

Special Contribution

A New Approach to Heritage Tourism in Southeast Asia

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Abstract: This article, in two parts, reports on a new model of heritage and eco-tourism that was pioneered in Southeast Asia (in Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam) from 2002 to 2016 and partly in Hungary in 2006 to 2008. Part I describes the approach and compares it to other forms of tourism and of government approaches to building tourism infrastructure. The approach expands the idea of heritage trails (walking and bicycling) to multiple periods and themes on the same landscape to raise questions on culture, history, and environment. In addition to tourism, the approach is educational and seeks to promote cross-cultural tolerance and environmental, cultural, and cultural heritage site protection. Part II describes the difficulties of implementing such an approach in four countries in Southeast Asia. Although the objectives of alternative forms of tourism that include environmental and heritage protection fit well within established international community laws and stated goals, the current neo-liberal, globalist homogenizing agenda in international development and the goal of elites in the region and globally to undermine minority identities, to protect the authority of elite rulers of nation-states, to promote a single ideology, and to suppress intellectual freedom, environmental protection, heritage protection, diversity, and individual expression, make it nearly impossible to promote any of the goals of such an approach.

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Part I

Tourism as a form of Enlightenment and a Means to Social Goals beyond Profit

1.1 Introduction

There is a truism about tourism and about education that few people say aloud because contemporary ideology about the workings of “the market” make it appear almost seditious to say it, but statistics appear to confirm it. Standard approaches to both tourism and education are mind-numbingly boring for large numbers of people and there is little real alternative despite the claim that such needs can be met by the “free market”.

To understand why both “tourism” and “education” may be viewed today, in many respects, as lacking in real intellectual stimulation, one need only turn to the standard definitions of both and an understanding of contemporary societies. The definitions already seem to pre-suppose appeals to the lowest common denominator in ways that are mass, commercial factory models.

The standard definition of “tourism” actually has two elements:

- “the activity of traveling to a place for pleasure; and
- the business of providing hotels, restaurants, etc., for people who are traveling”²

Note that the second definition turns the adjectival “tourist businesses” or “tourism businesses” directly into the noun where “tourism” itself implies a mass business to supply basic needs (and recreational luxuries) to “people who are traveling [to a place for pleasure]” in the form of basic needs of shelter (hotels) and food (restaurants, etc.). There is nothing in these definitions that describes “pleasure” or infers any relationship to education and intellectual development, conceptual understanding, or protection. The “business of providing [services or products]” also suggests that the process is one directed by the producers without individual initiative. Exploration, discovery, and invention fall outside the second definition.

The definition of “pleasure” seems to reinforce this interpretation. It is defined as:

“a feeling of happiness, enjoyment or satisfaction: a pleasant or pleasing feeling”³

The definition of “education” is almost parallel to that of “tourism”, in a way that also describes an institutional or mass production process rather than an individual, intellectual search of discovery:

- “the action or process of teaching someone especially in a school, college, or university; and
- the knowledge, skill, and understanding that you get from attending a school, college, or university”⁴

This is not the bias of a single dictionary. The view is reinforced in other standard definitions:

“The process of receiving or giving systematic instruction, especially at a school or university”⁵

The definition already incorporates a bureaucratic, institutional world view that exploration through travel and tourism cannot be “education” unless there is a “school” doing teaching.

Although there are some cultural and religious traditions that are long historically rooted in the idea of travel as an individual search or quest for meaning and understanding and empathy, such as the searches for enlightenment in the travel of Krishna or Buddha or Ashoka in the ancient Indian tradition, dating back some 2,500 years, the standard forms of tourism today in Asia and throughout the world have largely fit into the package of processed mass activities, even when undertaken by individuals (See Figure 1).

Figure 1: Models of Asian Enlightenment Tourism



Sources: Public Domain. Confucius depicted in a tomb fresco in Dong Ping, Shandong, China, dated to the Western Han era (220 B.C.E. to 9 C.E.); Zheng He Statue in the Guangzhou Maritime Museum (jonjanego, posted to Flickr), China; Buddha frieze, with Vaijrapani, 2nd century from Gandhara, India, displayed in the Ostasiatische Kunst Museum in Cologne, Germany (PHG-COM); Source of Lao Tze riding to the West is unclear.

In Southeast Asia, the landscapes of Cambodia and Thailand, for example, are still dotted with lines of pilgrimage routes such as the Jayavarman VII (1181 to 1218) “Dharmasala” guest houses at intervals of some 20 km, such as the one from Angkor Wat to Phimai. This idea of pilgrimage routes, reinforcing a specific religious belief along an already packaged and pre-determined path, is common in the traditions of Buddhism in Asia, Islam in Asia and the Middle East, and Christianity in Europe and the Middle East.

The contemporary approach of mass, commercial tourism of resorts, guided tours, and niche tourism now includes visits to museums, cultural villages, homestays, and visits to heritage or

ecological sites, as well as specifically designed tours to appeal to specific interests, hobbies, and skills. Travellers can also go it alone with guidebooks in hand. Nevertheless, much of it remains a form of escapism or packaging, with only limited chances for exploration and discovery.

It seems clear that there is a market for approaches that are much more exciting and engaging than current tourism, with much higher intellectual content, more independence and individual development, and more spontaneity. One need only look at the books that are best-sellers in English and that find their way to Asia in the hands of travellers. Authors of historical fiction like James Michener and Alex Haley, for example, produce tomes of hundreds of pages that have become more popular than sort page-turners. Similarly, books that examine historical sites and raise new questions and theories about them, such as those by Jared Diamond on the rise and collapse of empires, are wildly popular. Historical films, such as “Gandhi”, “The Quiet American”, “The Killing Fields”, or “The King and I”, to mention just four on Asia, have enthralled global audiences. If the marketplace recognizes demand for such intellectual work on culture and heritage in those media, certainly there should also be a market potential for similar approaches in the area of tourism.

More than 30 years ago, as a graduate student who found contemporary approaches to education to be intellectually stifling and doctrinaire, removed from real world study, crushing individual initiative, offering little social benefit, and with little concern for personal growth or democracy, I began to redesign university curriculum in ways that added field work elements to social science modeling, skills learning, and practical applications (Lempert, 1995; Lempert, McCarty and Mitchell, 1995). Some of these approaches (in what can be termed, “democratic experiential education”) include some elements that overlap with the concept of “tourism” in that they include travel and interaction with different communities, geographies and ecologies, history and cultures.

What I found was a real demand not for packaged real-world experiences in institutions (like internships) or for education in the form of tours and recreation, but for intellectually engaging experiential learning with communities and in the natural environment. The courses that I designed started with small numbers of students, but these students were firmly committed to the approach and began to replicate the idea on their own. What I also found, however, is that university education today does not operate on competitive measurement standards or on market principles that would allow such new approaches to compete with and replace classroom regurgitation, lectures, cloistered seminars and book learning. Contemporary university education is subject to bureaucratic institutional controls and to public (political) and corporate funding that shape its agenda. The history of education as rooted in religious dogma and religious institutions (churches in the West, pagodas in Asia) has also severely restricted its ability to promote intellectual freedom, experimentation, and social science (Lempert, 2016).

Following these experiences within educational bureaucracies that were indoctrinating rather than educating, I decided to test approaches to education that would be accessible to the general public in participatory, experiential curricula in their own communities. My goal was to facilitate the ability of people of all ages to interpret and beautify the world around them by looking at their cultural and environmental heritage and that of their neighbors in new ways. The approach combined the idea of “tourism” with the idea of self-paced individualized education in ways that would promote tolerance, cultural and natural diversity, heritage protection, beautification of communities, civic skills, sustainability, and intellectual life as well as good health: all the essence of “civilization” and “development”, in one. I present this story in Box 1.

*Box 1: The Story of a New Approach to Tourism***The Author's Story of a New Approach to Tourism**

The idea germinated when I came to Southeast Asia (Hanoi, Vietnam) as the second U.S. Fulbright exchange Professor to Vietnam, some 20 years ago. At the time, the streets of Hanoi were safe for bicycling, the air was clean, and the multiple layers of historic and cultural influences on the city in its 3,000 year history as well as its traditional crafts villages, had not yet been destroyed by international and global policies that they called “development” and “modernization”. As my Vietnamese became fluent, I began to explore areas inside and around the city and along the Red River and its tributaries and to speak with people about their history and traditions, their historic sites of all kinds (everything from dirt citadels to ancient canals and roads to tombs and religious buildings) as well as the very different perspectives they had from those that the central government promoted about the history. Many of the communities were ancient Chinese villages that still worshipped historical Chinese leaders (whom the central government referred to as invaders), kidnapped and enslaved royalty of the defeated Cham from several centuries before, or local Vietnamese Kinh or other minority group clan leaders who were once kings. In 2002, I began to invite a Vietnamese woman colleague, Hue Nhu Nguyen, now an environmentalist and photographer, then a Vietnamese government employee, along so that we could discuss our different perceptions and interpretations of what we were seeing and hearing and what we found surprising or confusing. I also began documenting all of these sites and the trips and organizing them as “tours” of specific historical periods and geographic routes and transformations (e.g., river valleys).

For the past nearly 20 years now, in several countries in Southeast Asia as well as a bit in Eastern Europe, I have been cataloguing hundreds of these historical and cultural sites as a guide to helping peoples to recover, interpret and apply their lost and forgotten history so as to take pride in their past, to build understanding and tolerance with different peoples, to preserve their heritage for tourism and beauty of their communities, and to understand the historical relationships of peoples to their natural and social environments in ways that can promote healthy and sustainable communities (Lempert, 2012; 2013). As of 2006, I began to look for ways to turn this into a formal project to build a new kind of tourism and educational infrastructure and to turn it into a variety of tourism and educational products with governments, donors, educational institutions, and businesses with associated heritage and environmental protection, signage, and impacts on national and local planning policy for community identity and sustainability. I received a small academic research grant to both research historic sites and lead a team of international students (Khmer, French and American) on some short heritage field work at the Center for Khmer Studies in Siem Reap, Cambodia in 2006. In 2007 to 2008, while in Budapest, Hungary, Amnesty International sponsored my visa status research there for this project but I was unable to find any institutional support either financially, institutionally, or for publication of the series of heritage and thematic tours that I prepared for Budapest. In 2009, I returned to Southeast Asia and began to formally establish the project in Southeast Asia under the aegis of the Global Village Foundation and with a variety of partners as well as a very small start-up grant from the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Foundation. Although I formally based the project on the Mekong River in Vientiane, Laos at that time, I was open to any other possibilities for support and affiliation that would further the project in the countries of Southeast Asia or elsewhere.

This article reports on this new model of heritage and eco-tourism that was pioneered in Southeast Asia (in Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam) from 2002 to 2016, and partly in Hungary in 2006 to 2008. The core of the approach expands the idea of heritage trails (walking and bicycling) to multiple periods and themes on the same landscape to raise questions on culture, history, and environment.

Part I of this article is divided into three sections:

- **Background: Fit with the Literature on Heritage Tourism: A Multi-Functional Approach to Heritage Trails:** The background section shows both where this article fits with the study of tourism as well as several other theoretical and applied fields where tourism opens a window into approaches to social change, education, cultural protection, sustainable development, and urban planning, among others.
- **Hypothesis About the Prospects for a New Kind of Heritage Tourism as a Form of Social Entrepreneurship for Public Infrastructure:** As a form of social innovation and social experimentation, this article began with a number of hypotheses about the global social context and about the context of several countries, mostly in Asia, as well as the incentives and operations of several institutions in the sectors of government, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector. It was this belief that led me to design a project to establish the public infrastructure that could be used for this new kind of tourism.
- **The Approach in Detail, Its Theoretical Basis and its Fit within Tourism, Education and Other Social Functions:** This section presents the key concepts of the project that I designed, initiated, and sought to fund in order to create the public infrastructure for this new kind of tourism. This section offers some examples of how the tourism infrastructure would fuel private approaches to tourism, while exploring the implementation steps needed to achieve results.

1.2 Background: Fit with the Literature on Heritage Tourism: A Multi-Functional Approach to Heritage Trails

While there are existing sub-fields of the study of “tourism” into which this study easily fits, the reality of the approach that this article presents is that it turns tourism studies on its head and suggests that the study of tourism today may, largely, be backwards.

The standard approach to the study of “tourism” and the cross disciplinary approaches to tourism, such as “anthropology of tourism”, all start with the notion of tourism as a marketable “product” that is to be studied to see where it “fits” in categories of products or what its impacts and value are, as a way to improving it. It is assumed to be something created for the purpose of economic benefit (“commodification” in the “market”) or for “pleasure” or for a religious purpose (“pilgrimage”) to fit specific cultural objectives. It is studied as an “ends” in itself.

By contrast, the project that this author designed and implemented viewed tourism as a “means” to achieving other ends: promoting cultural survival (a part of applied social anthropology that is largely neglected, though it is partly encompassed in applied archaeology in the area of “heritage management”), promoting peace (a part of international relations and peace studies), a form of education (a pedagogical technique), and a part of national and urban planning as well as sustainable development (development studies) rather than just sustainable business (Lempert, 2016a). In other words, it is really directly a part of these other disciplines, both theoretical and

applied. This is similar to the emergence of eco-tourism, which is really a part of the study of environmental policy, where tourism serves as a policy tool to try to protect specific environments as well as to educate the public about the value of nature. In a similar vein, in another area, a recent article by this author analyzes overseas studies programs for university students (what some tourism studies scholars refer to as “educational tourism”) for its educational content to see whether education is, in fact, degenerating into tourism (which would be undesirable) and whether it exhibits elements of imperialism rather than an equal exchange (Lempert, under review).

At the core of my approach to “tourism” are the goals of human development (individual and cultural adaptation and intellectual growth), human survival, and human rights (individual and cultural rights). As such, this article should be of interest to readers from all of these different fields and not just to those whose focus is on the commercial sector of tourism and its consequences.

Although there is now a recognized sub-field of “Heritage Tourism” with at least one major journal by this name, along with a larger field of “Tourism” that is a subset of business and industry (as an economic sector), a sub-field of study where it crosses into social sciences (such as anthropology, as a sub-set of cultural contact and cultural change among social and cultural anthropologists (Smith, 1989), the applied field of heritage management within archaeology, and other potential sub-areas (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998)), as well as part of sub-fields of city planning (UNESCO, 2002), architecture, and recreation, these multiple dimensions of tourism make its study somewhat problematic. Where does “tourism” really fit, what contributions does its study actually make, to which fields, to which intellectual questions, and why?

The approach to tourism that this author has taken raises the problem directly because it touches on additional areas of human activity that are not generally goals of tourism, including promoting cultural protections and sustainability as well as promoting education in several areas (history and various forms of human adaptation). Moreover, by the definition that is used by the *Journal of Heritage Tourism (JHT)*, founded in 2006, there are questions as to whether parts of what this author includes as “tourism” and “heritage” even fit.

JHT defines “heritage tourism” on its website as comprising:

visits to sites of historical importance, including built environments and urban areas, rural and agricultural landscapes, natural regions, locations where historic events occurred and places where interesting and significant living cultures dominate⁶

This author believes that all historic periods and parts of culture are relevant for visits and not just those that are declared to be “of historical importance” or “where interesting and significant living cultures dominate”. “Interesting” and “significant” are relative terms. Moreover, in claiming to define this sub-field, the journal does not set out the intellectual questions that it seeks to answer, does not fit them within existing fields of study, and does not measure their relevance or applications or goals. The journal simply provides a list of topic areas for “study”. Much of what the field seems to study seems to be the business of tourism and its market niches within a cultural context, defining the cultural pressures and the ethical concerns that influence the sector.

