

**State-of-the-practice**

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# State-of-the-practice: Assessing community participation within Chinese cultural World Heritage properties

Ji Li <sup>a,\*</sup>, Sukanya Krishnamurthy <sup>b</sup>, Ana Pereira Roders <sup>c</sup>, Pieter van Wesemael <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of the Built Environment, Eindhoven University of Technology, the Netherlands

<sup>b</sup> School of Geosciences, University of Edinburgh, UK

<sup>c</sup> Department of Architectural Engineering and Technology, Delft University of Technology, the Netherlands

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## ABSTRACT

Community participation is a key part of heritage management. However, in practice, unlike natural heritage, the nature of community participation within cultural heritage is seldom assessed, nor are there theoretical frameworks developed to baseline such assessments. To fill this knowledge gap, this paper developed and tested an assessment framework, to assess community participation within cultural heritage. Based on the conceptualisation of community participation from heritage management policies, a literature review was conducted to develop an assessment framework, including four criteria and 23 indicators. This assessment framework was tested on the management practices of 36 Chinese cultural heritage properties inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List from 1987 to 2018. Using content analysis as a method, this research applied this assessment framework to UNESCO documents, reporting on the state-of-the-practice of heritage management as applied to Chinese World Heritage. The results provide an overview of the current situation on how community participation is positioned within World Heritage management in China. Several World Heritage properties in China have reported relatively high community participation in examples such as Honghe Hani Rice Terraces and Kulangsu. However, most of them demonstrate minimal community participation, such as the Yungang Grottoes and Lushan National Park. Moreover, the assessment framework of community participation in heritage management has been extended and improved, which is relevant to heritage management practices worldwide.

## 1. Introduction

Community participation is a topical issue within heritage management theories, policies and practices worldwide: a phenomenon that seeks to facilitate an inclusive and dynamic process contributing to sustainable urban development (Den, 2014; Landorf, 2009). The UNESCO Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (hereafter referred as the OGs) and its implementation promote a broader variety of stakeholders involved in heritage identification, protection, and preservation as a worldwide strategic policy (UNESCO, 2012). The vital role of local communities, their traditions and lifestyle characteristics are widely recognised in the OGs (Landorf, 2009; Simakole, Farrelly, & Holland, 2018; UNESCO, 2012). Besides this, with the adoption of the UNESCO, 2011 Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL), a new boost was given to approaches of urban conservation that, go beyond the historical

view of preserving built heritage as isolated objects, to managing urban heritage and its change aside to its context (UNESCO, 2011). Within the HUL approaches, community participation is recognised as a fundamental tool for heritage management practices (Taylor, 2016; Veldpaus, Pereira Roders, & Colenbrander, 2013).

Current heritage management processes are shifting from a centralised and exclusionary process to a participatory and holistic process, integrating heritage into wider urbanisation and modernisation contexts (Guzmán, Pereira Roders, & Colenbrander, 2017; Landorf, 2011). Community-based approaches are proven to support better integration between cultural heritage management, urban planning and socio-economic development agendas (Ripp & Rodwell, 2018; Wang & Zan, 2011). Grass-roots participation in decision-making can avoid the exclusion of socially marginalised groups and understand local needs well, sustaining the continuity of the community's social networks and cultural traditions (Yung, Chan, & Xu, 2014; Yung, Zhang, & Chan,

\* Corresponding author. Urbanism and Urban Architecture, Department of the Built Environment, Eindhoven University of Technology, Groene Loper 5, Room 7.09, 5612 AE, Eindhoven, the Netherlands.

E-mail address: [j.li3@tue.nl](mailto:j.li3@tue.nl) (J. Li).

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2017). Through participatory practices, local residents can gain a sense of satisfaction of both decision-making and benefit-sharing in heritage management processes (Fan, 2014; Yung et al., 2017). In addition, at rural cultural landscapes such as rice terraces, farmers continuously practice their traditional knowledge and management systems in cultivation, which can provide goods and services from the natural environment (Kladnik, Geršič, Pipan, & Volk Bahun, 2019; Modica, Zoccali, & Di Fazio, 2013). Farmers play a core role in sustaining cultural continuity and the interaction with the natural environment and agriculture (Di Fazio & Modica, 2018).

In order to define community-based approaches further, international scholars have developed and tested tailored theoretical frameworks with specific assessment criteria and indicators (Landorf, 2011; Simakole et al., 2018). Although several assessment frameworks on community participation have been developed and then applied to natural heritage, the assessment frameworks for cultural heritage management are still limited and needs to be explored further (Dhiliwayo, Breen, & Nyambe, 2009; Landorf, 2011; Simakole et al., 2018). The ones applied to natural heritage management generally neglect an integrated view of bridging heritage management with urban planning and socio-economic development (Landorf, 2009; Simakole et al., 2018; Verdini, 2015). Current cultural heritage management, especially in regions such as Asia and Africa, is facing pressure from rapid urbanisation (Logan, 2018; Zhang & Li, 2016). In China, cultural heritage management mainly relies on the collaboration of governmental agencies and profit-driven developers (Shin, 2010; Wu, 2018; Zhang & Li, 2016). As a result, local communities have limited powers as these collaborations are initiated from the top (Chen, 2011; Fan, 2014; Logan, 2018). In line with this, the establishment of a targeted assessment framework is urgently required, with the aim of facilitating effective community participation for the sustainable management of cultural heritage (Fan, 2014; Verdini, 2015; Wang & Zan, 2011).

