

# Museums in sustainable heritage development:

## A case study of Vietnam

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### **Abstract**

One of the greatest challenges of the century is the balancing of centrifugal forces from the accelerated pace of all forms of globalisation with the centripetal forces of localisation and indigenisation. The tension between the two is creative, and yet, if it is not facilitated with integrity and ethical understanding, we stand to lose the rich and varied cultural diversity of humanity. This facilitation is being addressed in different ways in different cultural contexts. Culture diversity in human development is a major area of concern in Vietnam. A country position paper has been prepared towards this end. Culture is now recognised as one of the four pillars of development along with environmental conservation, social and economic development. Museology in the country is now being considered as part of the discourse of sustainable heritage development.

Demonstration projects play an important role for the integration of culture in the economic and social plans, administrative reforms, legislative strategies, non-government organisations and private sector developers of Vietnam. As for the integration of museums into the development agenda, Vietnam is keen to learn from regional and broader international experience. Specialists and bureaucrats have been studying museums overseas quite extensively in their quest for the development of the new National History Museum and also the Vietnam Museum of Nature. However, most outsider models have to be customised to the Vietnamese context in order to be sustainable. The Vietnamese are endeavouring to build on widely acclaimed national best practice project museums such as the Vietnam Museum of Ethnology, the Ha Long Ecomuseum and the Cua Van Floating Museum. Museology is now being considered as part of the discourse of sustainable heritage development in Vietnam. This keynote address looks at some of these new demonstration projects that examine the role of museums in development and the protection of cultural diversity in twenty-first century Vietnam.

## Introduction

The tensions posed by the centripetal forces of localisation/indigenisation and centrifugal forces of globalisation provide a contemporary background for museums in Asia increasingly confronted by free-trade market imperatives. The concern is to come up with principles and processes that govern their transformation so that the 21st century museums are indigenous institutions that excel in the preservation, presentation, continuation and management of movable and immovable, tangible and intangible heritage resources of the rich cultural diversity of Asia. Regional or interregional formations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Museums or Asia Europe Museums Network provide opportunities to forge new alliances for collaborative projects, professional networking and capacity building programs. Such collaboration is critical for developing relevant sets of skills, competencies and museological discourse that are essential for establishing museums as sites of excellence for articulating the constituent community's sense of place and identity. The opening of several new museums in Southeast Asia focussing on the region such as the Asian Civilisations Museum in Singapore and the transformed National Museum of the Philippines are contributing to broaden the understanding and interpretation of the personalities of each of the countries and Southeast Asia itself.

The consultative processes of the World Commission for Culture and Development, UNESCO and the various international non-government organisations, such as the International Council of Museums, the International Council for Monuments and Sites and the International Union for Conservation of Nature, provide an overall profile of museums and heritage development in the Asian region. The following is a summary of the findings:

### *Strengths:*

1. Diverse heritage resources and creative capital exist that provide for locally significant, hence regionally unique, community development
2. The personnel and stakeholder delegates demonstrate a high level of commitment and innovation for growth and development of heritage/cultural industries
3. The infrastructure, both new and inherited, provides considerable opportunities for sub-regional and locally relevant culture in sustainable development
4. Existence of various sub-regional inter-governmental forums provide key agency frameworks for cooperation and co-ordination in regional heritage development
5. A range of other professional networks, such as the ones mentioned above along with the International Council of Archives and the International Federation of Library Associations, provide opportunities for integrated development of heritage resources including intangible/living heritage resources

### *Weaknesses:*

1. Varying types of legislative tools and, often, a lack of policy-driven frameworks for governance and for fostering heritage services as well as a lack of autonomy for culture in development
2. Inadequate personnel and capacity building for effective heritage development in several areas of activity, especially at the local government level
3. Lack of a systematic regional funding/grants programme with adequate resources for regional heritage development
4. Lack of sub-regional professional resource hubs catering to regional professional needs
5. Inadequate communication among professionals, including sharing of projects and expertise.