In parallel with the sub-field of “heritage tourism”, some scholars are trying to create other niches, so it is also problematic to determine where approaches like the one I present here fit. For example, some scholars are now seeking to define an area of “cultural tourism” as opposed to heritage. The distinction is that “heritage” is usually viewed as archaeological antiquity while

“culture” is usually viewed as contemporary and living. The line is clear where cultures are extinct and sites are abandoned, such as the early Bronze Age, Dong Son “Bronze Drum” culture (dating from about 300 C.E.) that is found throughout Southeast Asia. But this distinction does not make much sense to social and cultural anthropologists given that heritage decisions are themselves a part of contemporary culture and the majority of heritage sites in Southeast Asia are places of continuous use and redefinition with cultures moving and changing but not necessarily disappearing. As one scholar notes in attempting to define this sub-field, “there is not, at the moment, enough official information to be able to really identify this sector and its particular needs, to understand how the tourist relates to the heritage, or which main areas should be considered in the cultural tourism management” (Gali-Espelt, 2011).

In the standard approach to tourism as categories of products, split up into subject areas rather than areas of intellectual questions, there is a further sub-category into which this project can be “fit”; that of “heritage trails”. Though there are now said to be “thousands” of heritage trails throughout the world (Timothy and Boyd, 2006), this is an area that has not had much study (Jafa, 2012; Seigniny, 1992). Though there are studies of at least two in Asia, one in Hong Kong and one in rural Australia, there seem to be few in the region (Cheung, 1999; Prideaux, 2002). That makes this study an “addition to the literature”.

Most of the studies in the field of tourism raise issues that are not really relevant to this project. The hopes of the editors of *JHT*, for example, for the study of heritage trails, is that it would simply offer a standard market share analysis of the number of “consumers” of this “product” that they claim “needs to be addressed with some urgency” (Timothy and Boyd, 2006, p. 9). Typically, the focus of “heritage tourism” is on the “market” demand as a means of catering to the different desires for “pleasure” (Moscardo, 2000).

Other concerns in the sub-field focus on the product “quality” and “authenticity” of heritage (Schouten, 1995) and on the selection, interpretation and “packaging” of the heritage “product” (Timothy and Prideaux, 2004; Hall, 1997). Most of the “anthropology of tourism” focuses on the cultural meaning and construction of “sites” (Di Giovine, 2009) and museum displays (Karp and Levine, 1991), how history is used for political and ideological purposes and has become an ideological battleground (McClean, 1998; Linenthal and Engelhardt, 1996), and how and whether sites should be reconstructed and interpreted (Hems and Blockley, 2006; Uzell, 1989; Bhabba, 1994). All of this is rooted in the study of discourse and “texts” that have become popular in “post-modern” studies (Derrida, 1967; Bourdieu, 1993) and the anthropological study of religion and mythologies (Barthes, [1957] 1987).

The approach to tourism that is presented here circumvents most of the problems of selection and presentation of heritage because it seeks to record and present everything that is still existing on the landscape and to present as many ideas as possible about what it means so that visitors can consider different meanings and interpretations and conduct their own learning. Although the full documentation of existing heritage brings to light the different history that exists and forces decision-making on what should be protected and why, my approach is not to make those determinations; only to bring all of the information to light to inform those decisions. Rather than just present specific sites to fit “themes” as UNESCO does (UNESCO, 2005), sites can be recognized and presented for multiple periods and for different uses (Lempert, 2015).

The contribution of this article is to show that heritage tourism can be a means to several humanistic ends and to examine the different incentive systems of different actors that make such

approaches possible or impossible, using empirical evidence from the testing of one project in Southeast Asia. In a parallel to articles that examine eco-tourism as an environmental intervention to protect eco-systems and to promote environmental education, this article examines the approach of a combined heritage-culture-ecology model with goals of human development, cultural protections and sustainability.

The approach of this author is to mix the anthropological dimensions (what is possible in social change and culture contact, as well as what fits certain functions, using a structural functional approach to understanding cultures (Malinowski, 1944)) with the approach of a social and business entrepreneur testing the entrance of an idea into the “marketplace” with its several stakeholder constituencies. Rather than test a marketable “product”, what I introduced was a concept for tourism infrastructure that needed to appeal to multiple constituencies (international donors, local businesses, and government agencies) before being introduced directly in the form of tourist products for the public (local and international as well as students) as direct consumers.

1.3 Hypothesis About the Prospects for a New Kind of Heritage Tourism as a Form of Social Entrepreneurship for Public Infrastructure

Like all approaches in fields that represent something truly new that would result in social change, their introduction is, in fact, a social experiment that offers a test of what happens when it is introduced. That is also true of this project and its success and failure can be analyzed as a test of whether the initial hypotheses about the project hold true.

The approach to this project was a form of “social entrepreneurship” and “social innovation”, with the introduction of an idea to change society. In this case, the change that was introduced was in the form of a public idea (social infrastructure) that would then have commercial value in the marketplace (in the sector of tourism, the means by which the social innovation would be institutionalized). I introduced this innovation with some hypotheses about how different actors in a number of middle income and lower income countries, mostly in Southeast Asia, would react. As such, this project operated as a contemporary social experiment to test hypotheses about social changes in the areas of human development, sustainability, cultural protection and tolerance within and across borders, and urban planning, that could be possible through building infrastructure for a new kind of tourism that would involve the private sector.

The project began with certain assumptions about the contemporary political and social context, globally and in specific countries, that appeared to favor this approach. It also began with hypotheses about the incentives and abilities of several categories of actors. The results of multiple approaches to these actors for participation in and support of the project are the social scientific test results of this hypothesis.

Hypotheses About the Social Context of the Project: The basic context for the project appeared to be favorable despite the fact that I was an American citizen entering former “enemy” countries (Vietnam, Laos and Hungary), seeking to introduce discussions on tourism that could challenge the dogmatic government “line” as well as established cultural beliefs on history. I saw the societies as undergoing changes, welcoming foreign tourism and international interactions. There were several signs that this project offered an “opportunity” that would be successful and that are tested here. They are presented in Box 2:

*Box 2: Hypotheses about the Success of the Project***Hypotheses about the Success of the Project**

- Tourism was vastly increasing in all of the countries where the project was being considered and the revenue being generated was considerable. There are an increasing number of UNESCO sites in all of the countries and there was an increased willingness of the governments to expand tourism, with funding from global development banks, foreign donors, and private investments including even hotel and restaurant chains.
- Globalization and regionalization are largely promoted by the World Bank and regional development banks like the Asian Development Bank (ADB) with special attention to cross border trade links with countries, including cross border tourism “routes” of what is identified as the “Greater Mekong Sub-Region”.
- Relations have been improving in Southeast Asia with former “enemy” countries (e.g., the U.S., France, and China, in Laos and Vietnam) and tourists from these countries have been a large share of tourists. They have included returning war veterans and migrants to those countries, who have been contributors to NGO projects as part of reconciliation. Many of those in the next generation born after these wars have an eagerness to come back to these countries and discuss issues of identity. In Cambodia, for example, the Center for Khmer Studies specifically set up a program to promote discussions among French, American and Khmer students.
- The project approach of heritage tours has become well established in Western countries and partly in Asia, so there is already a precedent for them. There are also precedents in Asia for signage at heritage sites and recognition of some of the architectural heritage, including French and Chinese.
- Bicycling and walking tours as well as eco-tourism and adventure tourism are also on the rise, and tour companies have been developing forms of cultural tourism including trekking to bring tourists “off the beaten path” including through homestays.

With this potential, all that was needed to continue this growth was for a social entrepreneur to enter to help to develop the infrastructure: the historical and cultural research and background information that would serve as a guide to identification and protection of sites as a stimulus to the private sector to continue to develop profitable new tourist products.

Hypotheses about the Incentives and Behaviors of the Institutional Actors that Held the Keys to the Success of the Project: What this project required, that is different from tour companies independently testing tourism approaches on their own, is investment in the development of infrastructure for tourist products. To do that required institutional commitments by the actors who develop that infrastructure. I believed that these actors all had the incentives, resources, and ability to participate and that all they needed was a catalyst: a social entrepreneur who could provide the research skills that were needed and who could compile information, organize it for use by the private sector, and coordinate the different actors. That is what the project sought to do.

Most tourist projects are just "destinations". The infrastructure required is access (through roads) and then available commercial services (hotels, restaurants, state airlines). Heritage antiquity sites can start off easily this way in generating tourism earnings with little initial investment, as can natural sites. The government can declare them as sites, charge admission and use the funds for protection, restoration and interpretation. That is the initial model that was being followed as tourism quickly developed.

What this project recognized is that the initial tourism revenues from these kinds of sites would ultimately plateau and might not even be sustainable. What was required was to invest in the sector to continue to develop the infrastructure for new products. Furthermore, action needed to be taken to protect these potential products (heritage sites, cultures, the environment, architecture) from the destruction that would immediately occur with development.

The project also operated on the assumption that all of the foreign actors immediately understood this and were sensitive to it given the immediately visible destruction of sites with "development". The assumption was also that local actors took pride in their culture and heritage and would welcome ways to protect them and to do it sustainably, particularly with foreign help. The project operated with the further assumption that the very purpose of foreign projects and bank loans was to fund the infrastructure for tourism sector investment and growth as well as sustainability, given that funding was already entering in this way.

This kind of project, to create heritage trails with multiple sites, requires preparation and investment: research, interpretative material, signage and preservation. There is no immediate payoff to contractors for road construction or restoration or immediate benefit to hotels and restaurants and state airlines. There are no admissions fees to immediately collect. As more people come to the sites, it does fuel all of these industries (hotels, restaurants, travel) as well as others (protection, intellectual tourist products and souvenirs), but it also requires better zoning and government services for safety and site protections. This is a public investment.

The ability of this public investment to succeed and to achieve results is dependent on specific activities from specific groups of actors, with each set of actors essentially serving as "gatekeepers". This project consisted of four steps of activities, numbered below, with seven essential actors serving as gatekeepers that are shown in Box 3.

Box 3: The Infrastructure Activities to Promote Heritage Tourism

- Activity Step 1: Historical and cultural research, to be supported as an international development investment from NGOs or international bank loans, in connection with government partners including research institutes and universities, Ministries of Culture and Tourism/ Fine Arts;
- Activity Step 2: Placing heritage trail infrastructure on the landscape that would be part of popularization and protection, including the participation of Ministries of Public Works;
- Activity Step 3: Protection and/or placing signage at smaller sites, including involvement of owners;
- Activity Step 4: Market commitment to the key products, without government interference, including tourist maps, and tourist books.

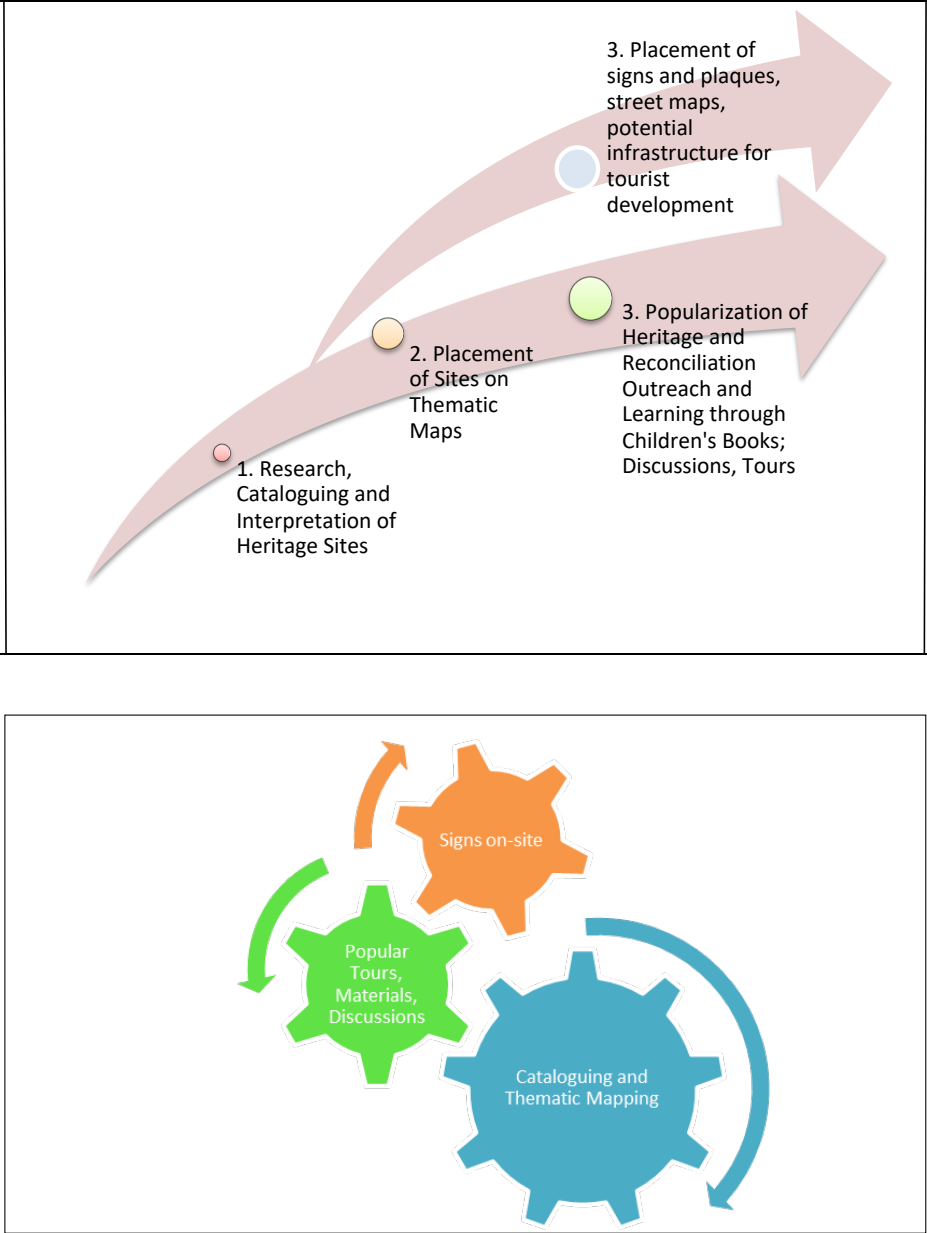
Figure 2 offers a flow chart of these activity steps in a pictorial form. In the diagram, steps three and four are shown as two parts of “Step 3” to indicate that they are simultaneous in time. The activities fit together as a whole like gears in a machine. If one step was stopped by a gatekeeper, the project would fail. While that suggests a high level of risk for that project, the relationships of the actors were also such that they could potentially influence each other and overcome any resistance of a particular set of actors.

Note also that each set of actors was also diverse and offered several chances to find and convince a partner or donor. So even if all but one government agency showed no interest and all but one foreign donor showed no interest and all but one NGO or donor agent showed no interest and all but one local publisher showed no interest, it would still be possible for the project to continue, just at a much slower rate.

While I did not estimate the market potentials for this new type of tourism as huge, I considered the numbers required for it to be profitable and it seemed lucrative, particularly if it started in major cities. Even tiny niche markets of 1% of foreign tourists would be large and such niches were already profitable for other forms of tourism. The appeal could also be great for local tourists, particularly youth.

While there is already evidence in Southeast Asia of initial investments in heritage tourism that are failures, including museums that do not attract tourists and many small archaeological sites that are not on major itineraries, the problem with many of these is that they are not on organized “routes” or trails linked with other sites and they are not presented in interesting ways. Within major cities, there already is a demand for visiting colonial architecture but it is not presented other than in very short walking tours, at best.

Figure 2: Flow chart of work: (Activities/Steps)



1.4 The Approach in Detail, its Theoretical Basis and its Fit Within Tourism, Education and Other Social Functions

This section presents the project concept in its basic proposals, highlights these with some sample outputs that help illustrate what the project does and how it differs from traditional approaches to heritage tourism and to tourism, in general, and then demonstrates how the project compares to existing approaches to tourism to explain where it “fits” or “positions” itself relative to these other approaches.