This research aims to develop and test an assessment framework, to assess community participation in cultural heritage management. Based on the conceptualisation of community participation from heritage management policies, a literature review was conducted to develop an assessment framework, including four criteria and 23 indicators. This assessment framework was tested on the management practices of 36 Chinese cultural heritage properties inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List (WHL), from 1987 to 2018. Using content analysis as a method, this research applied this assessment framework to official documents submitted by the States Parties of China to UNESCO about the Chinese World Heritage properties, in order to report and discuss the state-of-the-practice of heritage management. The results provide an overview of the current situation on how community participation is positioned within World Heritage management in China. Moreover, the assessment framework of community participation in heritage management has been extended and improved, which is relevant to heritage management practices worldwide.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Case selection and data collection

World Heritage properties are considered to promote best practices of heritage management worldwide (Landorf, 2011). Following the UNESCO, 1972 World Heritage Convention, to be inscribed on the WHL, a cultural and/or natural heritage property must meet criteria to evidence its *Outstanding Universal Value (OUV)* (Pereira Roders & van Oers, 2010; UNESCO, 1972). Essentially, managing World Heritage is an OUV-based process of definition and constant monitoring (Pereira Roders & van Oers, 2010). The World Heritage Convention stated the important role of the international community and the States Parties but it does not make reference to the importance of local communities and their engagement (UNESCO, 1972). Consequently, World Heritage management practices were led by experts, often in processes alienated

from the local communities and their needs (Bloch, 2016; Miura, 2005). Over time, the implementation of the World Heritage Convention came to acknowledge the importance of local communities (Landorf, 2009; Ripp & Rodwell, 2018), and their engagement within OUV-based management processes (Atalay, 2010; Chirikure, Manyanga, Ndoro, & Pwiti, 2010; Rasoolimanesh, Jaafar, Ahmad, & Barghi, 2017). China has 53 heritage properties inscribed on the WHL, and 36 of these are cultural properties as of 2018. This paper reports and discusses the state-of-the-practice, based on the 36 cultural properties in nomination, evaluation, protection and management, reported through UNESCO official documents. The documents include Nomination files, Advisory Bodies Evaluations, Periodic Reporting Reports, State of Conservation Reports and other related reports. These documents are available data from the UNESCO World Heritage website (<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/>), retrieved in November 2018.

### 2.2. Establishment of an assessment framework

To establish a targeted assessment framework for cultural heritage, this paper reviewed supranational and Chinese national policies on World Heritage management, as well as theoretical assessment frameworks from academic literature. The criteria to select the reviewed policy documents were to decree guidance on World Heritage management at both supranational and national levels of governance. All documents that do not directly address community participation, community values and development were excluded from this policy analysis. Supranational policies included international conventions and agendas adopted by international inter-governmental organisations, such as the OGs (UNESCO, 2012) and the Budapest Declaration (UNESCO, 2002). Chinese national policies included regulations and laws such as the Administrative Measures for the Protection of World Cultural Heritage (PRC, 2006). By reviewing these policies, even though they have addressed community participation, the research found no assessment framework to assess community participation in cultural heritage management.

Subsequently, a literature review was further conducted to develop an assessment framework, merging the existing heritage-based management frameworks on community participation, which could be applicable to cultural heritage. Assessment frameworks are known to help raise transparency, enable systematic comparison, and better link heritage management to sustainable development goals, and therefore, could contribute to understanding the diversity and efficiency in levels of community engagement in (Chinese) World Heritage management (Landorf, 2011; Li, Krishnamurthy, Pereira Roders, & van Wesemael, 2020; Simakole et al., 2018). The reviewed frameworks include participatory natural heritage management (PNH), sustainable cultural heritage management (SCH) and (studies of) Chinese cultural heritage management (CCH). Within these three frameworks, only PNH is a targeted assessment framework of community participation. SCH and CCH are broader frameworks including related indicators, which can help bridge cultural heritage management to urban planning and development within Chinese contexts. Therefore, on the basis of the framework of PNH, adapting its natural heritage context to cultural heritage, criteria and indicators from SCH and CCH were discussed and then introduced to the developed assessment framework.

### 2.3. Content analysis in the assessment process

Relying on the research method of content analysis (e.g. Landorf, 2011; Simakole et al., 2018), the developed assessment framework was applied to analyse the texts of UNESCO official documents qualitatively. Criteria and indicators in the assessment framework were used to categorise the texts of the documents. Through the document reviewing process, a check of criteria/indicators in each of the 36 cultural properties was conducted to provide an overview of the participatory practices. Indicators were further refined as keywords to clarify their

definitions and prevent misinterpretation. For example, in the indicator 1.6 within the assessment framework in Table 1, the access to management information was refined as platforms such as websites and public meetings. In indicator 3.3, tenure rights to heritage properties were refined as ownership.

The coded texts were assessed and discussed, and the two main focused aspects of the assessment are: 1) the state of the participatory practices of each property, and 2) the management practices of Chinese World Heritage in response to each indicator. Through this process, we also counted the number of indicators that each property meets, categorising these properties from high to low degrees of participation. Then, the number of properties under each of the indicators was counted to demonstrate Chinese general practices for facilitating public participation. The numerical results were incorporated in the discussion section to help demonstrate the qualitative assessment.

In this research, only the management practices reported in the official documents of cultural World Heritage in China are assessed and discussed. Therefore, the results presented, in principle, are solely reflective of how the World Heritage properties and related heritage management practices are reported by the States Parties of China.

