues from a number of reasons including: 1) its strategic location as the gateway to the Jabal al-Akhdar mountains, a popular touristic destination, allowing control over access to them; 2) a unique topography, having developed along a steep hill face; 3) its visual prominence; 4) its two *falaj* channels and associated points of water access and use, which are integral part of the Falaj al-Khatmeen WHS; 5) its complex dwelling types in response to the topographic challenge; 6) its tribal and more recent history.

In particular, the settlement's significance results from the following.

- Urban and architectural significance:



Figures 7, 8. The distinctive settlement structure in an aerial photo of the ‘70s (left) and the Heritage Management and Development Master Plan (right).

- the settlement has negotiated the topographic challenge by fanning out and down from the apex of the hill, which has resulted in a unique morphological structure giving special configuration to streets, passages and open spaces (Fig. 7). This introduces important typological differences in the “hill-type” settlement model prevalent in Central Oman;
- the settlement was possibly inhabited in ancient times, which is evidenced by the dry stone masonry structures that dot the area behind the tower, said to have been once used by the guards (*siyab*) and possibly later by the semi-nomadic *shawawi* cattle herders as goat pens;
- dwellings are spatially complex and often overlapping, both for topographic and tribal closeness reasons, with entrances in some cases placed at the upper floor level;
- some dwellings incorporate *sablaks*, a feature not normally found in the region;
- several dwellings have decorated ceilings.
- Historical significance:
 - the settlement is an example of late development which took place as “rebuilding” in the 17th and 18th centuries AD under the Ya’aribah imamate and was impacted by tribal major movements (Wilkinson 1977, 1987);
 - the more recent historical developments in the late-1950s, following the Jabal al-Akhdar war, have left tangible impact on the settlement, thus marking its place in Omani history.
- Social significance:
 - the settlement evolution illustrates the gradual upward social mobility of certain families, resulting in very large dwellings at the bottom of the hill;
 - the settlement development is an important record of the ascendancy over three centuries of a tribal grouping, the Banī Riyām;
 - the social and political history of the settlement suggests complex negotiation and tendency for patience amongst the resident groups.

Primary threats that are likely to adversely affect the settlement’s significance include the fact it currently remains uninhabited barring two dwellings, the resulting lack of day-to-day maintenance and the structural failure arising from abandonment, fallen debris accumulation, poorly managed tourism (ill-informed guides and visitors allowed to roam the settlement unchecked), vehicular access to the settlement and surrounding urban development which pays very little regard to the traditional vernacular environment.

Corroborated by a comprehensive documentation, analysis and interpretation of settlement structure and morphology, building typologies and related states of preservation, complemented by a mapped inventory of structural and non-structural defects, a culturally and technically informed Master Plan has been proposed (Fig. 8). In times of limited financial resources the ever increasing economic dimension of heritage conservation and management pushes governments to either turn to the private sector or to appeal to tourism as a backing to their ever decreasing



Figures 10, 11. Entrance square (left) and dwellings in the central zone north of the upper channel (right).

fund availability. While on the one hand involving the private sector implies handing over responsibility for historic buildings and settlements to investment for profit-making enterprises, on the other hand, encouraging tourism means exposing them to use by foreigners, which, if not properly managed, may permanently alter the very character that attracted tourists in the first place as well as alienate them from use by the local inhabitants (Rab, unpubl.).