The Concept: The idea for this project is very simple and is based on existing approaches to heritage trails, environmental trails (and nature walks), cultural exchange, and adventure tourism. What it does it combine them all into one without the artificial packaging that promotes a single message or forces everything in an area into one single theme in which everything has to fit that one period or architectural style or cultural or political message. It celebrates diversity and shows it in layers, achieves several humanistic objectives at once rather than just financial benefit or promotion of an ideology, recognizes several types of sites rather than those of refined “artistic” or other imposed “merit” and financial value, and also leads to other humanistic and profitable activities in different sectors. The key concept areas of the approach are summarized in Box 4.

Box 4: Key Concept Areas of the Approach

Touring the Richness of Layers of Heritage: History, Environment, and Cultures in an Engaging Way: The educational and historical methodology used for site mapping and construction of the heritage trails that were the goal of this project is described separately in a peer reviewed journal on education, showing how cultures leave traces on the landscape over time that can be documented and explored in systematic ways (Lempert, 2013). In designing this approach, the author used some of the most current methods for presenting multiple perspectives on history for exploration, discussion and application in exciting and challenging ways (Loewen, 2010), as well as for protecting and promoting rich, diverse, environmentally healthy, and exciting living environments (Pierson, 2007).

The project did not specify the ways in which all of the different trails would be presented on the landscape other than to note the many possibilities for using painted images on roads to reveal history (e.g., ancient citadel gates), uncovering and revealing some sites that are underground (e.g., plexiglass covering over brick foundations of ancient walls and structures), and some re-landscaping or renovations of historic canals used for transport, lakes used for recreation, sacred forests and gardens, markets, and sites for animals (e.g., royal elephants).

Objectives and Implementation: The key objectives and steps of the project related to cultural protection and tolerance (particularly in cross-border areas such as Vientiane and Si Chiang Mai where the former Lao capital is now split into two countries and where there are populations across borders throughout the region) as well as reconciliation and understanding of the colonial history. Other objectives were also integrated into the approach since the idea of heritage is not simply one of art or religion but that of survival with the environment.

The approach of mapping the heritage on the geography and including the ancient environment and transportation routes also contained a strong ecological message as well as one on cultural survival and sustainability. The expansion of trails into biking routes to cover large areas and to replicate the speed of historic travel also incorporated messages of health and environment that are not found in most heritage tour approaches. Conversely, most recreational tourism such as biking generally focuses on the biking and not on sites and people.

The approach of creating only infrastructure and offering children's books and maps was designed to inspire independent thinking about history and cultural choice while developing critical thinking about contemporary problems using a field approach. This idea of stimulating thinking rather than dogma introduces an empowering element into education and the teaching of history that does not exist in most contemporary education or tourism.

An example of how these objectives were presented along with the steps of implementation is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Sample Project Description Used in Outreach Proposals

The project will document, protect and promote the largely unrecognized unique historical and cultural legacy. first of Vientiane city, in specific themes, by mapping and interconnecting dozens of small but important (but currently threatened) architectural and cultural heritage sites in the context of neighborhoods and communities (historic and living). The project will also work with the Lao government and international partners to develop, first, Vientiane's largely untapped potential for urban historic and cultural tourism, promote cultural protection and pride of the city and of the identities of each individual group in its history, and foster education on city history, as a model for the region. The project will promote new international linkages and ties in the areas of culture and environment with Thailand and other neighbors (Khmer, India, Viet Nam, etc.) as well as other countries that share in its history and visible heritage (France, U.S.).

They key outputs of the project will be:

- “Heritage Trails” and thematic site maps that recognize communities and landmarks as integrated, sustainable, healthy systems, with maps and markings on the landscape in ways that protect both.
- Public and private partnerships investing in public infrastructure architecture and landscape protection (starting with signage for sites that are at risk) to stimulate sustainable private sector heritage tourism and education products that create a constituency for preservation and understanding of heritage and sustainability.
- Biking and walking trail infrastructure linked to community, awareness, discussions, and tourism to promote healthy urban lifestyles, intellectual life, and civil society, through interaction with the urban landscape.

Objective 1. Document and raise local and international awareness to protect the historic heritage and culture sites that embody multi-cultural regional history and that root identity, expression and voice in geographic places, and that are at risk starting first in Vientiane, Lao, an historic national capital split by an international border.

Objective 2. Heal historic conflicts through joint examination of historical legacies (including that of the U.S., France, Thailand, and minority groups like the H'mong and Phuan in Lao).

Objective 3. Promote diversity, identity and tolerance and rebuild civil society in Laos through reawakening of cultural awareness and rooted-ness, recognizing communities that have been living side by side. This project will subtly, tactfully and creatively build civil society in Laos and across borders, with a Lao government partner and mix of foreign partners, by reinforcing ethnic identity, attachments to land, and other interests (gender, class, profession religion) that are the foundation of civil society and pluralism.

Project implementation steps will include:

⇒ *Thematic Mapping (“Heritage Tours”) of Vientiane City and Surrounding Areas* (e.g. Hat Sai Fong): Existing Sites (Architectural, Monuments, Geographic/Ecological) and known Sites without Remains by:

- Historical Period;
- Ethnic Group History and Culture;
- Unique Themes (Markets; Profession; Gender, Cultural Practices; Religious Practices, etc.)

⇒ *Thematic Mapping of the Thai Side of Vientiane City’s Legacy/Heritage of Culture and History*: Existing Sites (Architectural, Monuments, Geographic/Ecological) and known Sites without Remains (from Sri Chiang Mai to Viang Khuk, Nong Khai, and Phon Phisai). [Note that mapping could also be expanded to include certain history themes like Lane Xang monuments in Issan]

⇒ *Thematic Interpretation Plans for Tourism and Educational Visits Including*:

- Markers – roads, signs, memorials, maps;
- Guides to Sites;
- Cross Border Tourist approaches such as one day passes to link to Viang Khuk

Types of Sites: Tourism today seems to flow out of an elite view of the world (and one that is enshrined now by UNESCO in its World Heritage sites) where objects are protected or placed in museums because of their value as artistic “treasures”. While treasures certainly need special protection against theft, the view taken in my model is that artistic value, historic and cultural importance, and what is of intellectual (and touristic) interest are not the same. The subterranean sewage system of Paris is not as beautiful as the view from the top of the Eiffel tower, but both are tourist sites in Paris because both are unusual human constructions that reveal something about the city of Paris and its history that one cannot find elsewhere. Both raise question about what a city is and should be (especially if seen together).

Table 1 offers a list of sites that my approach includes, with explanations of how they are of touristic interest and why the current thinking of tourism does not recognize or protect them.

Spinoffs: The approach of this project was to generate infrastructure for tourism and then to rely on both the tourist industry to promote it and then government to work with the tourism industry to further develop additional infrastructure for protection and promotion of heritage. Some of these are briefly outlined in Figure 4.

Table 1: Types of "Sites": Comparing This Project to Traditional Tourism Site Selection

Site Type	Existing Tourism and Determinative Factors	Cultural and Environmental Heritage by Periods Approach, and Determinative Factors
Economic		
Factories, Farms	Only for historical recreation museums, historical significance, or significant craft or product	For technology, spatial setting, and period setting
Markets	Only for architecture and recreation	For spatial setting and period setting
Homes	Mansions (for art, architecture) and representational average homes	Similar, plus: spatial pattern of neighborhoods/interaction
Infrastructure: Energy, Sewage, etc.	-	Yes, as part of integrated approach
Transport Infrastructure		
Roads	-	For technology and period setting
Canals	For landscaping significance	For technology and period setting
Bridges	For architectural significance	For technology and period setting
Stations	For architectural significance	For technology and period setting
Environmental History		
Sacred Forests	For recreation only	For understanding of use of environment
Reservoirs, Ponds	For recreation only	For understanding of use of environment
Political and Military		
Fortresses	As memorials and for architecture	Yes, as part of integrated approach
Dirt Citadels	Only when they can be used for memorials	Yes, as part of integrated approach
Government Buildings	Only when they are artistic palaces	Yes, as part of integrated approach
Genocide Sites	Only if a group has political ability to make them memorials	Yes, as part of integrated approach and questioning, for all groups

Military Sites	As memorials for political purposes	Yes, as part of integrated approach and questioning
Prisons	Only if a group has political ability to make them memorials	Yes, as part of integrated approach and questioning
Civil Uprising Sites	Only if a group has political ability to make them memorials	Yes, as part of integrated approach for all groups
Homes and Workplaces of Political Leaders	Only if a group has political ability to make them memorials	Yes, as part of integrated approach for all groups
Socio-Economic		
Tombs and Burials	Only if there is architectural merit or they memorialize something	Yes, as part of integrated approach
Schools	Only if there is architectural merit or they memorialize something	Yes, as part of integrated approach
Recreation	Only if the areas still serve for recreation	Yes, as part of integrated approach
Red Light Districts	Only if they can be exploited for some lurid purpose	Yes, as part of integrated approach and questions of social ills, gender issues
Ghettos/Minority Areas	Only if a group can be exploited for tourism as exotic (crafts, performers, "ethnic zoos")	Yes, as part of integrated approach
Religious		
Shrines	For architecture and to promote Religious ideology	For period understanding and to QUESTION the beliefs and their role
Memorials	To promote State ideology	To QUESTION State Ideology
Other		
"Ghost Sites" (destroyed sites)	-	Yes, for meditation on what happened
Modern Sites	-	To question control of landscape and technology and choices made

Figure 4: Potential Project Spinoffs

- ⇒ **Valuation Plans and Measures for Tourism, Education, Protection**
- ⇒ **Tourist Industry Promotion/ Small Business Development and Spin-off Product Business Development Services**
- ⇒ **University and School Support for New Kinds of Activities in Local History and Cultural Appreciation** as well as Student Projects including Workshops with Teachers and Government Officials, Meetings with Publishers and Researchers
- ⇒ **Communications Outputs:** such as popular books, website, and other interactive materials, maps, magazine and media contests, protected heritage trails and protection plans of the historic neighborhoods and sites in Vientiane and elsewhere that are largely forgotten, unprotected, and in danger of being destroyed. The approach of these communications and in tours and discussions that will test them is to enable multiple groups to experience the historic sites of Vientiane as a split city and to rethink and retell the stories of history and cultural interaction while developing the consciousness and planning to protect that historic legacy.
- ⇒ **Preservation and Restoration Plans**, including investment proposals, donor solicitations, possible linked historical and environmental heritage protection planning (similar to approach at Wat Phu), adoption of buildings by donors for specific building protection; renovation of destroyed gardens/forests/canals/parks; restoration of deteriorating endangered architecture and landscape. The proposal for “building adoption” and joint exhibits at the site of the Luxembourg Development funded LANITA school for tourism in Vientiane, was published by the project in the *Vientiane Times* in January 7, 2012.
- ⇒ **Cross Border Heritage Museums** (such as the Si Gottapura area, around Thakhek that had capitals on both sides of the Mekong. This proposal was published by the project in the *Vientiane Times* in March 14, 2012)
- ⇒ **Magnet Sites and Opportunities for Living Museums to Reflect Each Period or Theme** (similar to the Lane Xang Citadel Wall Museum but potentially including historical boats and river tours on those boats; Elephant grounds; craft demonstrations)

Sample Outputs: Viewing some of the actual outputs of this project and comparing them with standard approaches, such as this project’s maps with standard tourist maps, this project’s heritage trails with standard heritage trails, this project’s tour guides and books with standard tour guides, and specific sites or site information that this project highlights compared to the standard visit, helps make it clear what this project does. A way to imagine this new approach and to compare it to existing approaches is presented in Box 5.

Box 5: Using Imagination to Consider the New Approach

Imagining the Boredom of Contemporary Tourism: Before considering the outputs of this approach to tourism, imagine yourself planning a trip to a foreign city or a foreign tourist site, either with a guide book or a tour. You will drop into a new place and suddenly visit a bunch of sites in an area, possibly along with a museum and a market or souvenir market.

Probably after a day of such tourism, your head will be spinning and will ache and you will want to run for some relaxing. The reason is because everything will seem like a jumble of facts that are impossible to digest: multiple periods of history all at once, multiple events and styles, multiple peoples. None of this has any real context. It is just a flood of information. Objects seem detached from the landscape and from the people who inhabited it. You will hear a pre-determined view of the “official history” of what happened and why it happened that is reinforced and drilled into your mind by “the experts”. There is no room for real thinking or questioning and you are pushed into showing the proper emotion that is already pushed on you as the theme about the history or the people.

After experiencing the heritage in this way, it will be obvious to you why there is a commonly shared belief that this is a kind of “educational experience” with all that this implies, good and bad, rather than an exploration or adventure. You will then likely want to agree with the view that heritage tourism only has a limited potential; to introduce certain majestic sites that one “must” see.

Experiencing Something New: Now, imagine a different kind of experience that is like entering a time machine, where you are an explorer imagining yourself going back in time and trying to understand everything as it was for specific groups of people in different times and then as things changed over time from one period to the next. The way you will do that is by looking only at each layer or history or culture at a time and looking at it all in context, with as much as is still available to see. You will put yourself on the landscape with the same natural environment and transport that existed then. You will look at everything that still exists from that time or is remembered. And you will be free to ask any question you wish about what happened, what decisions were made and why, how they influence what came after and what exists today, and what lessons can be learned. That is this project’s approach to tourism. It may sound fanciful but it is a reality. Enough still exists on Southeast Asian landscapes today to make it a reality.

Tourist Maps: Standard tourist maps, today, are one-dimensional. They present the world as a kind of “flatland” (Abbott, 1884) with a bunch of sites for tourists scattered over a landscape. Other than some designs or pictures and some marking of districts, they rarely show any kind of creativity, imagination or depth. They present a “destination” with affiliated “services” (hotels, restaurants, banks, travel agencies, and recreation). In areas where there are multiple periods of history and cultures, the result is a confusing mass of information, babble and noise. One “does” a place and “sees the sites”. Even the standard “heritage tours” on such maps are just presented as a series of lines through several streets where one connects a few sites like dots.

The approach of this project is to create layered maps for each period of history and culture and theme, explaining the full cultural geography of how the sites fit into the geography of hills,

rivers, and lakes, and how the culture “worked”. It shows the logic of where everything was in relation and how this fit a concept of the way people lived and all that entails.

Figure 5 offers an example of a standard tourist map of downtown Vientiane that is this typical “flat” scattering of sites and streets (downloaded from the Internet). On this map, I have sketched out just four quick heritage tour maps from four different periods of Vientiane’s history to offer an entirely new perspective on the city and how one can tour it and imagine it and understand it over time. The four periods represent four different cultural groups who built the city in different ways: the Gupta Empire from India and the Mon Dvaravati Indian influenced era, the Khmer era, the Lao Empire era of Lan Xang, and the French colonial era. On this map, you can see the canals and wetland that the Gupta travelled when they saw the city. You can see the way the Khmer built a reservoir and a line of sites up to the main religious site on top of a hill, in following the Khmer idea of water and mountain. You can see how the Lao built citadel walls with moats in concentric ovals, for reasons of defense and control of flooding. And you can see the French road artery system connecting with river transport (and the airport to the west). All of these still exist in parts in the city. One can tour all of these and imagine being in these different eras and thinking the way people at that time thought. But, today, none of this is part of tourism, nor is it part of urban preservation and landscaping, nor is it part of teaching history. All of these presentations are flat and destructive.