### 3. Conceptualisation of community participation within heritage management policies

Community participation involves a collaborative process between different communities to achieve common goals of community improvement and development (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2017). All concerned communities are empowered with equal rights to get access to information and address their interests and needs (Zhong & Leung, 2019). When community participation is promoted for heritage management practices, its concept is defined as “groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations” are able to work collaboratively to discuss local concerned issues and ideas of heritage management (McCloskey et al., 2011, p. 3; Simakole et al., 2018). Therefore, the concerned communities are people who value local heritage and are willing to sustain and pass to future generations (Zhong & Leung, 2019). Currently, the concept of community participation broadly indicates the relationships of collaboration, partnership, consultation and involvement between governments, heritage managers, experts and residents (Simakole et al., 2018). Still, engaging local residents living or working within the heritage area in the management process is the fundamental of fostering genuine community participation (Ginzarly, Farah, & Teller, 2019; Li et al., 2020; Zhong & Leung, 2019). This section has reviewed both supranational and Chinese national policies for World Heritage management to conceptualise community participation.

#### 3.1. Supranational policies

International heritage communities have formulated several supranational policies, seeking to engage local communities and ensure their interests are included in the decision-making of World Heritage management (Pereira Roders & van Oers, 2010; Schmidt, 2014). The OGs claim that the range of involved stakeholders necessarily spans “site managers, local and regional governments, local communities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other interested parties and partners” (pp.3, Article 12). Following the OGs, State Parties are recommended to take responsibility for integrating heritage management into urban planning frameworks and sustaining heritage functions in socio-economic development to achieve broad community goals. The goals include the protection of the heritage’s physical attributes, traditional lifestyles, cultural continuity and the improvements of local livelihoods. In the Budapest Declaration (UNESCO, 2002), the World Heritage Committee emphasised the importance to balance heritage conservation and urban development, setting the goals for socio-economic development and the quality of life of the local

**Table 1**

Assessment framework of community participation for cultural heritage management (Dhliwayo et al., 2009; Landorf, 2009, 2011; Simakole et al., 2018; Verdini, 2015; Wang & Zan, 2011; Yung et al., 2014).

4 Criteria	23 Indicators
1 Participation in decision-making processes for cultural heritage management	1.1 Indicating identification of broad-based community goals (SCH) 1.2 Indicating prioritisation of objectives through communities’ participation (SCH) 1.3 Indicating local communities in decision-making bodies (PNH) 1.4 Indicating requirement for agencies to implement community representation (PNH, SCH) 1.5 Indicating prescribed levels of community representation (PNH) 1.6 Indicating access to management information by communities (PNH) 1.7 Indicating partnerships in the management process between local communities, private sectors and government agencies (PNH, SCH, CCH) 1.8 Indicating evaluation and review of management partnerships (SCH) 1.9 Indicating decentralisation of heritage management powers to local communities (PNH, SCH, CCH) 1.10 Indicating assigned responsibilities across communities (SCH) 1.11 Indicating supportive roles of governmental agencies in building management partnerships (SCH, CCH)
2 Competence of participants to participate in the cultural heritage management process	2.1 Indicating requirement for the promotion of heritage management awareness-raising, knowledge and understanding within communities (PNH, CCH) 2.2 Indicating the development of skills and capacity-building within communities to participate in heritage management (PNH) 2.3 Indicating adequacy of heritage-related business skills possessed to communities (CCH)
3 Right to social justice and confidence of participants in the cultural heritage management process	3.1 Indicating community-based organisations recognised by the national laws and policies or authorities to participate in heritage management (PNH, SCH) 3.2 Indicating support for local communities to have legal recourse to challenge decisions that do not promote their interests (PNH, SCH) 3.3 Indicating tenure rights to heritage properties and other resources by communities (PNH, SCH, CCH)
4 Empowerment and equity in the cultural heritage management process	4.1 Indicating equitable distribution of heritage management benefits (PNH, SCH, CCH) 4.2 Indicating a collaborative funding framework for the costs arising from heritage management (PNH, SCH, CCH) 4.3 Indicating fairness by ensuring the full range of potentially affected individuals is identified (PNH, SCH) 4.4 Indicating representation and participation of women, youth and other socially disadvantaged groups on decision-making bodies (PNH) 4.5 Indicating identification of local communities’ values, attitudes and lifestyle characteristics (SCH, CCH)

(continued on next page)

Table 1 (continued)

4 Criteria	23 Indicators
	4.6 Indicating identification and assessment of local critical issues for communities (SCH, CCH)

community. Sustainable development is connected to heritage management and community values with common local interests. The [Nara +20 \(2015\)](#) on Heritage Practices, Cultural Values, and the Concept of Authenticity, states the responsibility for heritage management should be shared among the local community and the cultural bearers, who generated or cared for local cultural heritage.

The OGs also state that the competence of local communities is the foundation of fostering public participation in heritage management. [ICOMOS \(2008\)](#) addresses heritage interpretation and presentation activities should be accessible and offer educational training to the public for awareness-raising and capacity-building. Besides this, the rights and fairness of indigenous people, local communities and other concerned groups need to be primarily ensured ([IUCN, 2008](#)). Local communities should be continuously consulted and granted access to information about the implications, benefits, costs and consequences of World Heritage projects ([UNESCO, 2004](#)). Cultural heritage management requires efforts to protect indigenous communities and maintain their traditional practices ([ICOMOS, 2011](#)). The traditional practices of both tangible and intangible values are essential to the authenticity and integrity of cultural heritage ([ICOMOS, 2010](#)). In line with this, [ICCROM \(2015\)](#) has published a document characterising the concept of living heritage and discussing a living heritage approach. Within the living heritage concept, the indigenous community is empowered in cultural heritage protection and exploitation practices, aiming to enhance local cultural identities and customs, social inclusion and stability, and economic growth.

