

# COMMUNITY CO-CREATION IN LIVING HERITAGE CONSERVATION - FROM OBJECT-CENTERED TO PEOPLE-CENTERED PLANNING FOR THE ANCIENT CITY OF PINGYAO

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**KEY WORDS:** Community Co-creation, Living Heritage, Pingyao Ancient City, Continuity, Authenticity.

## ABSTRACT:

Since the conservation of living heritage sites such as historic towns and traditional villages often involves the coordination of multiple interests, the modern socio-economic development of heritage sites and the dominant participatory nature of local heritage communities become the main conflicts in practice. Using a combination of literature research and field cases, this paper firstly compares the history of the theoretical conservation approach to living heritage and explains its core concepts and basic methods. Secondly, it analyses the application and effectiveness of the community co-creation model in living heritage sites using the case of the ancient city of Pingyao in Shanxi Province, China. It is hoped that this will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the current development and future direction of heritage conservation methods, and further consider how to reconcile the historical and daily values of heritage in the conservation process.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The recognition of the importance of conserving living heritage sites such as historic villages and districts by the international academic community dates back to the 1980s. The application of the principles of authenticity and integrity within the framework of the World Heritage system was initially problematic in the conservation of these sites. As a result, the World Heritage Convention established separate guidelines for the nomination of special properties in 1987 to guide the conservation of living heritage sites such as historic town complexes. This gave rise to the development of the historic townscape approach as a distinct issue within the World Heritage system. The evaluation of the heritage values of these sites is often influenced by subjective interpretations, with various stakeholders emphasizing different aspects of these values.

The international approach to heritage conservation has undergone a change from a material-based conservation approach to a value-based conservation approach and then to a living heritage approach (Poulios, 2014). In the last decade, the number of domestic and international studies with living conservation as a keyword has gradually increased, and the discussion has expanded from immaterial elements to material elements. The discussion focuses on the priority of heritage values and daily life values in historic areas. In Asia, due to the presence of more traditions from the agricultural era and the need for continuous renewal of Asian wooden architecture, more attention has been paid to the practice of living heritage. In Japan, for example, living preservation has been carried out for nearly 50 years under the name of community-based urban conservation (町並み型まちづくり) (Architectural Institute of Japan, 2004). Around 1960, the first movement for the preservation of historic districts and local residents was launched in Japan. The first was the "Minami Kiso-cho" five-year plan launched by residents in 1964 to preserve

"Tsumagojuku", establishing the general rule that preservation takes precedence over all development (Minami Kiso Town, 1989). In 1972, the National Register of Historic Districts was created, and in 1975, the Japanese government amended the Cultural Property Preservation Law to establish a system for the preservation of traditional building groups (Takahashi, Y., 2012).

Early research on the living of heritage in China was mainly devoted to intangible cultural heritage, such as ethnic mythology (Wang X., 2016) and religion (Du Q., 2012a). As the research on living theory intensified, scholars have interpreted the concept of "living" in different ways. In the early period, the dynamic nature of living heritage was emphasized, and living heritage refers to heritage that still maintains its historical function. There are also some who believe that living heritage refers to living preservation, calling for the preservation of historic buildings to respect the original functions on the one hand, and to try to infuse them with new functions in line with modern socio-economic development on the other. However, in the process of practice, there are serious consequences of displacing the indigenous people from the heritage sites. How to create living heritage communities where indigenous people can continue to live has become the focus of current research. In recent years, more and more attention has been focused on the relationship between living heritage and local residents, for example, Wang Fang pointed out that it is necessary to pay attention to the interactive participation of visitors and local residents in traditional neighbourhoods, emphasizing "community life" and "living culture" (Wang, F., 2007).

The conservation of the ancient city of Pingyao in Shanxi Province, China, a World Heritage Site, is a clearer example of this process. The planning of the ancient city has gone through a transition from object-centered restoration of ancient buildings to people-centered community co-creation.

In 1997, the ancient city of Pingyao in Shanxi, China, was named a World Heritage Site, and after 25 years, the management of the heritage site has now achieved certain results. The plan has evolved from an earlier conservation model that focused on infrastructure restoration and tourism development to the current community co-creation model led by local communities, which is China's latest attempt in the conservation of living heritage sites.