*Opportunities:*

1. Unique heritage resources and creative capital providing outstanding opportunities for facilitating greater empowerment and locally significant heritage development
2. Focus on local/national narratives could enable 'best practice' approaches to the preservation and promotion of intangible/living heritage resources
3. Regional and sub-regional diversity could provide for responsible cultural and heritage tourism, which will diversify the resource base in sustainable development
4. Some of the sub-regional inter-governmental forums could explore the provision of capital injection into different countries on a strategic basis with cooperation and co-ordination between regional clusters of countries
5. Location of significant regional heritage infrastructure provides opportunities for cooperative capacity building and museum development so as to maximise cultural, environmental and economic outcomes  
Locating museums in Integrated Local Area Planning is critical here

*Threats:*

1. Under-preparedness for participation in networks could result in members failing to maximise on the opportunities provided by growth and development initiatives and for facing the negative impacts of globalisation
2. Lack of capacity among some of the disadvantaged local/provincial areas/countries could result in disparities of development and the preservation of heritage resources
3. Inadequate capacity building and professional development infrastructure that is not regionally grounded could lead to skills development from external programmes that are not necessarily relevant for application in the regional contexts
4. Inadequate, or a lack of, regionally based

grants programmes/foundations makes it difficult for forward planning, innovation and target programmes addressing young people, women, indigenous people, minority ethnic communities and other target groups on a regional basis or at the local government level

5. Lack of appropriate heritage infrastructure could lead to a loss of tourism growth opportunities, both locally and nationally, thus leading to the failure of tourism to contribute to local GDP, hence job creation and poverty alleviation

The above general profile also reveals some of the common themes that are emerging among countries of the Asian Region:

- Locating Heritage in Sustainable Development
- Benefits and Pitfalls of Heritage Economics
- Heritage Tourism and Sustainable Development
- Intellectual and Cultural Property Rights: who benefits
- Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Cultural Property
- Protection of Cultural Property during Armed Conflict
- Cultural Exchanges for Project Sharing and Promoting Cross Cultural Understanding and Peace

It is within this overall context that the following case study of Vietnam will be discussed. Some of the recent developments of museums in Vietnam are illustrated through select demonstration projects that have a national multiplier impact and significance.

**Culture in development in Vietnam**

The location of culture in sustainable development within the context of the accelerated pace of globalisation is the key approach to museum development in 21st century Vietnam. The country is following a focussed and intense developmental path

with already significant results in poverty reduction. This ‘open road’ to development, known as the “doi moi” reforms, includes efforts distributed nationally that have been carefully planned across Vietnam and with international partners, enabling the country that has witnessed a century of war and famine to reach stable macroeconomic conditions. The challenge is not only to address the social and environmental concerns, but also to maximise the potential for growth through the rich cultural diversity of the country. This requires a continuing dialogue, active participation and innovative approaches to engagement with the fifty-four diverse ethno cultural community groups of the country. Museums are becoming important tools in this ambitious path being undertaken in Vietnam.

It is argued in the final report of the World Commission on Culture and Development, *Our Creative Diversity*, that culture is a driving force and goal for development as well as a key factor impacting on every stage of the development process. It was further argued at the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development that for development to be relevant and responsive, due attention will have to be paid to both the tangible and the intangible dimensions of heritage resources. The preferred direction is to go beyond simply making efforts that are culturally sensitive in development and to locate culture in all its diversity as an integral part of all developmental planning. This requires a negotiated path where the cultural aspects that are beneficial to all are promoted and those that are detrimental to the well-being of groups of the society are avoided. Such a path requires rethinking certain developmental models, which erode cultural identities and cultural diversity leading to negative impacts on the national and local cultural heritage of people.

The “doi moi” reforms and the subsequent transformations that are being

witnessed in Vietnam require certain strategic approaches and catalytic interventions if one were to embed museums in this holistic developmental approach. The National Department of Cultural Heritage in the Vietnam Ministry of Culture and Information aims to locate their new museum development framework at the intersections and merging of the cultural and socio-economic objectives. National projects focussing on ethnic diversity and minority representation such as the Vietnam Museum of Ethnology and the Ha Long Ecomuseum recognise and address the specific cultural characteristics of the population of Vietnam. Here community grounded museology is being advocated both at the national and the provincial levels to profile indigenous cultural resources for socio-economic development; promotion of knowledge sharing and exchange; and the application of cultural resources to strengthen identities and diversity contributing to sustainable heritage development.

In order to induce a multiplier effect from these developments a series of national workshops are being facilitated. This capacity building is perceived as critical for such strategic directions to take effect. As the country recognises that specific interventions and operational changes will be needed in order to alter the development trajectory towards greater sustainability of the country's economy, environment and society, the location of museums in this path is timely and in many ways long overdue. It is underlined that the development of culture should progress, side-by-side with economic and social development and environmental protection in Vietnam, as the fourth pillar of development.