### 3.2. Chinese national policies

Drawing on supranational policies, some national policies, regulations and laws have been issued to manage World Heritage in China. In 2006, the Chinese Ministry of Culture formulated a core policy document, the Administrative Measures for the Protection of World Cultural Heritage. It states that “the state encourages the citizens, legal persons and other organisations to participate in the protection of Cultural World Heritage” (Article 7) to protect public benefits and rights. Following the Cultural Relics Protection Law of the PRC, private, collective and state ownership to heritage are equally protected by the law to promote fairness and rights of local residents. In the Regulation on the Protection of Famous Historical and Cultural Cities, Towns and Villages, it states every citizen has the right to know conservation scopes and planning schemes of cultural heritage projects. The procedures of soliciting and approving public opinions must be established before working out planning schemes, as written in the Measures for the Administration of City Purple Lines in 2004.

The central government has established local institutions in charge of the daily management of heritage and collaboration with residents. These local institutions are under the strict control of upper-level governments and all management actions need to be approved by the central government ([Fan, 2014](#)). Following national policies, such as in Lijiang, the local conservation plan sets out one of the main principles as “positive protection through community participation and the active involvement from tourists and migrant business people” ([Su, 2010](#), p. 166). The goal of community improvement and socio-economic promotion has been set in policy-making to better face the challenges of rapid urbanisation in the Measures for the Administration of City Purple Lines.

Both supranational and national policies place emphasis on the importance of community participation in cultural heritage

management, embracing various facets of citizen involvement in decision-making while enhancing their competence, rights and empowerment. Heritage properties are managed as a dynamic resource in sustainable urban development to improve local community life. Based on these legal, policy and institutional provisions, a literature review on relevant frameworks was conducted to develop an assessment framework of community participation for cultural heritage management.

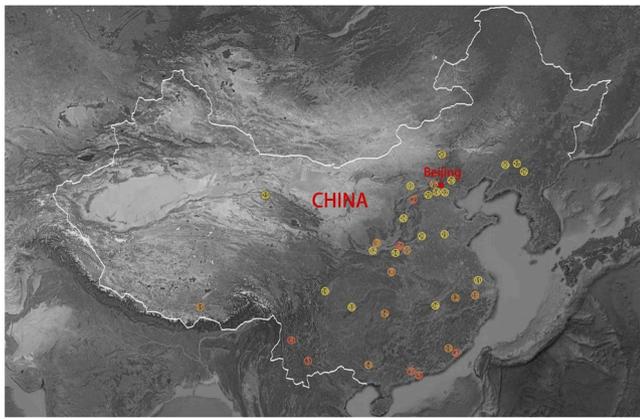
### 4. The developed assessment framework of community participation for cultural heritage management

International scholars have proposed several theoretical (assessment) frameworks of community participation for heritage management. In the context of natural heritage management, [Dhliwayo et al. \(2009\)](#) worked out criteria and indicators to facilitate the participation of rural communities in South Africa. Drawing on this framework, [Simakole et al. \(2018\)](#) extended it to assess the provisions for effective community participation in a protected natural area in Zambia ([Simakole et al., 2018](#)). These assessment frameworks have hitherto only been applied to natural heritage management. They have systematic criteria and indicators without addressing the necessity of the integration between heritage management and urban development ([Dhliwayo et al., 2009](#); [Simakole et al., 2018](#)). Therefore, of these assessment frameworks focusing on participatory natural heritage management (PNH), the four criteria and 15 indicators are identified as the basis and also adapted to be applied to cultural heritage. For example, the ownership of land in the natural heritage framework has been adapted to the ownership of properties including buildings, sites and monuments for cultural heritage. And in the following sections, we discussed several collected broader frameworks to help bridge cultural heritage management with urban planning and development.

Current approaches to cultural heritage management are positioned within mainstream urban planning and development theories ([Ruhanen, 2004](#); [Ripp & Rodwell, 2015, 2016](#)). Characteristics such as safety, fairness and sense of place in communities can optimise the managerial outcomes of cultural heritage projects in dynamic urban contexts ([Leus & Verhelst, 2018](#)). These management approaches are essentially incorporated into local socio-economic development and community improvement ([Landorf, 2011](#); [Ruhanen, 2004](#); [Simpson, 2001](#)). Communities’ cultural identities and traditional lifestyles are primarily protected while they boost socio-economic activities to meet residents’ demands for everyday life ([Borona & Ndiema, 2014](#); [Elsorady, 2012](#)). Within broader urban planning domains, related indicators of community participation are embraced in the frameworks used to assess the sustainable management of cultural World Heritage properties in the UK ([Landorf, 2009, 2011](#)). In these frameworks, [Landorf \(2009, 2011\)](#) employed indicators from both heritage management and urban planning fields. Community values, attitudes and roles are highlighted, and the breadth and degree of participation were identified at the beginning of the strategy-making phase ([Landorf, 2011](#)). Therefore, based on the integrated process of sustainable cultural heritage management (SCH), seven extra indicators were included in the developed assessment framework, including identification of community goals, prioritisation of developmental objectives, review of management partnerships, assigned responsibilities, supportive role of government, community values and assessment of local social issues. To test this assessment framework, reported documents on Chinese heritage management were reviewed to further improve this framework.

Cultural heritage is recognised as a strong force for urban socio-economic development in China through insights from local empirical studies rather than an assessment on community participation and heritage ([Kou, Zhou, Chen, & Zhang, 2018](#); [Yung et al., 2014](#)). [Verdini \(2015\)](#) states the success of progressing public participation is based on both vertical and horizontal relationships. Governments should decentralise management power and devolve it to actors at the local level.