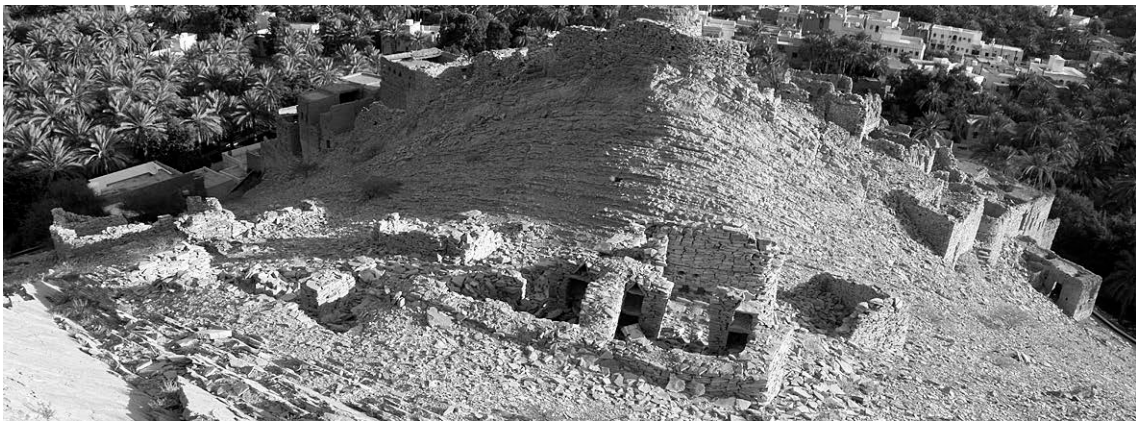
With the intention of moving away from an entirely tourism focused development as well as from a solely government/private sector-driven initiative, we have built the HMP around the idea that a viable sustainable alternative would be a long-term private and public sector engagement through stakeholder cooperation, whereby the social and economic base can be strengthened through the participation of the community at large in decision-making processes, on-site income generative activities (traditional agriculture, crafts, irrigation systems and tertiary activities dependent on traditional economics) and the running of education facilities. We reckon this is the only sustainable way to realistically integrate the management of the site with the socio-economic and cultural development of its community.

A set of general policies has been envisaged to form the basic framework for development planning and conservation in Hārat as-Saybanī, which sets out the ways in which the significant values of the settlement, its integrity, and the heritage and material culture are to be safeguarded within a context of sustainable development. Particularly relevant are those recommending that:

- *a link be established between modern-day aspirations and continuation of age-old methods of livelihood and culture*, meaning that if continued sustenance of the traditional ways of life gives the settlement its character, on the other hand the requirements emerging from societal changes driven by shifts in the globalized culture and economy need to be addressed;
- *a holistic approach to development be adopted to achieve a balanced and sustainable future which is in sympathy with the past*, taking the oasis and its setting into account, not just a constituent settlement in isolation, and identifying their development needs;
- *a full evaluation of all conventionally available and standardized strategies be undertaken before embracing any of those as acceptable approaches*, meaning that when turning to tourism as one strategy of heritage rehabilitation, ecologically and socially appropriate as well as local tourism, not just international or Arab regional tourism, is taken into consideration in order to enrich the palette of experiences across visitor groups.

While tourism is likely to play an important role in the local economy, it is felt that managing the heritage at Barkat al-Mawz provides the opportunity to think innovatively about programmatic input. On this basis a Master Plan has been proposed which aims to ensure sustained reuse of the site by approaching it from an integrated economic, social and cultural perspective that is of relevance to all stakeholders concerned. This means focusing on education, research and skills training in heritage and allied areas, as well as in traditional crafts, dovetailed with touristic and commercial activities.

The focus on education is elaborated through the involvement and expansion of the locally-based Nizwa University into the settlement. By devolving aspects of the built environment related teaching, training and research, it is envisaged that the University could play a key role in the revival. As the majority of the University employees are of local origin, it largely reduces an



Figures 12, 13. Ruins in the eastern part of the upper channel (top) and hilltop ancient structures (bottom).

obvious problem in heritage revitalisation, that of the alienation of new users. The sensitive integration of redevelopment with conservation and cross-programming straddling traditional and new uses would also ensure continuity and avoid estrangement. The extension of the thriving local agricultural trading into the settlement would likewise ensure its integration into the evolving life of the Omani Interior.

Guided by the principle of achieving minimum destruction and limited intervention on the basis of a careful consideration of the state of preservation of settlement structures, the Master Plan identifies key areas for restoration, rebuilding, consolidation and redevelopment, where an information centre, short-stay accommodation, food and other commercial outlets, toilets and auxiliary facilities are introduced. In particular, the Master Plan focuses on the substantially extant built fabric at the base of the hill and along the two *falaj* channels, where heritage management and development will heighten touristic experience and restrict the threat of unmanaged touristic activity across the settlement. It is proposed that the visitor-related facilities and new developments are concentrated in this area, also to allow easy access to visitors, where a key impediment is likely to be the steepness of the site. A large number of dwellings close to the entrance square (Fig. 10) will be restored and where necessary, partly rebuilt, to provide an understanding of the settlement pattern and complex dwelling organization. Because active partnership with the erstwhile inhabitants of the settlement, who continue to own the properties, is one of the key objective of the Master Plan, most of the dwellings within the zone north of the upper channel (Fig. 11) have been earmarked for economic activities. The zone including the ruins east of the upper channel (Fig. 12) is proposed for redevelopment into education, training and tourism related facilities, where an attempt will be made to retain, as much as feasible, the existing walls and fragments of structures. This rebuilding would reintroduce the lost built fabric and its original density. Finally, it is proposed that the upper reaches of the settlement (Fig. 13), whose archaeological value is worth investigating, be retained as consolidated ruins and accessed through prescribed routes for tourists to walk up to the tower and enjoy a panoramic view of the oasis.