Vietnam is known historically for its ability to mobilise community support and participation to achieve national goals and objectives. Harnessing this national strength for the development of museums is possible if

the potential of culture in propelling an accelerating development is realized through integrated planning at national, provincial and local levels. The government of Vietnam recognises that if it takes into account both national and local cultural values that there is a greater chance of achieving sustainable results and continuing the nationalist discourse of the country. However, the tensions between community cultural development and the imperatives of the market forces are yet to be adequately addressed and reconciled with the pace that has been set since the “doi moi” transformations began in the 1980s.

The late President Ho Chi Minh, said that “for survival and for the purpose of life, mankind created and invented languages, script, ethics, laws, science, religion, literature, art, daily tools for clothing, food, dwelling, and made use of them. All of those creations and inventions constitute culture.” It is within this framework of thinking that I recently worked on the drafting of the UN Country discussion paper working closely with Vietnamese, donor and intergovernmental agencies. (UN Discussion paper, 2003) Vietnam is committed to a policy of engagement in dealing with the forces of globalisation. In a national forum that has become seminal in establishing the country's approach to dealing with globalisation, Professor Vo Dai Luoc stated succinctly that “the challenge for Vietnam at the turn of the millennium is the ‘renovation of national institutions to be compatible with world institutions and participate energetically in the formulation of global institutions.” (Vo Dai Luoc, 2000)

The past decade has seen the country searching for solutions to reform its institutions managing movable and immovable heritage. In this period, Vietnam has become a signatory to the 1972 World Heritage Convention. So far five areas have been inscribed on the World Heritage List.

Several initiatives to establish new museums are underway. There is a particular focus now on protecting the intangible heritage of the country. In many ways the standards are being set by international conventions and professional documents. For example the translation of the documents relating to the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the means to prohibiting and preventing illicit traffic in cultural property has led to the country prioritising this area of heritage protection. This is also evident in the major Asia Pacific Conference of the International Council of Museums in 2001 focussing on the Protection of Cultural Heritage in Southeast Asia. However, the most significant turning point is the promulgation of the National Cultural Heritage Law in 2002.

This legislation overrides all the previous legal instruments that were often piecemeal, obsolete and fragmentary. It has become the tool for the future development of a post-colonial heritage industry and a watershed in the development of museums in Vietnam. In Vietnam the museum as a conceptual institution was introduced only in the early twentieth century. The recent history of heritage conservation in Vietnam was closely linked to the establishment of the Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient in 1900. (Luu Tran Tieu, 2001) During the first half of the twentieth century more than 400 historical remains and heritage landscapes were researched and documented. At the same time several museums with over 30,000 artifacts were established.

The year 1910 saw the construction of the first museum in Hanoi. Its initial focus was on the display of archaeological and ethnographic collections and the royal costumes of the Nguyen Dynasty. Originally called the Museum of Eastern Arts, it now stands prominently as the Vietnam Historical Museum. Its evolution witnessed the acquisition of collections from several Asian countries including Laos, Cambodia, China,

India, Myanmar, Japan, Indonesia, Thailand, and so on. Two years ago the Prime Minister of Vietnam initiated the establishment of a new national history museum that aims to tell the history of Vietnam and also its relationships with other cultures and countries of Southeast Asia. The continuity of the older museum and its transformation and the establishment of the new museum will deal with the colonial discourse of orientalism that has continued in many parts of Vietnam.

None stand as a classic reminder of the orientalist discourse than the former Permentier Museum, which is the present day Museum of Cham Arts in Da Nang established in 1934. The legacy of such museological thinking can still be seen in many of the museums of Vietnam today. This early development of museums in Vietnam is similar to museums in many other parts of Asia illustrating the much debated and understood discourse of Orientalism. This international museological reflection is yet to be adequately analysed and used in the transformation of museums and heritage development in Vietnam.

The aftermath of the August Revolution in 1945 and the subsequent birth of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam saw the beginning of the flourishing of museums in Vietnam. Following the end of the Vietnam War, aptly called the American War in Vietnam, and the reunification of Vietnam in 1975, the responsibility for museums and other heritage resources was entrusted to the new national Ministry of Culture and Information. Its mandate was to consolidate, develop and maintain the existing museums; to build new ones at the national level; and to establish specialist, provincial and city museums.