This paper first compares the emergence and conceptual approach of living heritage theory, and then demonstrates the mechanism and effectiveness of the community co-creation model in the conservation of living heritage sites with the specific case of the ancient city of Pingyao. This study helps to understand the true value of living heritage sites, to adopt a dialectical perspective on the historical and everyday values of living heritage sites, and to explore specific approaches to heritage community conservation in China through specific case studies. This study is innovative in some ways. First, for the first time, the theoretical framework of living heritage is applied to the study of the ancient city of Pingyao, in an attempt to determine whether Pingyao's planning conforms to the international concept and theoretical framework of "living heritage". Second, this study is somewhat time-sensitive, investigating the latest developments in Pingyao and attempting to sort out the process of changes in its planning strategies and conservation effects.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Literature Summarization and Archiving

The research adopts a documentary and archival approach to summarize the progress of living heritage research based on the reading of existing studies. This research tries to sort out the origins and development of living heritage theory throughout the world by reviewing significant documents issued by authoritative heritage conservation organizations globally<sup>1</sup>.

### 2.2 Field Research and Case Study

This study investigates heritage conservation cases in China that have made partial progress in applying the theory, summarizes conservation methods, and evaluates and reflects on their roles. Through research methods such as questionnaires and in-depth interviews, we explore the ways and effects of the model of community co-creation in living heritage sites in China.

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<sup>1</sup> These authorities include UNESCO, the three advisory bodies to the World Heritage Convention - ICCROM, ICOMOS and IUCN - as well as the International Council of Museums (ICOM), the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), the World Heritage Cities Coalition (OWHC), the World Heritage Foundation (WMF), the World Archaeological Council (WAC) and the International Commission on Vernacular Architecture (CIAV)

## 3. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE THEORY OF LIVING HERITAGE

### 3.1 Theoretical concerns about the value of living heritage

Living heritage was originally influenced by the "living history" of cultural anthropology, referring to traditions that still function today (Shao Y., Hu L. & Xu J., 2019.). At the end of the 20th century, the influence of anthropology on heritage conservation theory became apparent. Under the influence of postmodernism, heritage conservation theory began to criticize colonialist approaches to research, emphasizing instead the return of the discourse of heritage conservation to the local population, as in anthropological research. 1980-1990 A. Jabbour described the different understandings of cultural heritage conservation in architectural historiography and anthropology. Architectural historiography tends to use a range of terms to describe architectural styles of the period. Cultural anthropology begins by describing the "living cultural model" and insists on a focus on living culture with people as the primary study subject (Jabbour A. Folklife, 2023).

In terms of the World Heritage system, the term "living" first appeared in the Venice Charter in 1964, proposing that historic monuments are living witnesses and treating ancient village landscapes as a special form of historical and cultural heritage, containing guardianship, natural environment, and folklore (ICOMOS, 1964). The 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage proposed to make heritage sites work in communities (UNESCO, 1972), and since then, many heritage sites with indigenous peoples have been inscribed on the World Heritage List, and the development and conservation of the habitat of heritage sites have become a focus of research. The 1979 Bala Charter proposed maintaining a sense of place for cultural heritage, introducing living elements, and strengthening local identity and cultural identity (ICOMOS, 1999). In 1982, the Florence Charter first introduced a concept similar to living heritage, "living monuments", which emphasizes the dynamic use and transmission of cultural heritage in local communities, mostly referring to the heritage that has historical value and is still in use (ICOMOS, 1982). In 1984 and 1992, historic town heritage and cultural landscape heritage were added to the World Heritage category, both of which emphasize the importance of their dynamic management and evolution. The 1994 Nara Authenticity Document emphasized cultural continuity and stated that the owner's knowledge of the heritage is an important guarantee of its continuity (UNESCO, 1994). In the 1994 Global Strategy, the concept of "all living cultures" was introduced; in the revision of the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention in the same year, criterion 3 for evaluating the "outstanding universal value" of World Heritage sites considers World Heritage sites as "evidence of living cultures," and criterion 6 considers World Heritage sites as having a link to "living traditions". In the 1996 Antonio Declaration, it was proposed that historic cities are dynamic and that traditions can be continuously used, and the terms "living culture," "living traditions," etc. emerged (ICOMOS, 1996).