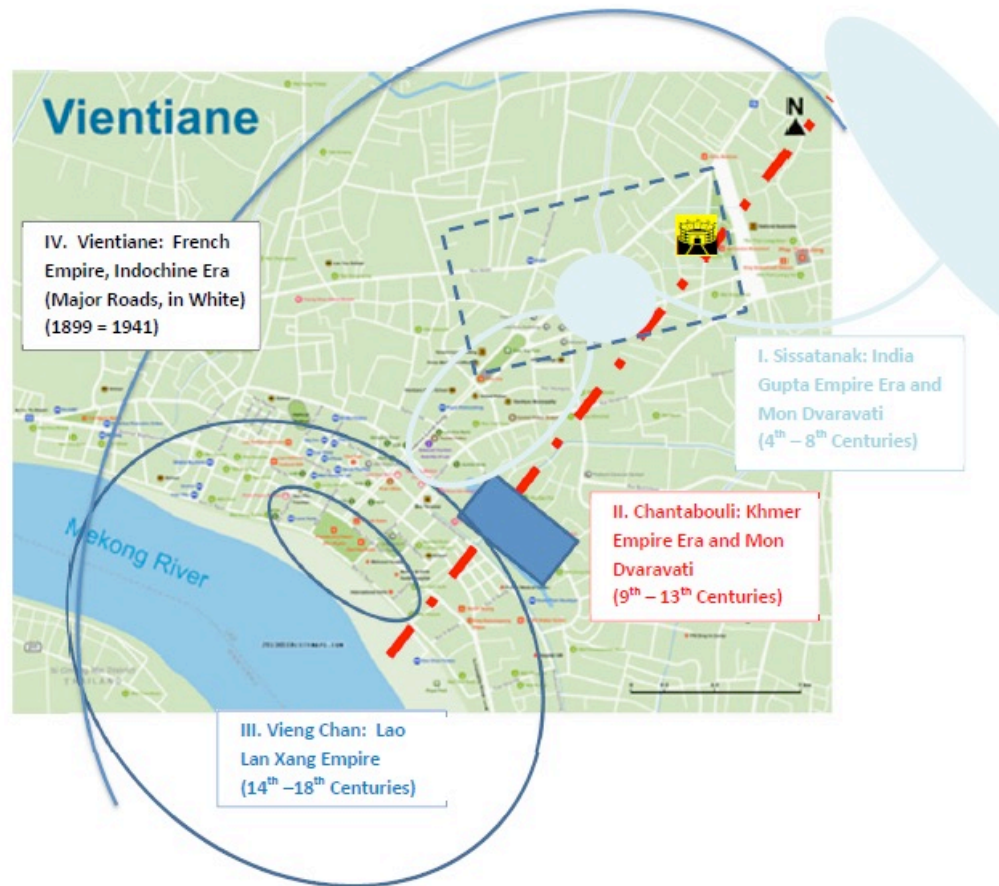
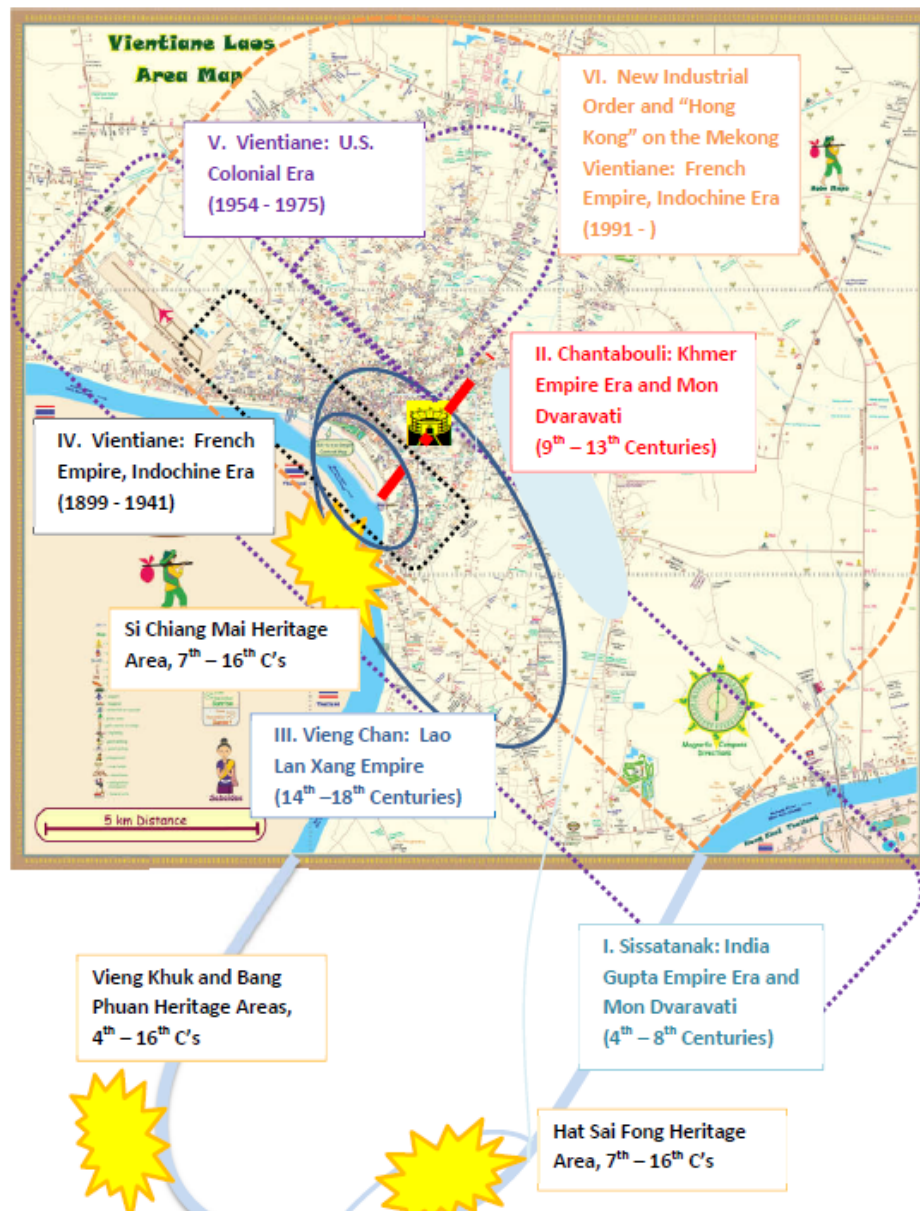
Figure 5: Heritage Tourism Mapping of Vientiane Center versus Standard Tourist Map

Figure 6 shows this again at a different scale. Figure 6 uses a different tourist map as its base map. This is the Hobo Map for Vientiane. It has many more sites listed on it but it is also “flat”. The Hobo map cuts out a large bend in the Mekong River that is an essential key for tourism in the area, so I have added it back in. On this map, I have added in two other historic periods: the American colonial era and the current city. So this map now has six layers on it. What is important to see from this map is how the standard tourist maps for Vientiane not only suppress the richness of tourism potential for the city, the richness of its history and cultures, and of its environment, but also works to destroy it. In fact, the heritage of Vientiane is on both sides of the Mekong, including much in Thailand that no one visits because there is no effort here at cross-border tourism that would be easy (with tourist boats that could cross the Mekong and with day-passes for tourists on both sides). But it isn’t only across the river. The most ancient part of Vientiane is at Hat Sai Fong, the ancient entrance gate to the city, about 20 km east of the Vientiane Center. It is a terrific potential tourist site with some 16th century towers. It was also the ancient route to the city center on ancient canals. It is now being destroyed. No one visits it. It has disappeared along with the thinking about how the city worked. Those ancient sites connected to Hat Sai Fong on the Thai side, including another 5th century Gupta Empire monument, the Bang Phuan, and including another Lan Xang era city,

Vieng Khuk (Vieng Khukham, possibly the ancient and considered “lost” twin of Vientiane, the “Vieng Kham”) are all just forgotten. Shown on this map is also the full extent of the 16 km Lan Xang era city wall that can also be toured. But tourist maps do not show it.

Figure 6: Heritage Tourist Map of Vientiane Area and Cross Border, Compared to Standard Tourist Map



Tour Guides: Standard tour guides are also barren, sparse, and unimaginative. They list a few sites that government tourist authorities “identify” for tourism and abandon the dozens of other sites that may be of equal importance or interest. Tourist books copy each other and the sites that are not included either disappear from tourism or disappear entirely (as they are destroyed).

Figure 7 shows an indicative cover for a new kind of tour guide; one that focuses on a single layer, presents a tour as travelling with a bicycle as a “time machine”, and presents the history and culture and geography with jokes and questions along with a map to the sites. The strategy that I chose was to have a chicken named “Chick-a-Dee” showing that anyone can bike to the sites and anyone can explore and think about history, and that it can be fun.

Figure 7: Sample Heritage Tourism Product to Promote the Project. Artwork Credit: Sengaphon Lathanavong



Table 2, in three parts, shows how many different tours can actually be created in this way, given the amount of existing sites and historic information, just for Vientiane and the area around Vientiane (for some overnight biking tours on both sides of the Mekong). The list shows different themes by history and by cultural interest and also describes the cultural diversity that can be highlighted by such tours.

Table 2: List of Specific Vientiane City Themes for Heritage Trails, Maps, Books, Interaction (in three parts)

Theme	Groups to be Reconnected with Lao	Religious Groups
History: In the City		
Ancient Period: -Sissattanak/Sayaphoum/ Souvannaphoum/Phiseuanam, Capital of Lao Kottaboune Kingdom, India's Gupta Empire, 4th-6th Century, and -Ancient Naga Landscapes of Sissattanak	India	Hinduism
Chantabuli: The City of the Moon: Khmer and Mon Dvaravati Vientiane, 8th-14th Centuries	Khmer, Mon Dvaravati Peoples	
Lan Xang Regional Citadel, 1353 – 1560, and Capital, Vieng Chan, 1560 -1829	Burmese, Thai (Lan Na), Japanese, Chinese	
The Siamese, 1829 - 1899 and the Haw Wars, 1886	Thai, Chinese, Tai Minorities	
Nong Khai, the Thai Replacement for Vientiane as the Regional Trade Center; and 20th Century Cosmopolitan Provincial Capital	Thai	
French Colonial Administrative Vientiane, 1899-1941	French, Vietnamese	Catholics
Japanese Occupation, World War II	Japanese	
“Neutral” or “American Influenced Regime” Developing Capital, 1945 to 1975	U.S., India	
Battle for Vientiane, 1960	Thai, Vietnamese, Russia, Royal Family	
Soviet and Vietnamese Influence, 1975 to ...	Russia, Vietnamese	
New Industrial Era	Japanese, Thai, Other Asian Neighbors	
“Hong Kong on the Mekong”	China	

Theme	Groups to be Reconnected with Lao	Religious Groups
Culture: In the City		
Chinese Vientiane	Chinese	Confucianism
Vietnamese Vientiane	Vietnamese	Vietnamese Spirit Religions; Confucianism
Lao Minorities in the City: Phuan, H'Mong, Black Tai, Others	Lao Minorities	Animist Religion
Traditional Lao Villages Around Vientiane	Lao	
Pan Asian Vientiane	India, Philippines, Cambodia, Japanese, ...	Muslim
Best Markets and Foods	Chinese, Vietnamese, Other Asian	
Favorite Wats	Lao and Historic	Buddhism
Spirit and Cult Worship Sites	Lao and Historic	Animism
Crafts Villages and Traditions	Lao	
Lao Traditional Medicine and Health Practices	Lao	
Lao Women Heritage Trail	Lao	

Theme	Groups to be Reconnected with Lao	Religious Groups
History: Just Around the City		
Buddhist Caves and Worship Sites Around Vientiane	Mon Dvaravati, Khmer	Hindu
The Angkorian (and Dvaravati?) Road to That Luang, 13th Century	Khmer	Hindu
The Mon, 8th – 12th, and Lan Xang Port of Sai Phong, 13th to 18th centuries	Mon Dvaravati	
History: In the Province, Farther from the City		
Buddhist Caves and Worship Sites North of Vientiane, on the Road to Vang Vieng	Mon Dvaravati	
Civilization on the Nan Ngum: Early Civilization of Pako, 5th century, Vieng Kham, the Gold Citadel of Lan Xang, and Thalat	Mon Dvaravati,	
Minority Kingdoms Along the Mekong at the Edge of Lan Xang: The Road to Xainyaboury	Lao Minorities	Animist
Ancient Ports and Religious Sites Along the Mekong, East of Vientiane	Mon-Dvaravati, Lao Minorities	Animist
History: Cross Border Connections of Histories and Cultures with Thailand		
Nong Khai, the Thai Replacement for Vientiane as the Regional Trade Center; and 20th Century Cosmopolitan Provincial Capital	Thailand, Chinese, Vietnamese	
Lan Xang and Ancient Dvaravati/ Khmer/Cham? in Issan: The Other Side of the Vientiane Capital from Si Chiang Mai to Nong Khai	Thailand, Chinese, Vietnamese	Hindu
Ancient Caves and Dvaravati/ Khmer/Cham?/Sri Gotapura? Holy Sites: To the Phu Phra Bat	Thailand	
Northeast Issan: The Mekong from Nong Khai Going East	Thailand	
Ancient Villages of Issan and the New Connecting Urban Center of Udon Thani	Thailand	
Civilizations on the Flat Seasonal Wetlands around Nong Han: From the Pre-Historic Bronze and Moat Sites of Bang Chiang to Dvaravati, Khmer, and Lan Xang	Thailand, Phuan minority	
The Mekong to Sayaburi and Northwest Issan: the Lao Cities of Chiang Khan, Loei and Nong Bua Lamphu	Thailand	

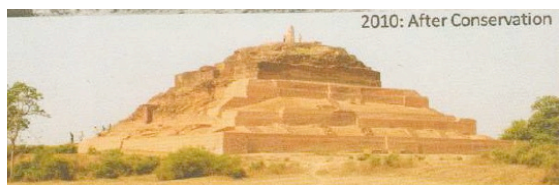
New Ways of Seeing Sites: Although the key to this approach to tourism is the way it organizes different sites and presents them, what makes it intellectually exciting and also expands tourism is that it uncovers new things about what seems familiar and already “established information” while also showing how sites that are considered “less important” can also offer a fascination for tourists, both for foreigners and for locals exploring their own surroundings. The idea of putting sites in contexts of geography and time and using scientific frameworks immediately raises questions of what is “missing” and why, and that leads to new thinking and new discoveries.

Figure 8 shows the most famous site in Vientiane that is on every tourist map; the That Luang (“Royal Stupa”). The Lao King, Setthathirat, who moved the capital of Lan Xang to Vientiane in 1560 built a Buddhist tower here and this is what the Lao worship today. In the museum at the site, there are signs of Khmer Brahman worship from the time of Khmer King Jayavarman VII who built a tower here that Setthathirat may have turned into the Buddhist tower as he did in many other places of the Lao Lan Xang Empire. The rest of the history is presented as legends and distorted history of early Buddhism. In surveying sites through the region, looking at the geography, and comparing other sites, I have come up with an explanation that restores and clarifies this lost history (Lempert, under review2). I have published it in the Vietnamese press (Lempert, 2016b). I am convinced that the tower is an imperial victory monument of the Indian Gupta Empire from the 4th to 5th century. The key to seeing this is to look at the base of the monument that is the ancient structure, and not the stupa upon it. There is now a different way of seeing what is here and making sense out of it and it changes the way of seeing the region. This is just one of many examples.

Figure 8: Seeing History in New Ways: The Invisible History of Indian Gupta Empire Colonization, 4th to 5th Century⁷



The That Luang Stupa, with 20th century additions, changes and gilding.
(Photo: © Aaron Smith, London, UK, in public domain)



Temple 1 at Ahichhatra, India, possibly of
Chandraguptra II (380 – 413/415 C.E.)
(Vikrama, 2012, reprinted with permission)



That Luang base in Vientiane, Laos, as it
appeared in 1889 (Raquez, 1902)

Figure 9 shows two of the dozens of Khmer temples in Thailand, side by side. The one on the left is in Buriram province near the Khmer border, from the 10th – 12th centuries. It is just a ruin of several sandstone blocks of what was a Khmer Brahman temple that had fertility worship with a central water basin (“yoni”) representing the female reproductive system, and a “linga” phallic symbol. In the picture on the right, from Wat Khok Prasat, in a province just west of Buriram, Nakhon Ratchasema, the yoni basin of sandstone is still here but without the linga. This site is not on tourist maps because the tower is no longer standing and it has no remaining art work on the site. It is now inside a compound of a Christian church and school. It has been turned into a garden and dozens of Thai students pass by it every day. There are no signs here about the history. But this site is exactly what tourism is about as an adventure of discovery, questioning, and tolerance. The “linga” phallic symbol is no longer here on top of the yoni basin, but in its place today there is a statue of the “Virgin Mary” exactly where the linga would be. What does this mean? Is this an example of “syncretism” (replacement and reuse in the same way) or is this some kind of desecration? How does an ancient Khmer Brahman fertility temple turn into a worship site for the (Jewish) “Virgin Mary”?