In 2004 there are one hundred and twenty institutions that are museological with over two million artifacts. They cater to the sixty-four provinces of Vietnam. This emerging network of museums is part of the nation-

building ideology of Vietnam. As already mentioned in April 2001 Vietnam hosted its first ICOM conference on the protection of cultural heritage in Southeast Asia under the leadership of Professor Dr Luu Tran Tieu, Vice Minister for Culture and Information. The seven flagship national museums of Vietnam participated: the Vietnam History Museum, the Vietnam Revolutionary Museum, the Ho Chi Minh Museum, the Vietnam Fine Arts Museum, and the Vietnam Ethnic Cultural Museums, the Army Museum and the Vietnam Museum of Ethnology. The emerging new museological discourse of Vietnam is presented at various national international conferences. The following are some of the significant ones.

### **The Vietnam Museum of Ethnology**

Vietnam is an active participant in the current efforts by UNESCO to establish an international instrument on Cultural Diversity. One of the national priority areas of development is focused on promoting cultural and economic development among ethnic minorities. While the ethnic diversity of Vietnam provides a range of economic development opportunities for the country, the policy formulation in this area must take into account the particular characteristics of the concerned communities. Many of the ethnic minorities have played an important role in the formation and development of the overall cultural features of the nation, and today constitute a precious but sensitive cultural resource. (To Ngoc Thanh, Hanoi, 2002) For example, the minority ethnic groups of Hoang Lien mountain range in the north and the Central Highlands plateau are a major attraction for visitors and tourists contributing to the local GDP. However, the scope of tourism has been stretched to the limits of the carrying capacity of these areas and the cultural integrity of the ethnic minorities and their way of life is under threat.

It is important to carefully assess and

minimise social impacts as Vietnam implements its policy of encouraging 'village tourism in more remote areas' that is recommended in the Revised Tourism Development Plan 2001-2010. Since much of this heritage is intangible it needs particularly sensitive approaches towards its management and protection. (Salemink, 2001) However, the vulnerability of the economic and social patterns of these ethnic minorities is also a function of their poverty. In Viet Nam, poverty is relatively higher among ethnic minorities than in that of the total population, and they suffer from inadequate infrastructure and basic services. (UNDP, 2002) Their heritage is also threatened by a negative perception that their traditional lifestyle is backward, with ensuing social exclusion and limited access to socioeconomic decision-making processes that impact on their lives.

The Poverty Task Force, a government-donor forum for dialogue and consultation on poverty reduction, recommends in its recent report that priority be given to three specific targets as part of the main goal of eradicating poverty and preserving the culture and diversity of ethnic minorities.

- Preserve and develop ethnic minority languages and promote bilingual literacy in areas where there are high concentrations of minority people;
- Ensure that individual and collective land-use rights for all land-use types have been allocated to the majority of ethnic mountainous people;
- Increase the proportion of government personnel of ethnic origin closer to the proportion in the national population.

These targets bring together the four pillars of development for the first time in Vietnam - cultural, social, economic and environmental - laying the foundation for the approach that successful development depends on an understanding of culture and its integration in all policy-making, planning and project

development and implementation.

One of the most exciting new developments in the protection and promotion of the cultural heritage of ethnic minorities is the initiation of the new Vietnam Museum of Ethnology in Hanoi under the leadership of Professor Nguyen Van Huy in 1995. The aim of the Museum is to represent the cultural diversity of Vietnam using an inter-disciplinary approach to the study of ethnology. With a strong focus on ethnic minorities this museum officially opened its doors in November 1997. It moves a way from the conventional approaches to ethnology museums and begins the project from the present day. It aims to explain the contemporary issues and concerns of the diverse people of Vietnam using the museum as a tool for cross cultural understanding. Professor Huy argues that "tradition and modernity are not the two ends of the continuum; they are continuous processes of inheriting, eliminating, selecting and creating material and spiritual values; they are processes of producing and reproducing sources for development and serve as the base for a sustainable development." (Huy, 2000) The Vietnam Museum of Ethnology explores the dialectical relations between socioeconomic and cultural reproduction. It is one of the few museums in the world that takes this approach to use the museum as a tool to illustrate and interpret contemporary changes that are taking place in human development.