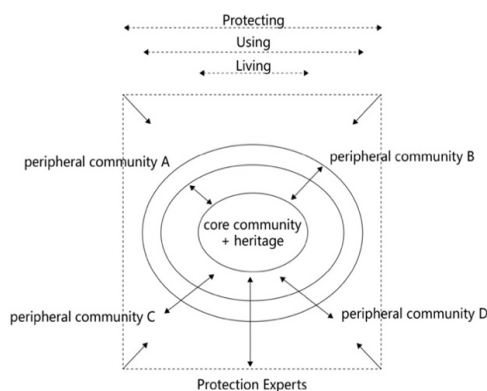
### 3.2 Proposal of Living Heritage Theory—ICCROM

Ultimately, in ICCROM's 2003 Draft Hoi An: Asia's Best Conservation Practices, the phrase "living heritage" first

appeared, highlighting historic districts, including historic villages and urban areas, as an important component of living cultural heritage in Asian countries (UNESCO, 2003). From 2002 to 2003, ICCROM hosted the Living Heritage Sites Program (LHP) and defined living heritage as "Heritage that maintains its original function and is able to continue its spatial expression in changing circumstances (WIJESURIYAG, 2008)." The goal is to increase awareness of the concept of "living heritage" in the field of conservation and management of heritage sites (Stovel H., Stanley-Price N. & Killick, R., 2005). Its research methodology is integrated with social science research and focuses on communication between heritage experts and heritage communities. In 2009, ICCROM published the *"Handbook of Living Heritage Conservation Methods,"* which defines living heritage as "sites, traditions, and practices created and still in use by historically diverse authors or heritage places in which a core community lives in or near (BAILLIE B, 2009)." From 2012 to 2017, ICCROM organized one of its five key projects, "People-centered Conservation Approach Enhancement," and in 2015, it organized a short course "Promoting People-centered Conservation Approach: Community Participation in Cultural and Natural Conservation," and published a series of books and documents, thus gradually establishing a framework for a living heritage methodology (ICCROM, 2015). In 2017, ICOMOS set out the requirements for living heritage conservation in the Delhi Declaration on Heritage and Democracy (ICOMOS, 2003).

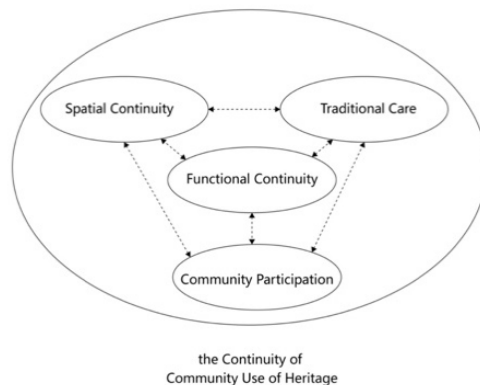
### 3.3 Conservation methods

**3.3.1 Role and Concept of Heritage Communities:** The living heritage approach considers the relationship between community and heritage as the starting point for understanding and defining heritage and seeks to establish a truly community-based approach to make heritage conservation more sustainable by strengthening community participation. The stakeholders are divided into a "core community" and a "peripheral community," and protection experts (POULIOSI, 2014). The "core community" refers to the people who are most closely connected to the heritage, often the creators of the heritage, such as local residents. The "peripheral community" is the indirect, non-continuous community that is connected to the heritage through the core community and can consume the heritage, such as visitors to the heritage site, the cities surrounding the heritage site, etc. The management and conservation of heritage are ensured by the participation of the residents of the core community (Figure. 1).



**Figure 1.** Schematic diagram of heritage community stratification (POULIOSI, 2014)

**3.3.2 Judgment of continuity of living heritage.** The conservation approach to living heritage emphasizes the continuity of community use of heritage, which is divided into functional continuity, spatial continuity, traditional care, and community participation. Functional continuity should be defined according to the understanding of the core community residents, which is not necessarily static; spatial continuity includes physical space and cultural space, i.e., intangible and tangible heritage; traditional care refers to the maintenance, management, and heritage awareness held in the community, ensuring that the community residents are stewards of the heritage; and community participation is not necessarily limited to the local area (Figure. 2).