Legend

○ Meeting 13 to 18 indicators; ○ Meeting 7 to 12 indicators; ○ Meeting 0 to 6 indicators.

**Fig. 1.** Locations of Chinese World Heritage properties from 1987 to 2018. Legend: ○ Meeting 13 to 18 indicators; ○ Meeting 7 to 12 indicators; ○ Meeting 0 to 6 indicators.

(With reference to UNESCO World Heritage website: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/cn>).



**Fig. 2.** Cultural landscape of Honghe Hani rice terraces. (Author: Li Kun, [whc.unesco.org/en/documents/123256](http://whc.unesco.org/en/documents/123256)).



**Fig. 3.** Ancient building complex in the Wudang Mountains. (Author: Ko Hon Chiu Vincent, [whc.unesco.org/en/documents/126092](http://whc.unesco.org/en/documents/126092)).



**Fig. 4.** Summer palace, an imperial garden in Beijing. (Author: Juan Frias-Velatti, [whc.unesco.org/en/documents/113058](http://whc.unesco.org/en/documents/113058)).

Temple of Heaven, Mogao Caves, Ancient City of Ping Yao, Peking Man Site, Capital Cities and Tombs of the Ancient Koguryo Kingdom, Imperial Tombs of the Ming and Qing Dynasties, Mountain Resort and its Outlying Temples, Yin Xu, Imperial Palaces of the Ming and Qing Dynasties in Beijing and Shenyang, Classical Gardens of Suzhou, Mausoleum of the First Qin Emperor, Dazu Rock Carvings, Longmen Grottoes, Yungang Grottoes, and Lushan National Park.

The analysed UNESCO documents do not indicate a high degree of community participation practices in any of these properties, namely meeting 19 to 23 indicators. Still, relatively high community participation is reported within seven properties including Mount Wutai, Honghe Hani Rice Terraces, Kulangsu and Lijiang. The role of local residents has been recognised in the decision-making process for collaborative heritage maintenance and management. Residents have formed part of the management committees enacting regulations in order to ensure public benefits in Kulangsu and Mount Wutai. Residents, for example from Honghe Hani Rice Terraces, Lijiang and the Grand Canal, have platforms to be informed about heritage projects and to build competence in participating in heritage management and related economic activities. Furthermore, these seven heritage properties have been utilised in daily lives to continue community traditional lifestyles.

For the 10 properties meeting 7 to 12 indicators, the local institutions have taken some actions to engage local residents and respect their ideas, but the degree of public participation is relatively low and more efforts are urgently needed. The residents of these properties have been involved and consulted in the decision-making for achieving broad-community goals and protecting heritage attributes. For example in Fujian Tulou, the local government has taken actions to provide necessary infrastructure and facilities to improve residents' living condition. Residents are encouraged to stay within the property to protect traditional lifestyles, heritage authenticity and integrity. Within these properties, educational activities have been organised to publicise heritage significance and gain communities' professional skills. Even so, residents do not have channels to access management information and benefit-sharing processes. Besides this, they often lack sufficient resources to challenge government decisions deviating from their interests, for example in the Historic Ensemble of the Potala Palace and Xidi and Hongcun.

More than half of the properties (19 out of 36) have community participation involved in World Heritage management to only a minimal degree, meeting up to six indicators. The documents showcase some efforts to involve residents in the decision-making process, but they lack the educational opportunities related to gaining skills of heritage management and business activities. Besides this, residents are hardly empowered and have insufficient platforms to negotiate with

governments and other social actors. Community needs and local social issues are also not well addressed. Interestingly, many of these properties have changed from their original functions to museums or archaeological sites, such as the Dazu Rock Carvings, Longmen Grottoes and Yin Xu. Based on the assessment criteria and indicators, we further discussed specific Chinese practices in community participation facilitation, and a summary of the findings is presented as follows.

5.2. Participation in decision-making processes for cultural heritage management

The decision-making of cultural heritage management needs to not only include governmental agencies, experts and businesses but also NGOs and representatives of residents, with the aim of achieving community goals (Kyriakidis & Anagnostopoulos, 2015; Lekakis, 2013). After applying the 11 assessment indicators of criterion 1, the number of properties meeting each indicator is as shown in Fig. 5. Chinese governments have established local state institutions for World Heritage management, aiming to facilitate the participation of local residents in the management process. Management power is decentralised from the central government to these local institutions, who appear to be identifying community-based goals and building collaborative partnerships. However, insufficient attention has been paid to several aspects, including engaging local communities with decision-making bodies and prioritisation of objectives, public accesses to management information and evaluation of current partnerships.

Contents of these documents indicate that community participation has taken place in Chinese World Heritage, but still, residents have insufficient platforms and resources to express their ideas and interests. Broad-based community goals (indicator 1.1) have been explicitly set for 21 properties as a method to improve local living environments and protect the OUV of World Heritage. For the indicator of objectives prioritisation in indicator 1.2, the “public-interest-first” objective is approved in a few official management documents (SACH, 2014). For example, residents from Kulangsu developed a convention to establish protection objectives regarding heritage values, community awareness, responsibilities and rights. Besides this, the residents of the Historical Centre of Macao got involved in framing local planning directions and objectives. However, the inclusion of residents in management bodies (indicator 1.3) has been only approved in the management schemes of six properties, such as in Lijiang and Kaiping, and only five properties emphasised the requirements of community presentation in decision-making (indicator 1.4). To implement

community-coordination strategies, at the prescribed level (indicator 1.5), multiple governance-level provisions were formulated, such as the customary laws of the Hani people, the Cultural Heritage Protection Law of Macao and related Guangdong provincial regulations for Kaiping Diaolou. Of various channels used for communication (indicator 1.6), the establishment of websites, library datasets, letters, and emails was approved in the management documents of 7 properties for collecting community ideas and publicising management measures, such as in Peking Man Site and Mogao Caves.