Figure 9: Cultural Syncretism or Replacement? Virgin Mary in Place of a Khmer Linga



Wat Phanom Rung, Buriram
(Photo: Hue Nhu Nguyen)



Wat Khok Prasat/ Ban Mai Thai Charoen,
Pakham, Nakhon Ratchasema
(Photo: Hue Nhu Nguyen)

Comparative “Fit” of the Approach with Existing Tourism: Positioning of the Outreach Appeal: Businesses seeking to “market” new forms of tourism might consider the competitive position in a map of the “market segments”. This project can be viewed in comparison to other forms of tourism by the types of experience (the “pleasure of tourism”) it provides. At the same time, one might also describe tourism experiences in terms of the “social functions” they serve.

Table 3 lists five different categories of “functions” of human activities that also might apply to tourism. Two of these might be considered “recreation and health” (for physical health and mental stimulation). Tourism also can serve as a kind of education (both information and development of skills) and for religious identity for one group or for multiple groups (or for “national identity” which is similar to a religious group identity). This project also had the objective of promoting sustainable development and human adaptation, which is included as the final category.

The chart compares several types of Heritage Tourism across these categories as well as other kinds of tourism such as Eco-Tourism, Adventure Tourism, Pilgrimages, Resort Tourism, and activities that are not thought of as “tourism” but are becoming similar to tourism such as International Education and Professional Exchanges. Heritage tourism approaches, in general, fulfill multiple categories. Most of these other approaches only fit one of two categories. The approach I took is the only one that fits all five of the categories.

Table 3: Distinguishing Tourism (Cross Cultural Contact) Approaches by Social Functions

Approaches	Functions				
	Mental Stimulation	Physical Health	Religion/Identity Promotion [National or Multiple]	Education (Skills Development)	Social Adaptability (Research, Skills for Adaptive Change)
Heritage Tourism					
- UNESCO “Theme” Sites	Yes	No	Yes, Usually Nationalistic	Possibly	No
- Guided Tours	Partly	Yes	Yes	Possibly	Possibly
- Museums	Yes	-	Yes, Depends on Sponsor	Possibly	Possibly
- Restoration Villages /Theme Parks	Yes	-	Yes	Possibly	No
- Heritage Trails	Yes	Yes	Yes, Possibly Multiple	Possibly	Possibly
- Multiple Layer Heritage Trails with provocative questions	Yes	Yes	Yes, Multiple	Yes	Yes
- Home Stays	Yes	Possibly	Yes, Possibly Multiple	Possibly	Possibly
Environmental /Eco-Tourism	Yes	Yes	Possibly	Possibly	Possibly
International Education Programs	Yes	No	-	Possibly	Possibly
Resorts, Parks	No	Yes	No	No	No
Adventure Tourism (Biking w/o History or Culture)	No	Yes	No	No	No
Pilgrimage	No	No	Yes	No	No
Professional Exchanges	Yes	No	No	Possibly	Yes

1.5 Summary and Conclusion

Everything in establishing this project seemed new, exciting, and offering excellent opportunities for profit, enjoyment, pride, and protection. All of the activities of the project can be found in parts in successful projects, elsewhere. The reality, however, and the obstacles that this approach faced in four countries of Southeast Asia, given current global politics, were somewhat different. That story and its explanations are presented in Part II.

Part II

Why it is so Difficult to Protect Cultures and Build Bridges in Asia

2.1 Introduction

For some 15 years, from 2002 to 2016 in Asia and partly in Hungary from 2006 to 2008, I not only developed a new approach to tourism in several countries in Southeast Asia as well as in Eastern Europe, working to catalogue hundreds of historical and cultural sites as a guide to helping peoples to recover, interpret and apply their lost and forgotten history so as to take pride in their past, to build understanding and tolerance with different peoples, to preserve their heritage for tourism, and to understand the historical relationships of peoples to their natural and social environments in ways that can promote sustainable communities (Lempert, 2012; 2013). I also sought to work with governments and private actors to create the infrastructure for tourism that would promote these ends of tourism as a form of “enlightenment” beyond profit and entertainment. In a way, this innovation could also be described as a kind of “social experiment” in tourism and the results of that experiment can be seen as research data on this kind of educational innovation.

The core of the approach that I developed expands the idea of heritage trails (walking and bicycling) to multiple periods and themes on the same landscape to raise questions on culture, history, and environment by establishing the infrastructure for heritage trails, new kinds of tour books and maps, signage and protection, new understandings of history and culture, and a variety of potential spinoffs of private sector tourist products that would serve to promote various social objectives. That means it has a number of possibilities for supporters and stakeholders. So what actually happens when something like this is introduced?

While academic articles today are often used as case studies to promote projects or approaches in what often is just a disguised form of advertisement with conflicts of interest, this article serves as a critical post-mortem of a project that is, in fact, not viable in the current Southeast Asian political and ideological climate and that can expect success only in limited circumstances in “developed” countries. Despite its objectives to fit within established international community laws and stated goals, the current neo-liberal, globalist homogenizing agenda in international development and the goal of elites in Asia and globally to undermine minority identities, to protect the authority of political elites, to promote a single ideology, and to suppress intellectual freedom, environmental protection, heritage protection, diversity, and individual expression, make it nearly impossible to promote any of the goals of such an approach.

This part of the article discusses the difficulties of attempting such a new approach in four countries in Southeast Asia with primary source data and analysis. This part of the article is divided into three sections:

- **Methodology: The Fit of the Approach within Tourism, Education and Other Social Functions and the Test of Support:** This section describes how the response to each of the key implementation steps of the project with different actors or “gatekeepers” and with different incentives offers data to test hypotheses about the possible social changes and tourism sector changes that the project sought to introduce.
- **Results/Data: The Experience of Trying to Institutionalize it (Resistance to the Project):** This section summarizes the outputs of the project and the reactions (largely

resistance or passivity) to it by the various groups of actors essential for success of this type of project.

- **Discussion and Conclusion:** This final section offers some explanations of how contemporary ideologies of globalization, nationalism, and development appear to thwart all the stated international goals for sustainability, human rights and development, and co-existence that should have led to the success of this project.

2.2 Methodology: The Fit of the Approach Within Tourism, Education and Other Social Functions and the Test of Support

The ability of this public investment to achieve results is dependent on specific activities from specific groups of actors, essentially serving as “gatekeepers”. The tourism infrastructure project began with the hypothesis that there were positive incentives for participation from each of seven groups of institutional actors who were potential gatekeepers, and that the success or failure of this project could be measured by examining what these gatekeepers did.

The data that test the hypothesis of this article on the potential for success of this project and of the social changes that it sought to introduce is the reaction of the seven sets of institutional actors or “gatekeepers”. The project’s success depended on the actors recognizing the benefits that I was introducing as fitting within their stated and actual goals and then taking some routine steps of support equivalent to those they would take to promote competing activities. Part I of this article presents what the project was “selling” in the form of standard professional documents (fund-raising proposals, partnership agreements) and samples of the project outputs in the four steps of the project (heritage mapping, heritage trail infrastructure, signage and other site protection, and private sector infrastructure including trail maps, trail books and spinoffs of heritage tourism products). By contrast, Part II examines what the “gatekeepers” were “buying”. The seven gatekeepers and their claimed incentives that favored the success of this project are as follows:

- I. **Country Governments** should have the incentives to promote natural pride in their own rich and diverse heritage and recognize the economic benefits of investing in tourism as well as the benefits of cross-border cooperation and integration for peace and prosperity. The country governments are the main gatekeepers of the project with the potential to destroy or promote and facilitate it.
- II. **Foreign Governments**, including former colonial powers (the U.S., France, China, and India) should have the incentives to protect and promote signs of their historic influence. Foreign governments are a second gatekeeper that could also destroy or facilitate this project through funding and influence on the other actors.
- III. **International Organizations and Development NGOs** should welcome the opportunity to invest in cultural protection infrastructure that had economic benefits and that would promote diversity. They should also welcome cross-border initiatives that fit with their concept of the “Greater Mekong Sub-region”. They should welcome the spur to local industries, local education, and the benefit to themselves as expatriates looking for more recreational opportunities as well as the chance to beautify the places in which they were living. In order for competent researchers to implement the approach, assuming that the idea required international actors, there needed to be an institutional and financial mechanism to fund them. If funding came from other sources, the organizational forms of NGOs were at least needed as implementing intermediaries. While it would have been possible to

start a new organization specifically for this project, a new NGO would still need a group of people to manage it with connections to the development community.

- IV. **The Foreign Business Tourism Community** should see the benefit of increased tourist attractions as ways to increase demand for their services (hotel stays, restaurants, transport, tours). The business community served as a gatekeeper at the third and fourth step of the project and had the ability to facilitate it at the earlier stages.
- V. **The Local Business Community** should also see the benefits of both an expanded tourist market as well as the project's support for new types of product. Their role is similar to that of the foreign business community but on a smaller scale.
- VI. **Local Publishers** including Foreign Publishers with Local Subsidiaries should see the benefit of appealing to foreigners with publications in foreign languages as well as local versions in local languages. Local publishers served as gatekeepers in the fourth step.
- VII. **The Foreign Academic Community** should welcome new theories and debate on history and culture as well as new opportunities for research. This group was not an essential actor but could facilitate the project.

Other actors could also potentially facilitate the project such as local media (providing publicity that could help in outreach to the gatekeepers). However, they were not essential. For the purposes of the analysis in this article, as author I ask the reader to assume that my competence in "selling" this project met the professional standards and that the responses of the different actors reflect their preferences and incentives rather than any faults of mine in presenting the project or any specific prejudices against me, personally.

I undertook this project because it suited my specialized skills and training: in writing successful fund-raising proposals in international development, in serving as an attorney for start-up NGOs, as an administrator and strategic planner for governmental organizations and NGOs, as an international educator, in marketing in the private sector, and in conducting cultural research. I lived and succeeded as a social entrepreneur in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe as well as the U.S. and have skills in journalism, fiction writing and publication.

Even assuming personal failure or major error in some aspect of this project, my work on this project would still be a valid experiment because there was nothing preventing any of the institutional actors from copying or competing against this project if the actors did not wish to work with me.

2.3 Results/Data: The Experience of Trying to Institutionalize the Approach in Southeast Asia (Resistance to it)

The result of the several years committed to this project and testing several strategies with various partners suggest that the project is not viable in Southeast Asia or Hungary under current conditions. Some small components of the project may be economically viable as a business investment such as specialized tours or tour books, but the amount of initial financial investment and risk and the need for long-term commitment in the countries make it currently unlikely for even small portions of the project to succeed as marketable for-profit tourism products.

In presenting the results of this project, it is interesting to examine not only its viability in its original form but also what is possible to do without government support as a fall-back option. Once I began to realize that this project was not viable as an infrastructure project, parts of the project were considered as small tourism businesses. Indeed, where the public sector is now failing, there is a belief that the private sector either can take the place of government or that it can be induced to do so through incentives. The data from this project can also demonstrate the barriers that exist to such approaches in the private sector.

For readers without a background in either public welfare accounting (cost-benefit accounting for the public sector) or business planning for a private enterprise, there is a simple way to think about this project and how its viability is measured by economists and accountants. The idea of the project for identifying sites and creating public infrastructure for heritage tours is, in some ways similar to the creation of a public park. This is a good analogy because there are many places in Southeast Asia where ancient heritage sites such as dirt citadels with moats around them, or areas of ancient city centers with ruins, have now been turned into public parks (in some cases, historic heritage parks on a small scale). An example in a major city in the region is the 900-meter diameter Wiang Chet Lin/ Wiang Jetrin ancient dirt citadel of the Lawa, possibly from the 8th to 9th century, in Chiang Mai near the university that is now a park. The project can also be analogized to a research institute since it also worked to generate applied research. In both cases, either a park or research institute, could be created as entirely “for-profit” taking no government money and being funded by user fees and products. The results would be similar to that of this project.

Like this project, the benefits of a public park in a city go well beyond the specific enjoyment that users of the park receive. The planting of trees in a city park improves the air quality which improves public health and increases property values. It also provides ecological benefits in water and climate that save the city money. As a public investment, its value goes well beyond the benefits that users would pay in ticket prices. To meet its costs and benefits, ticket prices would have to be high and at high prices, the park would probably fail. The same goes for this project. The benefits to the area, health, sustainability and individual development are not measured in the costs that people would pay for the individual tours. The tours increase visits which increase revenues to hotels, restaurants, travel services (in this case, the bicycle industry) and travel agents. But these are “free riders” who benefit without having supported the project in any way. The money that would be paid for the tours or tour guides likely would not cover the costs of the research while the economic benefits of the “free riders” would never be collected to support the project research. Without any public support, the signage and protection of sites would also not occur, which also undermines the project. Nor would there be any investment in bike lanes or safety for people taking the tours. And the amount that would be charged for the tours and the tour guides to cover the costs would also mean that the tours would be targeted at wealthy foreigners, with no benefits or participation for local children or other local people wanting to learn more about their own history. The benefits of the project in increasing tolerance, promoting peace, and promoting sustainable development would also not occur.

Like this project, most research centers that are geared to doing research of public benefit need to be tied to public funding if they are to benefit the public and if they are to succeed. There are many research centers today that have little or no public funding. They turn to corporate sponsorship to survive. In doing so, their research is no longer “public”; it is private research to promote their donors and a specific agenda. They are acting as consulting firms, doing research for clients, or they are public relations and propaganda arms of their donors, promoting specific

ideologies through research. Public research for public benefit is a recognized public function. Where the funds disappear, the function disappears. In the case of heritage research and presentations, when there are no funds, there is no way to connect the research with the public other than through sales of services and products like tours and books. Occasionally, there are authors who invest their lives in this kind of research but it is at a high risk. That is why such research is usually publicly funded through universities and affiliated or independent research centers.

The results of this project are presented in three categories, below:

- the **outputs** of the project and the support received or not received and whether each output is viable either as a public infrastructure project or private sector investment;
- the **decisions of the seven categories of gatekeepers** essential to the success of this project; and
- the **reactions of the gatekeepers to specific categories of heritage** to see if their reactions to the project were a general response to protecting and learning about heritage, in general, or whether their reactions were motivated by concerns about specific political sensitivities relevant to specific areas of heritage.

Outputs: The outputs of the project have been considerable in research in anticipation for expansion, and in spin-offs of the initial work. Nevertheless, for the core project in Vientiane and across the Mekong in northern Thailand, the support did not even cover more than 10% of the costs of just one component of the project: the research of the heritage and the preparation of tours in the form of children's books and/or adult tours. This lack of support was not limited to the project in Vientiane. In Cambodia, where I had a research grant, the support for only the first part of the project was similarly only about 10%. In Hungary, the support was merely that of administrative ability to remain in the country and to use a library and an organizational umbrella. In Vietnam, some funding for an unrelated exchange fellowship from the U.S. government's Fulbright Program nominally covered a similarly small part of the research. The list of outputs, their relation to the project (essential outputs, relation of outputs to project components, administrative/procedural outputs, and spin-offs that are additional beneficial outputs as a result of the project but not part of it), and their viability as a public project and/or as a private sector project are listed and analyzed in Table 4.