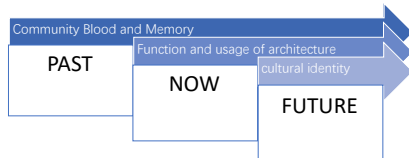


**Figure 2.** Schematic diagram of the continuity of living heritage (Zhao X., 2012)

The world's understanding of continuity in cultural heritage has evolved from a material-centered to a value-oriented approach. C. Tunnard proposed in 1966 that the link to the past should be maintained in heritage in order to understand the past (Tunnard C, 2007). In the 1980s, Cleere H. proposed two different kinds of continuity in heritage: cultural continuity and spiritual continuity (Cleere H, 1989). The different understandings of continuity are related to the different views of history in the East and the West: the Western linear view of history, which sees the continuity of contemporary society and historical epochs as based on a sense of material cultural identity, and the Eastern cyclical view of history, which sees the heritage of an office as constantly renewed and history as continuing spiritually. A series of material-oriented heritage conservation concepts developed earlier under the dominance of the Western linear historical view, such as the early Venice Charter. With the development of Eastern countries and the awakening of self-national cultural identity, the world began to emphasize cultural diversity, giving rise to value-oriented heritage conservation methodologies such as the 1994 *Nara Authenticity Document*, which expressed the Eastern world as represented by Japan's perception of it. The 2001 and 2005 UNESCO Declarations on Cultural Diversity and the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions both reflect the world's recognition of cultural diversity.

Compared to the above two bases of continuity judgment, the way communities perceive and use heritage is crucial to the judgment of the continuity of living heritage. The spatial formation and continuity of a community are due to the

transmission of cultural identity in the community. When the community residents' perception of heritage changes, the space will also change, so the continuity of living heritage is more concerned with the spiritual aspect of continuity. The change in the physical space of the community needs to be viewed dialectically. It has continuity as long as the community residents transform the space on their own to maintain their cultural identity while continuously adapting to the socioeconomic situation (Lin, Mei-Yin, 2010). In the development of communities, the preservation of living heritage is managed against change, not to control it but to control its rate of change and give appropriate advice (Figure. 3).



**Figure 3.** Relationship between changes in living heritage and its continuity (Zhao X., 2012)

**3.3.3 Judgment of Authenticity of living heritage.** The understanding of heritage authenticity in the world heritage system has gone through a cognitive process from static conservation to dynamic management. In the early days, under the influence of the Western linear view of history, heritage was mostly "salvaged and preserved," emphasizing that its authenticity was reflected in its untouched form (George E. Marcus, 2006). In 2001, UNESCO issued the "Hoi An Agreement on the Best Time for Conservation in Asia," which states that the intangible aspects of tangible heritage should be included in the assessment of authenticity (Nara, 2004).

Rather than being universal, the authenticity of living heritage should be judged by the core community's value perceptions, using internal community judgment criteria. Since living heritage is closely related to contemporary life (Kuruppu I, 1996), the material heritage is bound to change in the process of its development and continuation, and therefore it should be judged based on whether it has the spirit of the heritage site. S. W. Semes extends architectural heritage conservation from the relationship between the present and history to the connection between the present and the future, arguing that conservation is not about preserving what is dead intact but rather about nurturing and managing what is alive. management (Semes S W., 2010). In judging the authenticity of living heritage, external influences and impacts on tangible heritage are often judged to be inauthentic, but impacts on non-material aspects such as community perceptions are not fully judged and need to be analyzed specifically according to the actual situation. Similarly, changes in intrinsic community perceptions can be judged authentic for the non-material aspects of heritage, but sometimes their manifestations in the material aspects are not directly judged, which leads to the authenticity of living heritage is currently characterized by the difficulty of standardization and uncertainty (Table. 1).

	Material	Non-material
External influences	Unreal	Unreal?
Intrinsic Changes	Real?	Real

**Table 1.** External Influences on the Judgment of Authenticity of Heritage Values

**3.3.4 Methods of implementation of living heritage.** POULIOSI summarizes the basic steps for implementing the living heritage approach in the six points below.