Partnership-building has been well facilitated while the effectiveness of partnerships has not been assessed in the management process, as addressed in these documents. For indicator 1.7, many heritage projects, for example in the Great Wall and the Grand Canal, were carried out with effective public participation, and the partnership-building spanned the collaboration of governmental agencies, businesses and other social actors such as publicity and educational institutions and especially, the engagement of residents. In the Silk Roads, sufficient attention was paid to improving the perception and participation of local residents in substantial conservation work while enhancing the collaborations with different stakeholders. This collaborative partnership has also been built in Lijiang to implement management plans and supervise site monitoring of daily maintenance (UNESCO, 2008). However, there is little attention paid to the effectiveness of current management partnerships (indicator 1.8). Only in Mount Wutai was it pointed out that the heritage administration officers should facilitate the collaboration with local temple workers apart from national protection and maintenance work (ICOMOS, 2009).

As Fan (2014) and Li et al. (2020) have noted, Chinese cultural heritage management is a government-led process blended with public consultation. For indicator 1.9, the decentralisation of management power to locals has been facilitated in most properties. The central government enables the State Administration of Cultural Heritage of the People’s Republic of China (Hereafter: SACH) to establish local state institutions. These local institutions are committed to carrying out daily maintenance, implementing management schemes and especially, building partnerships (indicator 1.11, n = 25). For instance, the local community of the Grand Canal was involved in the nomination process. Besides this, the management committee of Wudang has done a good job in mobilising residents and the religious community – with Taoists as the principal protectors. For indicator 1.10, only the management institutions of the properties in Wudang, Honghe, and Zuojiang assigned management and protection responsibilities to various stakeholder groups. In Zuojiang, volunteers selected from villagers were willing and

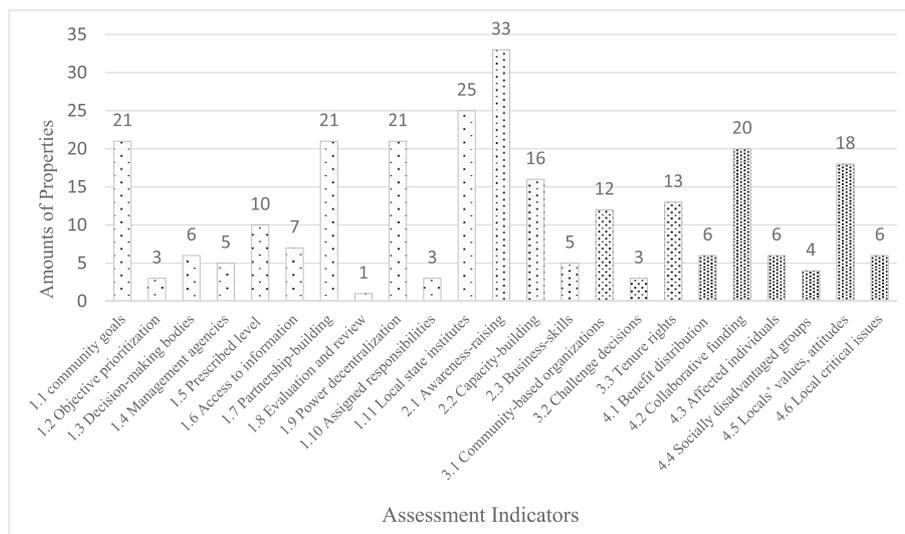


Fig. 5. Assessed results in response to the 23 assessment indicators.

then committed to watching over the rock art under local leaders' supervision (ICOMOS, 2016).

### 5.3. Competence of participants to participate in the cultural heritage management process

Competence of participants is a key factor in facilitating effective participation in cultural heritage management and protection processes (Wijesuriya, Thompson, & Court, 2017). The management process needs to provide local residents with the opportunities to be trained as information providers, management partners and businesses (Dhliwayo et al., 2009; Yung et al., 2014). In Chinese World Heritage management, various methods were used to publicise and communicate heritage information but training activities were mainly provided to official staff, not to local residents. Business skill-building is still weak but has started to improve among residents, as tourism is a significant driver in urban economic growth. The quantitative result of the 3 indicators of criterion 2 is as shown in Fig. 5.

For indicator 2.1, almost all the properties ( $n = 33$  out of 36) have taken actions to publicise heritage projects, boosting citizens' understanding of World Heritage and promoting the compliance with supranational conventions and relevant national provisions. For example, the government of Honghe employed both domestic and overseas media to communicate about the Hani Terraces culture, protection progress, and the latest technologies. The Macao Government launched a "Macao Cultural Heritage Promotion Project" to educate citizens through exhibitions, seminars, games, and competitions (SACHMacao SAR of PRC, 2005). Raising citizens' awareness was listed as one of the objectives in this project, reflecting the maturity of the community and their willingness to participate.

Regarding capacity-building initiatives (indicator 2.2), most of the documents report that training programmes were mainly organised for official staff, including site directors, managers, and professionals. For example, staff in the local agencies of Lushan National Park, Mogao Caves, and the Site of Xanadu have had the opportunity to participate in professional workshops, lectures, and seminars. International heritage communities such as UNESCO and ICCROM supplied and exchanged the information for training, as did the national heritage management circle. Less than half of the managing institutions ( $n = 16$ ) provide training opportunities to local residents. The Lijiang institution handed out maintenance manuals for house owners, helping them to undertake daily protection and repair work. In Kaiping and the Potala Palace, local craftsmen were trained to continue traditional techniques of buildings. Capacity-building activities for residents have been also added to the execution agendas of several management plans to be implemented in the future, such as at Mount Wutai and the Grand Canal.