The amount of material produced may seem staggering: some 300 tours in some 6,000 pages; some 8 sample children's books for Vientiane (text only, in English only, with guidelines for art work and maps) that are roughly the length of an adult book when combined, and several media articles to promote it (in publications such as *The Vientiane Times* and *Champa Holidays*). The spin-offs include two unpublished companion books for history and culture on Vietnam and a companion book on the excitement of this approach of tourism (nearing completion) and some 19 academic articles that could possibly comprise two additional academic books including those on new historical discoveries (9 articles that could be a book on the reinterpreted history of Laos and Thailand), and articles with explanations of the methodology of the project (Lempert, 2013), of heritage protection approaches (Lempert, 2015), as well as spin-off articles on tourism with applications for protecting the public (Lempert, 2016a; Lempert, under review) as well as those that would advance the field of anthropology and culture change as well as prediction. This does not include the several proposals, outreach letters, contracts and other administrative work that could ultimately provide the basis for running such projects even though the project now is not viable.

Photographs were not considered key to the project since the idea was to create some adventure. Later, Hue Nhu Nguyen began photographing sites to support project outreach and spin-offs when photographic technology became electronic.

Almost always, work of this kind would be subsidized by existing institutions, by academics receiving teaching salaries or non-government organizations developing new projects and seeking to sell them. Some organizations have whole teams to do the proposal writing and administration that this author did alone. The paradox of this project is that it is impossible under any “normal” conditions for any individual to have done this work alone. At the same time, it appears that existing institutions that fund this kind of project development, rarely if ever seem to propose anything in this area or that deviates from a very narrow set of already established templates of approaches. The next two sub-sections, analyzing the actions of the gatekeeper organizations, helps to explain why.

Table 4: Project Outputs and Relation to Support of Project Gatekeepers

Outputs	Portion Receiving Financial Sponsorship and by Whom	Viability of Outputs in Private Sector without Public Support as Infrastructure
Essential to Project		
<i>Heritage Mapping for Tours</i>		
Template for Tour Mapping	None: Self-Financed	[See Outputs below]
Project Proposals	None: Self-Financed	This is an investment in potential of public funding that is only viable where support is viable.
Project Reports for Partners and Donors	Overhead costs that are partly required by donors but not really financed and expected by others	This is an investment in potential of public funding that is only viable where support is viable.
Contracts and Memoranda of Understanding with Partners	None: Self-Financed	This is an investment in potential of public funding that is only viable where support is viable.
Project Outreach Publicity (Authored and published 7 articles, some with photos, and was interviewed for another)	None: Self-Financed	This is an investment in potential of public funding that is only viable where support is viable.
- Article with photos in <i>Champa Holidays</i> (Lao Airlines)	None: Self-Financed	Same

- Subject of article in <i>Phu Nu Thu Do</i> , Hanoi	None: Self-Financed	Same
- 6 Promotional articles in <i>Vientiane Times</i>	None: Self-Financed	Same
Adult Tours: 300 tours, overall (6,000 pages)	None: Self-Financed	Commercial viability (tour guides, tour company) and requires considerable additional investment beyond initial investment
- 24 tours in Vientiane and 8 outside the city (600 pages)	Nominal support (10%) from Pacific Asia Travel Association Foundation grant with stipend for roughly 3 months; institutional partnerships with Global Village Foundation (GVF), Lao Academy of Social Sciences (LASS), Vientiane International School (VIS)	Same
- 45 tours for rest of Laos (900 pages)	None: Self-Financed	Same
- 80 tours in Thailand (2,200 pages)	None: Self-Financed	Same
- 40 tours of Hanoi, Vietnam (600 pages)	Nominal support (10%) with a USIA Fulbright Professorship for 6 months that included research	Same
- 70 tours of rest of Vietnam (900 pages)	None: Self-Financed	Same
- 30 tours for Cambodia (300 pages)	About one third supported by Center for Khmer Studies Senior Research Associate Fellowship for 3 months at a modest stipend	Same
- 15 tours for Budapest, Hungary (250 pages)	None: Amnesty International Sponsored Visa; Soros Foundation (CEU) offered library privileges but no funds	Same

Children's Book ("Chick-a-Dee") Tours: 8 texts for Vientiane, English only, with indications for drawings and maps but no art work (180,000 words, total)	Same Nominal Support (about 10%) as for Vientiane Tours	Commercial viability unknown but requires considerable investment (art work, maps, translations, publishing/ printing, marketing, dealing with government censors) for a small market. If sold directly to a publisher, royalties will not sufficiently compensate the research and writing, making them viable only with public subsidy.
Signage for Sites: No output	None	No. Only Public and Private Partnership Make this viable.
Site Protection: No output	None	No. Only Public and Private Partnership Make this viable.
Spin-offs (2 books plus one nearing completion; 20 academic articles)	None: Self-Financed	No royalties to authors. Only academics with teaching positions or research grants have the subsidies to make this viable.
Academic Articles with New Historic Discoveries (9 total, none yet published, sent to academic journals)	None: Self-Financed	No royalties to authors. Only academics with teaching positions or research grants have the subsidies to make this viable.
Academic Articles on Tourism Infrastructure, including Methodology of Project and this article (4 total, published in academic journals)	None: Self-Financed	No royalties to authors. Only academics with teaching positions or research grants have the subsidies to make this viable.
Academic Books on Culture and History (2 on Vietnam, none yet published and possibly only self-publishable)	None: Self-Financed	No royalties to authors. Only academics with teaching positions or research grants have the subsidies to make this viable.

Academic Articles with New Theory on Culture Relations (2, published in academic journals)	None: Self-Financed	No royalties to authors. Only academics with teaching positions or research grants have the subsidies to make this viable.
Academic Book Reviews on Related Projects (3, published in academic journals)	None: Self-Financed	No royalties to authors. Only academics with teaching positions or research grants have the subsidies to make this viable.
Diary Type Essay Book on Excitement of The Approach (in progress)	None: Self-Financed	No royalties to authors. Only academics with teaching positions or research grants have the subsidies to make this viable.

Table 4 does not provide a valuation of my time (which might not be possible since the skills might be unique without any valuation in the “market” and difficulty of comparison) or the estimates of time commitment or time required for the outputs.

Note that it may still be possible to take the research material from the tours and to turn it into a commercial product for sale to Western tourists, using materials in English, possibly in downloadable form on the Internet. That will still require considerable expense and organization for editing and vetting the available material, generating maps of the tours (now possible electronically with Google Map), adding some photographs, and packaging and marketing it.

If the local children’s books are commercially viable, it can only be to a foreign market at high prices to cover the cost invested in production. This means that the books will not reach local children or locals in their intended formats. The royalties from such books would likely not be able to cover the cost of my research and writing to make such work financially viable. More likely, the intellectual property would be stolen by competitors and the material would be repackaged in ways that would undermine the project goals of: reconciliation and tolerance, promoting intellectual curiosity, promoting sustainability, promoting livable environments and empowering people. Given the realities of local political censorship and doctrines, use of the material in other versions would likely only reinforce government and religious ideologies of political control.

It would also be possible to create a tour company to run these heritage tours as packaged tours with paid tour guides, though that approach is also contrary to the goals of the project for making the information available to children and tourists in the areas of the heritage and not just to wealthy foreign tourists. Use of the material by local tour businesses would also eliminate many of the other objectives of the project. There is one company that does offer a good model for such tourism that does seem to be profitable; Context. Context has recently entered Asia but only in cities like Bangkok and Shanghai, hiring “docent” (academically qualified) tour guides for what they describe as “walking seminars”. Their small foundation would not support this work because they do not intend to enter the areas where this project was tested.

Response of Gatekeepers: Not one of the seven sectors of institutions that I identified as “gatekeepers”, whom I believed had incentives to support the project, had the incentives or made the commitments to make it viable. In almost every category, I could find one agency or institution that was willing to offer some kind of minimal commitment, but in almost every case the same sets of institutions were engaged in substantial commitments of resources and time that were causing the very destruction of heritage, cultures, and environments that undermined the viability of the project or that ran counter to its goals. Only the local media seemed to show any real support for the project, through publication of articles about it and about culture, but this essentially offered them a free subsidy (free content) without the need for any commitment. In many respects, international academics seemed overtly hostile to the results of the project since it raised questions about their complicity with governments in presenting mythical, one-sided, propagandist histories without questioning them and fulfilling their professional responsibilities. Almost all other categories of actors seemed indifferent or afraid to take risks of anything new without clear indication of political support from some higher authority.

The results are reported, partly in detail and in summary, in Tables 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9. They are summarized as follows.

- I. **Country Governments** seem inert or inconsistent with relation to the potential for innovations in tourism and were either powerless or uninterested in this project, including five Ministries in Laos, four other Lao offices, and Vientiane local agencies; two Ministries in Thailand (Tourism and Fine Arts) and local Thai government offices such as provincial offices of Nong Khai, across from Vientiane. The typical approach seemed to be to ask to see the money and the foreign country sponsors up front and to make no affirmative actions, with the ability then to choose from among donors offering money. Ideas regarding tourism and protection seemed to be inconsistent. Though governments in the region support UNESCO heritage sites that protect and commercialize minority or extinct cultures or parts of the heritage that might appear to be politically “sensitive” (such as monarchies in Laos and Vietnam), no government or international organization offered money to implement this project. Thus, there is no way of knowing exactly what they would do if offered. No government agencies appeared to show any intellectual interest in history (other than some archaeology interest) or in their own identity or culture (see Table 5).
- II. **Foreign Governments** appear ideologically and financially driven in their development relations and took no interest in this project. Most of their actions in Laos and the region appear to be destroying both their own heritage and the country’s heritage. The tiny amount of funding that they offer for heritage and culture seem designed as public relations to advertise their love for local culture only in symbolic ways while they destroy it in other ways. The response of 20 governments to this project, four of them with shared history, is presented in Table 6.
- III. **International Organizations and Development NGOs** appear to be ideologically driven to promote industrialization and destruction of heritage as well as versions of tourism that are geared to recreation for foreigners, in ways that reflect colonial relationships. There is barely any funding in any of these organizations for projects that focus on anything that could be said to develop “civilization”, intellect (beyond basic needs), or to protect cultures beyond attention to animal needs. This was the response of five United Nations agencies and three other international organizations, as well as some 35 NGOs approached for partnerships, and some 10 foundations approached for funding (see Table 7).

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- IV. **The Foreign Business Tourism Community** was slightly supportive of this initiative but the money they offered in support was not enough for it to be viable. Although they stand to benefit directly from expanded tourism through tourism infrastructure, hotels, tour operators, airlines and other travel businesses offer only meager foundation support for its development (see Table 8).
- V. **The Local Business Community** could be a factor in protecting heritage as it is in some cities in the region where communities have local pride (such as in some Chinese merchant districts in Thailand) and to some degree in Vietnam. In Laos, the locals were afraid to take any organized action (see Table 8).
- VI. **Local Publishers** including Foreign Publishers with Local Subsidiaries were supportive of this project to the extent that newspapers would publish material it received for free, but when it came to taking the risk on children's books, the government censorship and self-censorship in the region seems to have eviscerated the potential for provocative works. Some two dozen publishers turned down the children's books that this project prepared in Southeast Asia and five declined a book of adult tours in Hungary even though Hungarians have relatively more freedom (see Table 6).
- VII. **The Foreign Academic Community** seems to be antagonistic and detrimental to attempts to promote identities and debates over history, though publications are open for general discussions of tourism and tourism infrastructure (see Tables 9 and Table 4).

Table 5: Lao Government Agencies Approached to Support Project

Agency Approached	Office	Existing Fund or Modality	Response and Reason/ Interpretation
National			NO SUPPORT
Min. of Planning and Investment		Urban Planning and Sustainability	Took no responsibility
Min. of Public Works	(through UN Habitat)	Signage and renovation	Seemed only interested in construction even though the former Vice Minister wrote a series of books on the city's history
Min. of Culture	Archaeology	Preservation, museums	Claimed not to have anyone with the expertise who could manage such work even if they had the funds
	LNTA (Lao National Tourist Administration)	Tourism products and strategies	They work only with money up front from foreign donors or businesses and asked me to show the money
Min. of Education	UNESCO Committee	Education and international goals	Took no responsibility
	National University of Laos	Training in heritage and archaeology	Took no responsibility
Min. of Sports and Recreation		Promoting recreation and health	Took no responsibility
Lao Academy of Social Sciences		Researching history and culture and publishing	Agreed to co-sponsor the work for one year but did nothing to support fund-raising, research or contact and then asked for money and claimed they only worked for money up front
National Assembly		Budgeting and national priorities	Took no responsibility
Lao Architects Association		Architectural education and preservation	Took no responsibility
Lao Buddhist Association		Buddhist history and preservation	Took no responsibility

Local			NO SUPPORT
Vientiane Urban Development Authority (VUDA)		Urban planning and preservation	Took no responsibility

Table 6: Countries Approached to Support Project

Country Approached	Appeal or Benefit	Existing Fund or Modality	Response and Reason/ Interpretation
Southeast Asia			NO SUPPORT
New Zealand	-	NZAID Aid	Goal is to promote NZ Tourism, big tourism businesses, and subsidize government, not to promote identity or civilization
Australia	-	AusAID	They only support basic needs, not identity or civilization
Vietnam (in Laos)	Joint heritage in multiple periods	Cultural center in Vientiane	They only promote the “Ho Chi Minh religion”; No interest in Vietnamese migrants or joint culture other than military after 1975
		Historical institute cooperation	Goal seems to be hegemony in research
Vietnam (in Vietnam)	Promote Tourism and Identity	Foreign funds for museums, tourism	Newspapers do cover heritage, but with one political slant; Sites are protected if they are seen as politically and economically lucrative
Thailand	Promote reconciliation, joint tourism benefits, protect joint heritage	King of Thailand	NO RESPONSE: King seems to support domestic projects only
		Embassy; Ministry of Fine Arts (MOFA); Tourist Administration of Thailand (TAT); Government Institutes	No independent initiative

Thailand (in Thailand)	Promote reconciliation, joint tourism benefits, project joint heritage	Embassy; Ministry of Fine Arts (MOFA); Tourist Administration of Thailand (TAT); Government Institutes	Protection depends on regional area and identities and a variety of other factors. Currently little or no foreign money for any projects.
Cambodia	Promote reconciliation, joint tourism benefits	No funds	No interest in culture, only financial interests
Myanmar	Joint tourism benefits and shared heritage	No funds	No interest in culture
Philippines	Promote reconciliation, some heritage	No funds	Filipinos maintain some personal ties for pre-1975 connections but no protection of the sites
Historical Connection			NO SUPPORT
France	Reconciliation; Recognition and protection of French heritage	Ecole Française Research Library; French Institute	Academic study to benefit French archaeologists only
		AFD (Development Aid)	They build water systems in heritage areas and “plan” urban industrialization but do not protect the heritage
U.S.	Reconciliation; Recognition and protection of U.S. heritage	U.S. Ambassador’s Fund	Only want to fund single buildings as advertisements
		Smithsonian Institute	Only want to study objects in museums
India	Recognition and protection of Indian heritage from many eras	No funds	No funds or interest

China	Recognition and protection of Chinese heritage	Not really allowed to approach them	No interest in Chinese migrants or local history. No heritage policy with regard to promotion of Chinese investments.
		Cooperation with research institute	Goal seems to be hegemony over research
Japan	Reconciliation; Recognition of heritage	JICA Aid/ Grassroots human security project	Goal is to industrialize people after meeting basic needs, not to promote civilization
		Toyota Foundation	Some small research support where Japanese artifacts were uncovered, for Japanese researchers and Lao research.
No Connection but Has Aid Program			NO SUPPORT
Luxembourg	-	Lux-Dev/LANITA	Tourism projects train staff to serve foreigners in luxury hotels, not to protect culture
Germany	-	Ambassador Fund	Supports only specific restorations that can be advertised
		GIZ	Promotes enterprises, not civilization
		Culture Fund	Money for protection of palm leaf manuscripts only
Korea (South)	-	KOICA Aid	Goal is to industrialize people
		Walking street project in Vientiane	Promote local merchants in old town, not heritage