One of the well-known exhibits at the Museum is a bicycle that has been used by Mr. Pham Dang Uy between 1982 and 1997 in the Red River Delta to sell baskets. As is often the contemporary image in Vietnam, a range of produce and products are carried and sold from the back of bicycles. In this exhibit there are more than 800 baskets and other materials made with bamboo. The exhibit is the key to opening the door to the various layers of culture and social relations in the Red River Delta. With Mr. Uy as a

Ha Long Ecomuseum



cultural agent, researchers used his work and lifestyle at the museum to develop the exhibit and educational programs promoting the essence of the role of the museum as not only a site for a dialogue among cultures but also a space for mediating the cultural reproduction of diverse groups of Vietnamese who are faced with the challenge of exploring their sense of place and identity in the 21st Century.

### Ha Long Ecomuseum

Ha Long Bay is sometimes referred to as a microcosm of Vietnam. This is certainly so inasmuch as it clearly shows the conflict between conserving a rich, but fragile, heritage whilst simultaneously promoting the industrial, economic and tourism development that is essential to alleviate the severe poverty and impoverishment of large sections of the community. Traditionally, this has been treated as an 'either/or' issue and therefore frequently results in an impasse. The greatest challenge has been to bring together the Ha Long Bay World Heritage Area management and all the stakeholder groups into a participatory framework that is facilitated by the Ha Long Ecomuseum development. The partnership identifies the aims, interests and values that inform interpretations of community, local history and holistic environmental values, including intangible heritage values.

The Ecomuseum offers a way forward in many ways and is considered a national

demonstration project in Vietnam. Through the establishment of a far broader stakeholder base, involving communities, groups and organisations, in the management of the local heritage resources, it seeks to establish a mutuality of interest and a sense of common ownership. Through interpretation it raises awareness and understanding, not only of the significance of the natural and cultural heritage, but also of the contribution of industrial and commercial development to the betterment of a country striving to recover from almost a century of war and famine. Better understanding of the critical importance of both conservation and development softens the polarisation of the debate and enables the two issues to be viewed holistically.

The development of various pilot projects of the Ha Long Ecomuseum will examine some of the implications and dilemmas of interpreting environmental resources, sites and cultural heritage for visitors while protecting the significance and integrity of the resources. (Galla, 2002)

The role of the Ecomuseum is summarised as:

- Supporting communities in securing their basic living needs (this may require advocacy with other agencies)
- Facilitating the planning process within communities, including the identification of local resources
- Supporting the protection of local resources, including cultural maintenance
- Developing skills and providing other business support infrastructure, including funding and communications infrastructure
- Launching businesses through contracting and outsourcing, and provision of space for community markets
- Growing enterprises and employment through developing a prospectus for any business opportunity with good prospects for viability
- Supporting communities in making wise



Poverty alleviation is a priority focus of the Ha Long Ecomuseum



investments, and increasing their economic resources

- Facilitating demonstration projects such as the pilot projects that will be catalytic and have a multiplier effect.

The Ha Long Bay dilemma is far from unique to Vietnam. However, whilst the application of ‘new museology’ or ‘ecomuseology’ has been recognised as a valuable tool to mitigate development conflicts in several countries, it has yet to become established in an Asian context. Projects such as the Ha Long Ecomuseum could become models for promoting heritage economics without compromising conservation values; models in which the economic dimension of conservation will be revealed through community museological discourse. The Ha Long Ecomuseum development is being viewed as an exemplar for similar developments elsewhere and will be an important factor in the creation of a national policy for sustainable heritage tourism in Vietnam.

### **New museology - Ecomuseology in Vietnam**

Community-grounded museology is considered as vital to Vietnam to protect its cultural diversity and intangible heritage. The National Department of Cultural Heritage sees this approach as having potential to:

- Strengthen and protect the cultural and

heritage resource base for sustainable expression and practice through interpretation

- Engage the whole community in valuing and participating in heritage conservation and appreciation
- Provide relevant local community infrastructure for the support of conservation activity
- Develop the economic framework for the promotion of the conservation values through resolving conflicts and maximising on the opportunities for job creation and poverty alleviation.

In many circumstances the re-establishment of cultural pride and a sense of place is seen as the key to addressing social well-being and promoting conservation values in many parts of Asia. It requires an inclusive framework that recognises the cultural aspirations of different sections of the community, including groups that may otherwise be marginalised culturally, socially and economically.