In addition to management and protection capacities, residents also need the ability to participate in local economic activities such as heritage tourism and local production (Srijuntrapun, Fisher, & Rennie, 2017). For indicator 2.3, however, only five local administrative institutions have conducted related activities to promote residents' entrepreneurial and business skills. For example, in the Hani Rice Terraces, local governments agreed on contracts with farmers and farmers' organisations for collaboration in production, processing, and circulation of agricultural products, jointly sharing profits and undertaking risks. Farmers have improved their knowledge of industrial management in order to boost agriculture development. In Zuojiang, the farming system was adapted, combining land utilisation and cultivation with modern technologies, was established for the farmers.

### 5.4. Right to social justice and confidence of participants in the cultural heritage management process

The right of participants to social justice in cultural heritage management means that local communities have legal mechanisms to approve or challenge decisions made by governmental agencies

(Hammami, 2016; Lausche, 2011). This contributes to an inclusive and open process in which local communities can appeal government decisions to incorporate their interests in these decisions (Simakole et al., 2018). World Heritage management in China has taken actions to ensure residents' rights, confidence, access to information and social justice, and the quantitatively assessed results of criterion 3 are presented in Fig. 5.

Regarding indicator 3.1, community-based organisations have emerged to support public participation in the management processes of 12 properties. The management institution in Wudang coordinated with the Taoist Association in monitoring the law enforcement situation, commercial activities and heritage structures. The Buddhist Association of Mount Wutai played a significant role in the negotiations between administrative agencies, experts and residents. Several NGOs, such as the Friendship Association for Cultural Relics, provided strong support to the protection and rehabilitation measures for the ancient city of Pingyao. In Lijiang, local community organisations together with the chamber of commerce were committed to monitoring both conservation progress and commercial activities. Furthermore, community organisations and voluntary groups have also been established in several properties to solicit public opinion, collect data and conduct academic research, such as in Kulangsu, Kaiping Diaolou and Dengfeng.

For the legal recourse used for appealing ideas and to meet other needs in indicator 3.2, citizens need channels for approving or challenging government decisions, but only three properties have addressed them. A self-supporting public organisation called Yuanyang County Hani Rice Terraces Culture Preservation Institute has been established in the Hani Rice Terraces for government procurement, social donation and compensable services, through which farmers addressed their real interests and expectations. The residents of Kulangsu formed an organisation to formulate heritage protection and management conventions. In addition, communication channels, such as letter, fax, email, and website, were proposed for the Grand Canal, encouraging the public to contribute their suggestions and feedbacks.

In terms of indicator 3.3, according to related national laws, most of these properties ( $n = 28$  out of 36) are completely or partly state-owned. Local individuals have the private or collective ownership of 13 properties, including Xidi and Hongcun, Kaiping Diaolou, Kulangsu, and Lijiang. The state predominantly holds the right of the ownership of World Heritage properties. Therefore, in general, local Chinese residents lack resources to protect their rights, express interests and challenge government decisions.

### 5.5. Empowerment and equity in the cultural heritage management process

Community values are central to current heritage management approaches and community empowerment contributes to open public participation and well-accepted outcomes among the public (Poulios, 2014). It includes: 1) economic empowerment to increase economic gains to residents; 2) psychological empowerment to recognise resident values and their traditional knowledge; 3) social empowerment to enhance social benefits and stability; and 4) political empowerment to ensure all affected communities have rights and equity in the management process (Regina, 2002; Simakole et al., 2018). The assessed results in Fig. 5 show that Chinese World Heritage management seeks to protect social equity and empower residents. Although it is hard to enable local residents to fully undertake the management of heritage projects, some interesting actions of community empowerment are detailed below.

Regarding indicator 4.1, the facilitation of equitable benefit distribution, only six property institutions have taken actions with the aim of increasing local residents' income. The residents of Wudang Mountain and the Potala Palace have received payment of subsidies because of their supportive work of daily heritage maintenance. A business model – "company + farmer" – has been established in the Hani Rice Terraces to subsidise residents for farming red rice through traditional methods.

And direct financial profits from agricultural production in related enterprises were shared with local residents (SACH, 2015). Fair profit distribution mechanisms were also proposed in Kaiping Diaolou, Mount Wutai and the Silk Roads, encouraging an appropriate share of tourism revenues and creating more job opportunities for local residents as financial incentives. For the funding framework of indicator 4.2, the main financial sources were mainly national, provincial, and local authority budgets allocated by the state to on-site management institutions. In addition, some economic support from international sponsors such as UNESCO and the World Bank is also noted, but above all the revenue of entry fees is key to supplement protection and management expenses. Twenty management institutions have involved residents and social organisations in a collaborative funding framework. In terms of the funding from social organisations, the Hong Kong Chinese Culture Fund donated 5 million USD to the Imperial Palaces of the Ming and Qing dynasties.