SNV (Netherlands)	Some historical connection but mostly “trade” and not visible on the landscape	“Pro-Poor” “Sustainable Tourism” Projects	Projects seek to commercialize minority communities to generate incomes directly and in ways that privatize community assets and market them directly as destinations rather than promote infrastructure and tourism, in general.
Finland	-	University applied research	Reason unknown
Denmark	-	Prinz Claus Fund	Seem to only support specific restorations
Sweden	-	Swedish Aid	Money to museum exhibits only (in past) as tiny part of money for basic needs

Table 7: International Organizations Approached to Support Project

Country Approached	Appeal or Benefit	Existing Fund or Modality	Response and Reason/ Interpretation
UN System (in Laos)	~	~	CLAIMED INTEREST BUT NO SUPPORT
UNESCO	Culture and Education are their missions	Work with Ministry of Culture	Both the local office and regional office showed interest only in specific heritage sites, where they hire architects
UN Habitat	Urban Planning	Work with Ministry of Public Works	Requested a full proposal and appeared interested but then killed the fundraising, claiming a lack of interest from the Ministry of Public Works. Their only focus seems to be on building sewage and sanitation.
UNICEF	Education and culture protection for children	Works with Ministry of Education	No interest other than building schools. Former UN offices are an historic site from the 1960s that is now left off tourist maps and unremarked.
UNDP	All aspects of development	Works with all Ministries	No interest other than basic needs. Current UN offices are on historic land of a central wat, Wat That Foun, and next to key government buildings of the U.S. era (1960-75).
UN Volunteers	All aspects of government interest	Works with all Ministries	No interest even though funding was available and there were government agencies to sponsor the small amount of one year of salary support.
Other Multilateral (in Laos)	~	~	NO SUPPORT

World Bank/IMF	Promoting tourism revenue and sustainable infrastructure	Stay Another Day	No interest in tourism sector.
~	~	World Bank Protection Policy	Arranged for land of archaeological and religious importance in Vientiane for construction of their new office and then sought to investigate me when I raised issues of protection at their site. Previous office is in a building of historic importance (former Embassy) that is unprotected and not on tourist maps.
EU	All potential aspects of development	With government agencies	No interest.
Asian Development Bank	Cross cultural tourism	Loans to Ministry of Culture	They only fund “capacity building” for government officials and brochures but do not develop the industry of tourism or protect sites other than in projects for new roads to “open” sites to tourism.
International NGOs (for Partnership)	All potential benefits of project	Work with Government at any level and/or NGOs and private sector	MINIMAL SUPPORT [Lao Government will not work with individuals and donors will only fund organizations.]

NGOs already in Laos	Above	Approached about 10	Vientiane International School agreed to serve as a conduit for local receipt of funds though it was not a development NGO able to participate in other functions of the project. ~ Others had no interest in anything new from someone outside their organization.
NGOs in region	Above	Approached about 10	Global Children's Foundation agreed to an association for one year but offered no assistance then closed down their operations when director retired. (Work focused on subsidizing education in Viet Nam.) Others had no interest in anything new from someone outside of their organization.
NGOs that claim interest in heritage or sustainable tourism	Above	Approached about 10 including university affiliated research institutes, associations, and development institutes	No interest in anything new from someone outside of their organization. Many were too small or focused to take on a collaboration.
Universities with research centers and international development, professional associations	Good fit with research and applications	Approached about 5	Their overheads were extremely high making the collaboration infeasible and they generally only promote their existing faculty members.
Funding Organizations	~	~	MINIMAL SUPPORT BUT INSUFFICIENT FOR ANYTHING MORE THAN A FEW WEEKS

Foundations	~	Only 10 possible foundations of all potential sources, globally, that fit the category of either money for Laos or Heritage/Culture or something potentially related (bicycling)	Most of the potential funds would be insufficient to run the project for more than a few WEEKS. Despite the many potential development categories of the project, the foundation funding categories were very narrow and difficult to fit (e.g., Stanford Public Interest Law that really wants legal support, not tolerance; support for community groups; promoting bicycle lanes in the U.S.; “open society” (Soros), capacity building). There is only one fund for culture protection (Christensen Fund). Many funds have “client organizations” whom they regularly fund and are closed to new grantees (e.g., McKnight). The successful grant from PATA was one time, \$10,000, with detailed proposal and reporting.
~	~	NGO Start-Up Funds, Alumni Grant Funds	Almost all of these support young, recent graduates (e.g., Echoing Green; Stanford funds) and not continuing support for professionals.
~	~	Research Funds	Most research funds do not include any applied work and are geared to students and publications for a limited time, amount and product. Some only support local researchers and not foreigners (e.g., Toyota Foundation).

Table 8: Industries Approached to Support Project Components (Foreign and Domestic Business Community)

Country Approached	Appeal or Benefit	Existing Fund or Modality	Response and Reason/ Interpretation
Tourism Industry			NO SUPPORT
<i>International</i>			
Hotels	Build surrounding community and offer benefit for guests	Sought to create heritage street maps or historically related projects for hotels	Best Western had a home office fund but seemed to be afraid of supporting such a project even with a very small amount of money. Hotels on historic sites (e.g., site of early French movie theater) were not interested in tie-ins.
		Sought public relations sponsorship	No interest in local contributions for infrastructure development in the industry or for protection, other than through the small Pacific Asia Travel Association Foundation fund.
Airlines	Promote destinations	Only publicity in travel magazines, not funds	-
<i>Local</i>			
Hotels, Restaurants	Build surrounding community and offer benefit for guests	Tourist Business Association through Ministry of Culture	More interest in destination marketing than in any infrastructure support.
Tour Businesses	Subsidize new products that can be used for tours	Exotissimo Foundation	Offers a tiny fund but only supports local community group development projects for public relations
			Several tour businesses wanted to “rip-off” the work of this project for exclusive benefit that would exploit the intellectual product without any investment or support to it at all and without promoting development of infrastructure

Foreign Business Community (General)	Promote local economies in ways that promote the general business environment as good “corporate citizens”	Ad hoc funds and some established grants (e.g., Pepsi-Co Fund; Alcoa Fund)	NO SUPPORT. Grants are only public relations and tie-ins to advertising or to specific markets, not for actually building and protecting communities or identities. Development money is geared to local organizations for basic needs, not for intellectual development.
Local Business Community			NO SUPPORT HERE, THOUGH POSSIBLE ELSEWHERE
Families with historical ties	(e.g., Chinese Lao historic families)	Approached 5 families	Families were fearful of involvement though they expressed love for the city

Table 9: Support Sectors Approached to Support Project Components (Foreign and Domestic Media and Scholarly Communities)

Country Approached	Appeal or Benefit	Existing Fund or Modality	Response and Reason/ Interpretation
Book Publishing			NO SUPPORT
Laos	Subsidized books	Approached 5 publishers	One publisher agreed, then declined all publishing of any kind because the Ministry of Culture acted as an irrational censor and exerted financial pressures; Others avoid any kind of publishing on history, politics or intellectual issues
Thailand	Subsidized books	Approached 19 publishers	No interest in anything cross border or in work with diverse historic content/intellectual content. The view of the market among the publishers that reach foreigners is to offer coffee table books of photographs for people who want to sit and see pretty things.
Hungary	Subsidized books	Approached 5 publishers	No interest in anything not “academic” and theoretical
Local Media (to publicize project and build support)			GENERALLY SUPPORTIVE
In Laos		1 state newspaper in English; 1 state tourism magazine	Open to short pieces if they promote the country and tourist industry and are provided free of charge with all work done. No link between appearance of articles and support for project in country or with international community and possibly the opposite (partners fear association with projects and publicity)
In Thailand		1 airline/tourism magazine	Not interested.

In Vietnam		Various government publications in English.	Open to short pieces if they promote the country and tourist industry.
Research Community			MIXED RESPONSE
Archaeology and Anthropology Journals/ Area Studies Journals that relegate history to archaeology	Raise the issues and questions and vet material for goals of project	(Ongoing): Articles re-interpreting history based on human geography, submitted to about 10 journals in the field: with only 1 Lao Studies, 1 Khmer studies.	The number of journals is few (and partly specific to countries), with foreign and local academics self-censoring to fit the ideologies of the country elites in order to ensure continued access. The researchers are also interlocking. The journals are ideologically based rather than based on discipline.
Anthropology and social science academic book publishers	Raise the issues and questions and vet material for goals of project	(Ongoing) 20 academic publishers globally for two interpretive books on Vietnamese history and culture	The number of publishers is small with foreign academics' self-censorship to fit the ideologies of "Asian Tigers" and "Southeast Asian victims" and benefits of globalization, as well as requirements for only published already vetted views, information, and approaches
Tourism Journals		(Ongoing) Articles on approaches to heritage protection, to 5 or 6 journals in the field.	Contemporary tourism journals do not focus on solutions or methods but have largely become philosophy or tourism and representation.

Attitudes to Tourism by Type of Sites: While some of my colleagues believed that the resistance to this project would largely be one of underlying but unexpressed antagonisms between countries and cultures that would lead to a desire to selectively repress histories other than one's own and to use heritage tourism for political purposes, that does not appear to exactly fit the response to this project. In all of the countries of the project, there was certainly a preference for protection of the history and cultures (particularly religious sites and monuments) of the majority cultures and communities. Where communities have more autonomy, such as in Thailand, there are more community museums (e.g., those of the Lao Phuan, who have museums in Thailand where they emigrated but apparently not in Laos, where they have roots and also emigrated such as south to Vientiane) and restored markets (such as the Chinese community). In all countries, the sites of the majority religions and the history of the current leadership (including military sites and museums) continue to receive the most attention but this is not a hard-and-fast rule. For the governments that have history of empire (India, China, Tibet, Myanmar, Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, France, Japan, and the U.S.) in the Southeast Asian countries where I tested this project, none of the governments seemed to show any interest at all in protecting or discussing their own history or acknowledging any tourism from their country related to that history, despite the fact that all of these countries of former empires claimed an interest in reconciliation. Below is a quick examination of attitudes towards preservation of several eras of sites that serve as a brief test of the politics underlying heritage-ecology tourism and the politics involved in terms of the different actors.

- *Nationalist imperial history and majority religion:* Vietnam and Thailand promote their heritages of empire without any discussion of alternative views and without attempts at reconciliation with neighbors or admissions of errors on both sides that would promote their stated goals of peace and tolerance. Laos tells the same kind of story of history but does not protect or display many of the key sites from the period of its Lao Lan Xang empire and seems to have no interest in protection or discussion of the historical sites of Lan Xang that are across the Mekong River in Thailand as well as throughout Thailand where there are millions of ethnic "Lao". Many of the historic towers of Lan Xang that are in Vientiane or the Vientiane area are not even marked on tourist maps as if there is no interest at all in the country's identity or history.

Figure 10 offers an example of this in Laos and possibly explains the difference. Pictured is the site with the foundations of the royal Wat of the Lao Lan Xang Kings, Wat Kang, next to the site of the Royal Palace that is now the site of the Presidential Palace (the Hor Kham) in Vientiane. The foundations of brick walls around this royal area (1 meter high) have also been found but are fully buried and not displayed for tourism. The Wat Kang was destroyed by the French who built atop it. The French building has been destroyed. In 2017, the World Bank, that is supposed to be a government partner and protector of heritage, simply built atop it. Although the World Bank could have designed its building to reveal and display the Wat Kang Foundations and to promote pride in Lao history and culture, it did not. The World Bank has specific guidelines for heritage protection. Its Director at the time, Jim Kim, was a Harvard educated anthropologist. When construction began, I used the World Bank's procedures to seek a means of protecting this heritage. The response of the Bank was not to work on solutions but to investigate me, possibly disrupting my project. The World Bank's new offices were completed on the site in 2017. It appears that the authority on culture protection in the city rests with powerful actors outside of Laos and that as a small country Laos may not have sufficient sovereign authority to promote and protect its own identity and heritage even if there is a desire to do so. Several

other sites, even of the Lao government's "revolutionary period" leaders like "Red" Prince Souvannouvong, are disappearing.

- *Historic resistance to colonialism:* The Vietnamese government marks and protects many of the sites that its leadership views as part of their history. In Laos, many such sites are being destroyed (recently the French era court house that was a sign of French rule, was destroyed and rebuilt by the Chinese for the "Lao Fatherland Front" office). Others that were destroyed long ago, such as the French era prison in Vientiane and sites of political executions by the French (the area of the Chinese built "Cultural Hall" in Vientiane) are also unmarked.
- *Attitudes towards the history of Indian colonialism:* While the influence of India on South-east Asia is central to identities today, particularly through Buddhism, Buddhism itself seems to work to destroy much of the history while India also seems to have no interest in joint protection and examination of the heritage, even as a counter to the political and economic influence today of China. The influence of India in "Indo-China" and in Laos dates back to what seems to be trade during the Maurya Empire (200 B.C.E.), colonization during the Gupta Empire (4th century) as theorized by this author (Lempert, 2016b), indirect influence through the Cham Empire (5th century), Khmer empires of Chen La (6th century) and Angkor (8th to 12th century), and then through migrant communities in the 20th century, including a recognizable community and "India Street" in the center of Vientiane before 1975. One of the best ways for Laos to promote a sense of pride and sovereignty today would be to connect itself again with Jawal Nehru's "non-alignment" movement of the 1950s and to protect the buildings of the "International Control Commission" (ICC) where Indian soldiers lived and worked in Vientiane from 1962 to 1975 to seek to promote neutrality of the country. Like the "India market street", those buildings and the history are being erased. Other than a small amount of joint research in Angkor, Indian scholars and the Indian government seem to take no interest at all in any kind of joint work and protection in the region. Although there is Buddhist education and a large "sanka" that is building a university in Laos, and though monks sometimes study Pali/Sanskrit, there seems to be no interest and no study of Indian history or influence. Most monks, including head monks at wats that are the place of many Indian heritage sites, seem ignorant about and unconcerned with the history. Buddhism makes "merit" through destruction and rebuilding of sites, not necessarily through preservation. Buddhism, itself, seems to exist without history. Vietnam is somewhat different in regard to its Buddhist and other colonial history because ancestral lineages and heroes and sites are markers of history and there is less mobility. The influence of the French has also promoted some concern for protecting and measuring history through scientific methods rather than legends. There seems to be a joint decision among local leaders and foreigners in the region that was reinforced in the colonial period to keep the masses of the countries "peaceful" and unquestioning of mythologies. It continues today, even in academic journals. Thai historians do not want to consider unequal power relations or plural histories and prefer a history where everything was simply "trade" and "Buddhism" back to the 5th century B.C.E.

Figure 10: Sacred Lan Xang Lao History

Site of Wat Kang, the Royal Wat of the Lan Xang Kings (1560 to 1826), next to the Royal Palace and within the inner citadel, brick wall (foundations underground, around white fence in far right). Brick foundations of Wat still visible in 2015, prior to destruction for the World Bank Office

(Photo Credit: Hue Nhu Nguyen)

This Destruction, sponsored by ...