The capacity of stakeholder organisations and interest groups for promoting museums in sustainable development in Vietnam is heavily influenced by the organisational infrastructure available at a local level. This can be related to the model for developing local capacity that has been applied to a number of international project contexts. (Luther, 1990, Galla, 2002). Some of the key elements are:

*Motivation* - The capacity to motivate different sectors of the community and stakeholder groups to participate in heritage development is the first building-block for enhancing capacity.

*Leadership* - It is important to strengthen the immediate community leadership, to nurture leadership within key stakeholder groups and to achieve succession planning for future leadership.

*Reconciliation* - In many contexts it is necessary to recognise conflicts, especially

those that are resource based, to address them and come to a negotiated approach to resolving them without compromising the heritage values of areas such as Ha Long Bay. It is essential to promote reconciliation wherever possible through constructive action.

*Organisational capacity* - Organisational structures are essential to getting things done. It is important to recognise what exists, to strengthen capacity and develop clear and realistic roles.

*Governance* - It is critically important to recognise the often subtle and elaborate systems of management and decision making that operates within a complicated context such as Ha Long Bay and within its interface with supporting/sponsoring agencies, and to strengthen their effectiveness.

*Collaboration* - This is essential to achieve a productive pooling of resources for the common good, including information and ideas. It means that a collaborative culture for advancing sustainable development at Ha Long Bay or the Vietnam Museum of Ethnology through a stakeholder participation framework needs to be developed.

*Core skills* - There are clearly core skills that can enable stakeholder and community groups to address their own and the wider public needs, and these are a priority for training investment. They include an ability to plan ahead, to implement plans, and to monitor and evaluate whether the planning objectives are being met.

*Specialist skills* - There will be additional specialist skills, relevant to the particular environmental context and the local objectives of the stakeholder and community groups, which need to be furthered within the stakeholder participation framework or otherwise recruited.

*Information* - This is a key tool for building capacity and establishing information networks. The use of appropriate communication modes can assist in

empowering stakeholder and community groups, and making sure information is applied.

*Self-sufficiency* - As stakeholder and community groups become empowered, they will encounter greater success in securing the resources they need to achieve their objectives. However, it is necessary to assess how practical it is for groups to aim for self-sufficiency in the face of globalisation, and what outcomes are achievable and desirable.

*Resource management* - As resources are secured, it is important that they be managed effectively. Stakeholder and community groups need to identify the physical and human resources that they already have, mobilising them for sustainable benefit, and managing resources for sustainable use. The mapping of all the resources is an integral part of this process.

In September 2004, the workshop on Museums and Community Engagement in Hanoi emphasised capacity building for strategic planning, performance management, evaluation, governance and articulation of roles and responsibilities. At the workshop the National Department of Cultural Heritage acknowledged the diversity of organisational structures and their operating environments that exist in Vietnam. There is no 'one size fits all' approach to enhancing capacity. Rather, it is essential to recognise the opportunities and constraints impacting on organisational operations, and the resources that can be applied to produce effective and locally relevant solutions. In terms of the training programme, this suggests an approach that addresses some generic components (based on common principles and language) complemented by a 'toolbox' approach to presenting models and techniques that can be appropriate to different circumstances. Some guidance on selection and customisation of tools for most effective local application are included. This is the approach that is being pursued in

Vietnam with its ambitious agenda to develop quality and outstanding museums, at the local and provincial and national levels, as tools for sustainable heritage development.

### **Conclusion**

President Ho emphasised that culture plays a role in developing the politics, economics and social norms of a country. He underlined the critical position of culture in development. (Vu Khieu, 2002) It locates culture as an equal 'pillar' of development alongside with economic development, social development and environmental protection. Demonstration projects play an important role for the integration of culture in the economic and social plans, administrative reforms, legislative strategies, non-government organisations and private sector developers in Vietnam. As for the integration of museums into the development agenda Vietnam is keen to learn from regional and broader international experience. Specialists and bureaucrats have been studying museums overseas quite extensively in their quest for the development of the new National History Museum and also the Vietnam Museum of Nature. However, most outsider models have to be customised to the Vietnamese context for their sustainability. This is a major concern for museologists in Vietnam.