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper an attempt has been made to explore why internationally long-shared notions of sustainable integrated heritage management encounter resistance, both at grassroots and government levels, in the countries of the Middle East, where heritage of regional and national significance faces significant pressures of development. Focusing on Oman, socio-cultural attitudes towards traditional customs and practices associated with heritage and political approaches to its preservation have been identified that hinder integrated conservation.

The conservation and developmental guidelines produced for Ḥārat as-Saybanī, Barkat al-Mawz, are thought to offer a conscious case study of appropriate methodological approaches to sustainable management of traditional oasis settlements of Oman and the Middle East, which are heavily impacted by abandonment and alteration and far-reaching change in needs, aspirations, lifestyle and dwelling patterns. By advocating a heritage management philosophy aimed at bringing life back to the settlement, a functionally and socially diversified programmatic input has been proposed that revolves around awareness raising and capacity building, education and training, economic growth, private-public partnership and community participation.

It is recognized that the UNESCO HMP guidelines, which are focused on World Heritage Sites, are mainly Eurocentric, making their approach inadequate for sites of regional and national significance in the Middle East facing significant pressures of development. The authors have, therefore, taken the opportunity presented by Ḥārat as-Saybanī to refine those guidelines to make them relevant to Oman and the Middle East, by delivering detailed models and guidelines as well as appropriate, cost-effective and expedient work methodologies.

It is reckoned that the HMP proposed for Ḥārat as-Saybanī will have significant practical implications in Oman and the Middle East in terms of:

- impact at the levels of the government, public and private sectors, charitable organizations and the local stakeholder communities;
- impact on heritage management policy, processes and methods, related budget allocation, change in socio-cultural attitude and greater awareness of issues related to integration of heritage with development;
- contribution to sustainable modernization.

ENDNOTES

¹ The concept was the underlying theme of the *World Heritage 2002 International Congress*, Venice, Italy, 14-16 November 2002.

² The renovation and maintenance of Omani built heritage currently address castles and forts, towers and mosques, as indicated by the homonymous section of the MHC's official website. This reads "The Ministry had an important role in safeguarding ancient historical buildings as it renovated more than 100 castles and forts, as well as hundredth of towers in the Sultanate's various regions. Since 1995 the Ministry has accorded special attention to safeguarding ancient archaeological mosques and embarked on renovating around 35 of them." No mention is made to the renovation of dwellings or public structures commonly found in traditional settlements.

³ The *Bahla Fort and Oasis World Heritage Site Management Plan*, prepared by WS Atkins International, was submitted in 2005 and revised in 2010. It was only partially implemented in 2010 (restoration of various parts of the fort had been performed and a revised proposal for the restoration of the *souq* had been submitted) when the World Heritage Committee requested that it be implemented in its final version to ensure the proper management and conservation of the property (WHC-10/34.COM/20, Paris, 3 September 2010, Decision: 34 COM 7B.62).

⁴ The conclusions and recommendations of the UNESCO conference *Linking Universal and Local Values: Managing a Sustainable Future for World Heritage*, held in Amsterdam in May 2003, emphasize that "it is not viable to identify or manage universal value without acknowledging and maintaining the value of place to the local peoples" and acknowledge that "World Heritage properties are dynamic entities where cultural and social values evolve. They should not be frozen in time for purposes of conservation. Indeed, the continuity between the past and future should be integrated in management systems accommodating the possibility for sustainable change, thus ensuring that the evolution of the local value of the place is not impaired" (World Heritage Papers 13, p.165-166).

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