Dr. Jim Kim, Director,
The World Bank



“Working for a World Free of Poverty” (and diversity?)
(Photo Credit: The World Bank)

- *Attitudes towards the history of Chinese colonialism and migration:* Although the largest number of tourists to Laos now seems to be from China (assuming figures actually measure tourism and not temporary in-migration) to see parts of Asia's past that have been destroyed in China and elsewhere, it is only in those communities where Chinese merchant families have economic and political influence in Thailand where there is some preservation of this history (though mostly the merchant urban history of the past 200 years). The Chinese immigrant communities in Laos and Vientiane are politically weak and fearful. Vietnam largely erases and distorts the Chinese history even though much of Vietnamese culture itself is no longer the culture of the Viet peoples before Chinese influence and is largely a copy of the Chinese in everything from language to social organization. Much of the destruction of culture and heritage in Laos is now a result of Chinese investment that is promoted by the Chinese government with no interest among the Chinese government or Chinese investors and migrants in protecting Chinese history or reflecting on Chinese civilization and influences. There are Chinese schools and communal halls and temples in Vientiane but there does not appear to be any reciprocal interest in history or culture.
- *Attitudes towards the history of French (and other European) colonialism:* While there is a belief in Laos that the Lao wish to destroy its entire French colonial heritage and replace it with modern Chinese buildings in an attempt to erase the memory of the French era, this does not seem to be the case. Much French cultural influence continues in the region in all aspects of the culture including the form of government (colonial-military), dress, foods and architecture (where it is partly protected and partly destroyed, largely dependent on its perceived commercial value for attracting tourism). It is largely the French themselves who are participating in the destruction of the visible heritage but not of the continuing results of colonialism. In addition to the French Embassy in Vientiane that is in an historic French colonial building that is closed to tourism, there is a French cultural center on the historic main road built by the French (Lan Xang), and a French history and culture institute, the Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient (EFEO), as well as the French aid mission (AFD) that was previously in a restored French colonial building but has recently moved. None of these agencies or people working in them are involved in protecting the French heritage in the country or region or in discussions of the negatives (and positives) of French occupation and its legacy. Nor has there been any willingness by the French government to apologize for the French era and to work towards reversal of its continuing political harm or restoration of its positive aspects such as the green landscaping of Vientiane that were hallmarks of the French era that are now being reversed. Figure 11 depicts the fate of what was the last surviving French era bridge in Vientiane that may have been designed by Gustave Eiffel's company. It was destroyed to create luxury villas (built by Chinese investors) for the ASEM, Asia European meetings in 2012 and the forced removal of dozens of families. The *Vientiane Times* pictured an official from the French Embassy praising the construction and legitimizing the heritage destruction and relocations.

The situation in Thailand is somewhat different but it can be explained. Recently, the European Commission surveyed some 250 sites of European architecture in Thailand and has presented it in the form of maps and computer applications (European Commission, 2013, 2014, and 2015). In most of Thailand, however, there was no period of colonialism (other than a short period of British rule in the north and some French occupation in the eastern coast). Instead, there was the same hegemonic influence that continues today in the region and globally and that is euphemistically referred to by the European Commission as "trade" and "influence", though scholars more often refer to it as "neo-colonialism" or "dependency" (Wallerstein, 1979). Since the form that continues today is politically

acceptable, it can be presented in terms of “architecture”, without any discussion of its political and economic implications.

- *Attitudes towards the history of American colonialism:* Much of what could be said about the French legacy in Southeast Asia can also be said about the American influence in Thailand, southern and central Vietnam, and Laos. The U.S. has had major impacts that continue today. Most of the Lao government today works in American colonial era buildings (albeit with new pagoda roofs to make them appear to be “Lao”) and even the Lao “revolutionary” leader Kaysone Phomvihane moved into an American-built suburban neighborhood home that is preserved (in “Six Clicks City”). Despite its political interest in restoring relations with Laos and countering the influences of China, the U.S. government has done nothing to document and protect its heritage in Vientiane (possibly the best example anywhere in the world of a U.S. “colonial” city given the amount of money the U.S. spent) or throughout Laos, or to apologize for its negative impacts and open discussions on this legacy. Figure 12 shows the U.S.-built Parliamentary building in the government center that the U.S. built and that copies a number of elements from the White House in Washington, D.C. Most tourists to Vientiane climb up the Patuxay (“Victory Gate”) monument, also built during the American era, for a view of the city but there is no recognition in any guidebooks, signage or in any U.S. exhibits anywhere of this building that is directly at the foot of the Patuxay monument, across the street. I brought this to the attention of the U.S. Ambassador, the Embassy Cultural officers and even the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., as well as the staff of the new U.S. cultural center in the city center that was the site of the original U.S. Embassy from 1954 to 2014. There was no interest. Much of this heritage will soon be destroyed.

Figure 11: French History in Vientiane, Destroyed

Vientiane's Last Remaining Historic (of Gustave Eiffel's company?) Bridge, 1930 (7 years after Eiffel's death), across a small canal to Hat Don Chan, near the Mekong. Destroyed in 2012 for construction of luxury villas by a Chinese company for the ASEM Asian European Summit and then unoccupied. (Photo Credit: Hue Nhu Nguyen)



The Eiffel Tower, in Paris, 1889 (Public Domain Photo)



Gustave Eiffel's Saint Jean Bridge in Bordeaux, France, 1900, with similar design and construction to the bridge in Vientiane. (Photo: Public Domain)

Figure 12: American History in Vientiane, Unrecognized



The White House, Washington, D.C. (Photo: U.S. Government, Public Domain)



Lao National Assembly, 1955, start of the American Period, now an adjunct building of the Office of the Prime Minister (Photo Credit: Hue Nhu Nguyen)

- *Attitudes towards minorities and minority history:* Vientiane was a city of multi-cultural neighborhoods between 1954 and 1975 and the country has several dozen minority ethnicities (50 identified by linguists and similar to the number in Vietnam, though some claim there are twice that) who outnumber the Lao, but there is little effort to protect their history of culture. In the region, the minorities have no recognized history unless it is globally recognized for exploitation (UNESCO sites of Cham; Hoi An) or it fits with local religion (Phimai) or it can be exploited for cultural tourism (SNV “pro-poor tourism” and minority village trekking).

Where do some of the major expenditures of tourism funds go? Figure 13 shows the defining sites today of Vientiane and Nakhon Ratchasema (Khorat) in Thailand, half-way from Vientiane to Bangkok. Tourists are now directed to the iconic monuments that governments create to promote a political identity in opposition to neighbors rather than unity. During the time of the French control of Indochina, the French sought to reinforce local symbols that would separate the peoples of Indochina from others like the Thai. The symbol in Laos was Chao Anou, a Lao leader whom the Siamese imprisoned and killed in 1827. With no explanation of what he represents or how it is culturally “Lao”, the Lao have now built a statue to him along the Mekong, facing Thailand. Meanwhile, in Khorat and in several districts of that province, the Thai have built statues of a mythical wife of the Governor of Khorat whom Lao sources claim conducted a genocide against some 300,000 Khmer in 1819 and who also enforced the policies of forced migrations and enslavement of the Lao. According to the myth, Thao Surani (Khunying Mo) led women to seduce and trick the Lao soldiers, leading them to their deaths. The main statue in Khorat dates to 1934 but others in the districts are recent. This is tourism based on building walls, reinforcing animosities, and promoting myths, rather than one based on reconciliation, preservation, sustainability, diversity, intellectual curiosity, and factual history.

Figure 13: Tourism as Empty Heritage and Divisiveness: Idol and Authority Worship



Statue of Chao Anouvong,
Final King of Vientiane, 1827
Vientiane, Laos
(Photo: Hue Nhu Nguyen)



Statue of Thao Suranee in Soeng Sang,
Nakhon Ratchasema, Thailand
Mythical wife of Governor of Nakhon
Ratchasema and leader of women
supposedly defeating army of Chao
Anouvong, 1827
(Photo: Hue Nhu Nguyen)

2.4 Discussion and Conclusion

The reason for lack of viability of this project in Southeast Asia is not because there is no market for it, nor because it would be unprofitable, nor because it is too difficult to implement, and probably not because of anything specific to the peoples of Asia or to their governments. The key barrier appears to be the ideology that has taken hold of governments, international organizations, and those who feel they must follow; homogenizing globalization and corporatism for short-term profit at the expense of international law, civilization, and cultural identities.

The key actors who have the resources to implement this project and whose stated agenda and commitments would seem to support it are those actors who will not support it: foreign countries with a history of colonialism in the countries of the project and which continue to have disproportionate resources and power and the international organizations they control and fund. The “donor countries” consider support for heritage and culture, which international laws define as essential components of “human development”, as less important than meeting the needs of growing, unsustainable populations. When they calculate whether they have met their development “commitments”, spending on heritage and culture is not counted in the same way; it is considered to be an aspect of public relations and advertising rather than a fundamental of civilization and survival.

Although there are specific reasons why the countries in which this project was tested still hold animosities towards their neighbors or towards colonial powers that would lead them to resist this project or why they may themselves lack the resources and intellectual basis for a commitment to this kind of project, they would seem to be ready to take on a project like this if the major countries and international organizations were to take the lead.

There does not seem to be something unique about the countries of Southeast Asia or Hungary, either in their political systems, cultural traditions or religion that make them so different from other cultures and that would prevent them from taking on such a project while others would support it. Indeed, the countries where this project was tested have all signed on to the same international agreements as countries elsewhere. In fact, at the time I was working on this project in Hungary, I sought to create a tolerance project in Eastern Europe, in the form of a “Diaspora Bridge Center” to reconnect peoples. The Center would have focused on historical research and opened discussions but would also have promoted historic trails. Heritage funding in the European countries where I sought to initiate this project is largely targeted to ancestral cemeteries and monuments to nationalistic survival and for reinforcing fear rather than for reconciliation and historical examination (Lempert, 2008). The project may not currently be viable anywhere.

Certainly, there are countries where there is a greater diversity of museums, where there are heritage trails of diverse ethnicities, and where ethnic communities freely promote their own heritage. Local intellectual and environmental traditions may be strong. Political rights of communities may have more recognition. And there may be more opportunities for leisure. Where there is more national and local community sovereignty, there is more focus on heritage. But even there, cultures are assimilating and heritage is at risk. Many of the presentations there are not particularly challenging or deep.

Table 10 offers an explanation for why this project is not viable today, despite its fit with the international consensus in treaties and goals that were established following World War II and the period of colonialism. This project fits well with the goals of international law and extends

them in furtherance of more contemporary aspirations for democracy and individual empowerment and development. In the final column of the Table, presenting the ideology of globalization and corporatist neo-colonialism that appears to dominate the thinking today of the “New World Order” in the decisions of global development banks, multi-national enterprise, leaders of nation states, and even the United Nations system, there is no place for a project like this one.

Table 11 takes the analysis a step farther and demonstrates how it is that this globalist neo-colonial ideology shapes the incentives of the gatekeepers. While the gatekeepers who fund the infrastructure of the international system today claim to have the incentives that are enshrined in international law, their actions reveal a different political agenda.

The basic agenda of globalization today as it is implemented by international organizations and nation-states and how it impacts international development spending and tourism infrastructure policies is to keep the masses ignorant and entertained through bread and circuses, to promote a view of human nature that regiments people in mass production. Nation-state elites maintain their power and control by promoting symbols and ideologies rather than thought, by creating fear of enemies to promote militarism and police controls rather than peace and openness. They build walls and statues rather than promote intellect. They destroy identities and history to erase attachments to land and culture so that resources are easier to exploit and people are easier to keep mobile and productive. They rewrite history and do not learn from it. They destroy the environment and beauty in order to be “powerful”.

It is hard to know if this is a recurring human trait; inability to plan for the long-term future and protect diversity, or just a contemporary phenomenon brought by increasing mobility and industrialization. But it is likely to be a path that will collapse and that will continue only partly changed in the ashes. By the time global thinking changes again, probably the only heritage remaining will be the heritage of prison camps and war and cemeteries. It will make for fewer but newer and more “modern” heritage trails in Asia and elsewhere.

Table 10: Project Goals and Fit with Various Ideologies

Project Goals	Ideologies		
	United Nations Rights Treaties, Post-World War II	Education for Democracy and Sustainability	New World Order Globalization/ Corporatist Neo-Liberalism
Cross Cultural/ Cross Border Tolerance	Partly, through U.N. goal of peace and security	Yes, promote the idea of global citizens with rich understandings of identities and promotion of peace and reconciliation through democratic mechanisms.	No. Goal is homogenization and industrialization with peace through “trade” and harmonization with promotion of local nation-state identities for political stability and control.
Promote Cultural Identities and Survival; Build Local Pride	Yes, in U.N. Genocide Convention and Child Rights to Identity	Yes, promote federalism and cultural survival/diversity through healthy,vibrant cultures.	No. Goal is “growth”, homogenization, and industrialization.
Raise Intellectual Questions about History, Cultural Choice, Social Justice and Equity	Partly, through U.N. Child Rights to information and intellectual development	Yes, build civilization through empowerment and engaged citizenry.	No. Goal is only basic needs for workers while keeping people politically unequal.
Promote Health	Yes, as Child Right to Physical Development	Yes, promote lifelong heath.	No. Goal is only to promote basic health.
Promote Diverse Landscape/ Protect Endangered Heritage	Partly, through Rio Convention on Sustainable Development and UNESCO Charter	Yes, protect neighborhoods and local communities.	No.
Promote Environmental Consciousness	Partly, through Rio Convention on Sustainable Development	Yes, promote livable, sustainable environments and healthy interactions with nature.	Not really. Sustainability and climate change are now recognized but through technological solutions not love of nature.
Promote Economic Benefit through Developing Civilization (Local and Global Benefits)	No clear strategy of development, business or tourism.	Yes, participatory democracy and empowerment of both consumers and producers.	No. Extract what exists for profits to elites and sales to the international market.

Table 11: Expected and Actual Motivations of Actors Regarding the Heritage Project

Project Stakeholder/ Constituency	Expected Incentives for Participation and Support	Do the Project Incentives Work (Yes, No or Mixed)? What Goals Explain Actual Incentives (Denying Support)
Country Governments	National Economic Benefits for Tourism	(Laos): No. Incentives are only short term, immediate windfall gains; no interest in long-term public benefit (Thailand, VN): Yes, if there are Large Benefits
	National Pride	(Laos): No. Goal is to fit within the New World Order as subservient to outside powers
	Cross-Border Integration for Peace and Prosperity	No. Goal is for national elites to maintain power and sovereignty through nationalism, racism and past hatreds (e.g., battle over Preah Vihear).
Foreign Colonial Powers (U.S., France, India, China)	Protect and Promote their Historic Influence	No. Goal is to destroy the past and create rootlessness.
	Promote Cultural Attractions for Foreigners	Promote mass market heritage products for foreign economic exploitation, only.
International Organizations and Development NGOs	Promote Diversity	No. Goal is limited to promoting mass market heritage products for foreign economic exploitation, only.
	Promote Local Sustainability	No. Homogenize cultures for increasing productivity and globalization and dependency.
	Promote Tolerance and Cross Border Initiatives (e.g., Greater Mekong Sub-region)	No. Promote only roads and global corporate benefits (tour companies, hotel chains, airlines)
	Protect Heritage and Promote Intellectual Development/Civilization	No. View people of the region as animals: consumers and producers with only basic needs.
	Promote Local Education	Same

Foreign Business Tourism Community	Support Development of New Local Products to promote the industry	Very weak interest in developing the industry infrastructure. Goal is to cream off the transit (with hotels, restaurants, transport, tours). Much of it is also money laundering in hotels.
Local Business Community	Willingness to develop cultural and heritage products in niche markets, including foods, toys, books.	Little entrepreneurial spirit and the goal in the sector is to mostly purchase access to an area (hotels, tours) not to invest in products unless there is already demand or a foreign "project" subsidizes it. There is a fear in the region of intellectual products given political repression.
Local Publishers	Willingness to enter a market niche with subsidized work	Fearful of history and intellectual content. Want mass market not niche markets.
Foreign Academic Community	Welcome new theories and debate as part of intellectual excitement.	No. They are the major censors in an effort to flatter officials and assure their status and access; destroying intellectual life in favor of tiny non-controversial questions.
Foreign Tourists	Bored and ready for something new and exciting, interactive and empowering.	There is a small niche that needs to be developed. Most come for very little time and agree to be herded by peers and travel guides.
Local Tourists and Youth	Bored and ready for something new and exciting, interactive and empowering.	There is a small niche that needs to be developed. They are alienated and dumbed down and without organized power as consumers.

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Notes

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²From the Merriam-Webster dictionary on-line, accessed in November, 2016: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tourism>

³<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pleasure>

⁴<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/education>

⁵<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/education>

⁶Journal of Heritage Tourism, website: <http://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?show=aimsScope&journalCode=rjht20> accessed in November, 2016.

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