Some of the new museums are integrating museum and heritage conservation goals with socio-economic objectives in their planning and strategic development. Both the Vietnam Museum of Ethnology and the Ha Long Ecomuseum are attempting to generate income generation opportunities. The target audiences are mainly rural areas, ethnic minorities and young people. The emphasis is on local cultural resources and their effective management through balancing two

non-negotiable principles, cultural conservation and community development. The anticipated outcome is cultural diversity in sustainable development. In both the case studies mentioned above the cultural borders such as ethnicity, age, gender, class and geography have been taken into consideration. The Women's Union and Youth Union are providing participatory leadership through active engagement in projects that address women and child poverty alleviation and culturally appropriate awareness programs for the prevention of HIV/AIDS, drug use and environmental conservation through museological approaches.

Demonstration projects such as the Vietnam Museum of Ethnology and Craftlink partnership for the promotion of crafts of minority groups across the country and linguistic borders are based on documentation and sharing of knowledge and promotion of a culture of entrepreneurship through capacity building. The promotion of cultural characteristics has become central to tourism development that is the major sector of growth in Vietnam. Policy makers are beginning to appreciate that cultural characteristics determine the outcome of economic, social and environmental policies, strategies, plans and projects, and recognise that their informed management is essential for sustainable heritage development. The current challenge in best practice project development is to establish cultural indicators in sustainable development that are relevant to Vietnam and measure the progress being made. The results and evaluation will speak for themselves as to whether Vietnam's efforts to protect its cultural diversity and the distribution of benefits from economic growth are contributing to the culture and well-being of the country.

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Dr. Amareswar Galla was educated in both south and north India, including the prestigious Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi. Professor Galla provides strategic cultural leadership in Australia and the Asia Pacific Region, holding two concurrent professorships as the Professor of Museum Studies at the University of Queensland in Brisbane and the Director of Graduate Studies in Sustainable Heritage Development, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, the Australian National University in Canberra. He is also a visitor at the National Museum of Ethnology, Leiden, working on the implementation of Museums and Cultural Diversity Promotion in the Netherlands; Guest Curator of International Projects with the Vietnam National Department of Cultural Heritage; and Founding Convener of the Pacific Asia Observatory for Cultural Diversity in Human Development in partnership with several bodies including UNESCO. He is the first Australian to be elected as the President of the Asia Pacific Executive Board (1998-2004) - Chairperson of the Cross Cultural Task Force (2005- ) - and Vice President of the International Executive Council of the International Council of Museums, Paris.

Between 1985-92, Prof. Galla founded and directed the National Affirmative Action program for the participation of Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders in museums, galleries, national parks and World Heritage Areas in Australia. Between 1994-99, he was the international technical adviser for the transformation of Arts Councils, National

Museums and Cultural Institutions including museums and the National Parks Board in post- apartheid South Africa. At the same time he was a researcher and expert advisor to the UN World Commission for Culture and Development and the UNESCO Stockholm Action Plan from the Inter Governmental Conference on Cultural Policies in 1998. He worked with UNESCO in the establishment of World Heritage Areas as culture in development and poverty alleviation projects at Ha Long Bay and Hoi An in Vietnam and Darjeeling Himalayan Railway in India. A former Director on the Board of the National SBS Radio and TV in Australia, he provided professional leadership and support for the concept design and building of several museums including the Canberra Museum and Gallery, District Six Museum in Cape Town, Ha Long Ecomuseum, Hoi An Museum of History, Hoi An Museum of Folklife and the Cua Van Floating Museum in Ha Long Bay.

With an outstanding research and development record and publications, he gave keynote addresses to academic and professional conferences in over 50 countries during the past two decades. In May 2003, he gave a keynote speech to the Stockholm UNESCO Inter Governmental Meeting where he brought together global case studies dealing with culture, well-being and sustainable development focussing on the role of culture in poverty alleviation. A recognised champion of cultural democracy and governance in sustainable development, he gave case study grounded keynote addresses to the Universal Forum of Culture Congress on Cultural Rights and Human Development, Barcelona (August 2004); the opening forum of the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution (September 2004); Europe's Dancing With Diversity Conference, Amsterdam (November 2004); the ICOM Conservation Triennial Congress in the Hague (September 2005); the World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education in Waikato (November 2005) and the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works in Providence (June 2006). In February 2005 he established the national strategic partnership to promote culture, heritage and environment in sustainable development with UNESCO, Australian Local Government Association, Planning Institute of Australia, Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia, SBS Radio and TV, the University of Queensland and the ANU.