In indicator 4.3, the result presents that six properties have developed integrated management provisions and protective regulations into a comprehensive system to institutionalise the cooperation between all concerned stakeholder groups. In Mount Wutai, the strategy of multi-stakeholder partnerships was formulated to encourage various stakeholders to participate in the management process (SACH, 2009). In the Hani Rice Terraces, the government, village committees, villagers' associations, and farmers were requested to sign documents assigning responsibility. The stakeholders of the West Lake Landscape included the governments at different levels, tourist departments, service enterprises, local residents, and other social entities. Some effort has been put into facilitating the participation of socially disadvantaged people in four properties (indicator 4.4), but there are no statements on including them into management bodies. The Chinese Communist Youth League and the Women's Federation of Honghe Prefecture participated in programming the management measures, encouraging more young people back to the heritage site.

For the assessment of community value in indicator 4.5, some management processes ( $n = 18$ ) recognise the significance of the local communities who use the heritage properties through their traditional ways of daily practices and rituals. For instance, the religious activities of Taoists are vital for keeping the temples in the Wudang Mountains as living heritage, underpinning long-standing traditional social and religious structures. The residents in Pingyao and Lijiang are encouraged to live and work in the old towns, maintaining the layout of streets and lanes, water systems and other morphological features. In addition, the canal community's everyday activities and their living environments are considered inseparable parts of the Grand Canal's values. Regarding indicator 4.6, the management processes of six properties such as Lijiang, Kulangsu and the Wudang Mountains demonstrate the importance of identification and assessment of local critical social issues. The issues include local economic activities such as tourism development, infrastructure improvement and public services. These heritage properties are used and managed as a dynamic resource in promoting daily socio-economic activities and increasing residents' income (SACH, 2017). By doing so, residents can sustain and enhance the strong association with local heritage, such as in Lijiang and the West Lake Cultural Landscape.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper developed a targeted assessment framework through which to assess community participation within the management practice of the 36 Chinese cultural heritage inscribed on the WHL from 1987 to 2018. Based on the conceptualisation of community participation from supranational and national policies, an assessment framework was synthesised from a literature review on various heritage-related frameworks. This assessment framework further addressed both international and local/national (Chinese) issues related to community participation in cultural heritage management, which contributes to

sustainable relations between governments and residents. It identified 23 indicators under four main criteria: 1) participation in decision-making; 2) the competence of participants; 3) the right to justice and confidence of participants; and 4) empowerment and equity in cultural heritage management. This assessment framework adapted current heritage-related frameworks to cultural heritage management in China from an international perspective.

Through the application of the assessment framework to UNESCO documents, the results provide an overview of Chinese practices in facilitating community participation in World Heritage management. Generally, Chinese World Heritage management is a government-led process wherein community participation is happening to a minimal degree. Most properties have insufficient involvement of residents in decision-making, and the focus of management is placed more on the presentation of heritage materiality than the improvement of community traditional life. Even within these constraints, several properties have advanced community-based procedures and conducted relatively high levels of community participation, such as Honghe Hani Rice Terraces, Mount Wutai, Kulangsu and the Old Town of Lijiang. Local residents share responsibilities with administrative agencies and also reap benefits from these heritage-based conservation processes.

Chinese governments play a dominant and centralised role in the management process of World Heritage, and they have put efforts into building collaborative funding and benefit-sharing frameworks. Besides this, local state institutions have been established for the management of each property, under the supervision and approval of SACH. These local institutions are committed to conducting heritage monitoring and maintenance and solving daily community issues. They have done a good job in identifying community goals and building collaborative partnerships. For example, in several properties such as Mount Wutai and the Hani Rice Terraces, residents have opportunities to have a voice and even to form the decision-making body. However, management partnerships have not been periodically reviewed or evaluated. And there are few authorised conventions for the requirement of community presentation and assigning of responsibilities to residents. Although effectively publishing on heritage values and information, the training activities of management capacities and business skills, such as in Mogao Caves and Tusi Sites, have been mainly organised for officials and have not yet been arranged for local residents. Despite several community-based organisations being set up, in general, residents still lack resources to negotiate with different stakeholders and challenge any government decisions deviating from their interests. Positively, the management processes in some cases have endeavoured to identify local communities' traditions and daily routines, which are an inseparable part of heritage values, such as in the Old Town of Lijiang. To facilitate their empowerment further, concerned communities should be widely identified and local social issues explored, urgently.

We have to note that, for some properties, documentation related to reporting the latest practices to the World Heritage Centre, such as Pingyao and Lushan were not accessible online. In extended research, it would be interesting to further test this assessment framework from other perspectives, quantitative or more empirical data on the sites themselves. It is necessary to explore current situations of community participation as it happens in situ and not only through self-reporting in official documents. In addition, this framework could be further expanded and tested in other regions, enable to adapt to various national and local contexts varying in geographical characteristics, governance structures, heritage scope and potential to better help foster community participation in heritage management.

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## Declaration of competing interest

None.

## CRedit authorship contribution statement

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Ji Li is a PhD candidate of Urbanism and Urban Architecture at Eindhoven University of Technology (TU/e), the Netherlands. His research interests include community participation in sustainable urban development and World Heritage management.

Sukanya Krishnamurthy is a Senior Lecturer of the School of Geosciences at University of Edinburgh. Her main focus lies at the interface of urban, social and cultural geography, where her scholarship analyses how cities can use their resources and values for better sustainable development.

Ana Pereira Roders is Professor of Heritage and Values at TU Delft, the Netherlands. Her Chair Heritage and Values focuses on further understanding the values that define heritage, such as cultural, social, ecological, and economic; and how they impact the sustainability of cities.

Pieter van Wesemael is Professor of Urbanism and Urban Architecture at TU/e. He is responsible for the Living Cities research program of the Unit AUDE, which focuses on correlations between architecture and urbanism as well as on the evolutionary development of cities and regions bridging place-making, urban studies and cultural history.