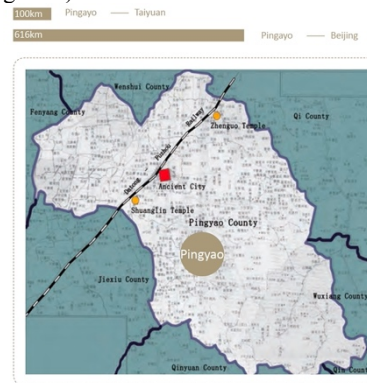
- (1) Identifying living heritage and core communities. First, confirm whether the heritage site is a living heritage and whether the living heritage approach is applicable, and then identify the core and peripheral communities.
- (2) Establish collaboration with core communities and create shared conservation goals and expectations.
- (3) Creation of heritage schematics to integrate conservation processes with sustainable community development and modern scientific conservation mechanisms, including the construction of continuity in time approaches, the construction of time-based traditional management mechanisms, and maintenance practices regarding core communities.
- (4) Evaluate heritage sites with core community residents to grade the value of the heritage.
- (5) Develop conservation goals and action plans with core community residents.
- (6) Periodically assess and revise conservation goals and action plans based on continuity to better serve the continuity (POULIOS I., 2014).

In step 2, special attention is given to empowering residents and identifying key players in social activities to create living heritage conservation partners.

#### 4. FEATURES OF PINGYAO AS LIVING HERITAGE

##### 4.1 Location and history

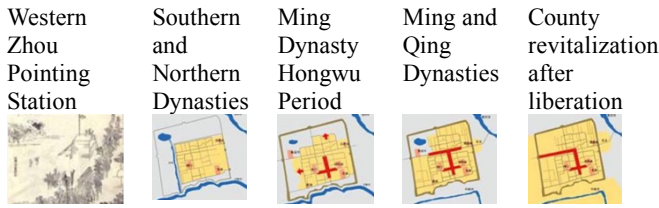
Pingyao County is located in the central part of Shanxi Province and the southern part of Jinzhong region in China. The ancient city of Pingyao is located in the north-central part of the county, with an area of 2.25 square kilometers and an actual population of 35,000 inhabitants. It is 100 km north of the provincial capital of Taiyuan and 616 km southwest of Beijing (Figure 4).



**Figure 4.** Geographical location of Pingyao (Source: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000234622>)

Pingyao was built in the period of King Xuan of the Western Zhou Dynasty (827 B.C.-782 B.C.) and expanded in the third year of Hongwu of the Ming Dynasty (1370 A.D.), which is more than 2,700 years ago. The Ming and Qing dynasties were the most glorious period of Pingyao's economy and construction, and the county gradually declined during the Republican period, until today the ancient city is under complete protection planning and in reasonable development (Institute of Jinzhong History Record, 2002). To date, the ancient city of Pingyao still retains the basic appearance of the

county during the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368-1911 A.D.), making it the most complete ancient city remaining in the Han Chinese region (Figure 5).



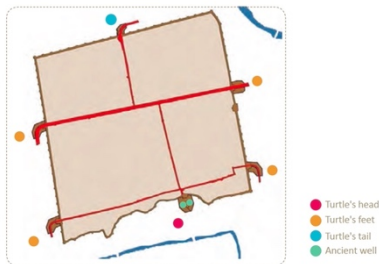
**Figure 5.** History of Pingyao (Source: 2009, Shanghai Tongji Urban Planning and Design Institute, Detailed Plan for the Protection of the Ancient City of Pingyao)

#### 4.2 Identification of communities in Pingyao

The ancient city of Pingyao has a distinctly local character, with an economic and social role. The ancient city of Pingyao contains a large number of aboriginal residences, including many privately-owned houses, which are often considered part of the family heritage. The survey revealed that residents have a clear love of place, with 78.5% of residents having lived in the Old Town for more than 20 years and more than 60% unwilling to move out of the Old Town. In addition, residents have a deep cultural identification with Pingyao, with more than 80% believing that it is everyone's responsibility to protect the ancient city and are willing to participate in its preservation and restoration (Shao Y, 2019).

#### 4.3 The continuity of Pingyao as living heritage

The continuity of living heritage lies in whether the core community's perception of heritage and its use changes. In terms of spatial continuity, the ancient city of Pingyao has a unique defense system, with well-preserved walls and gates, and a well-preserved square city pattern. The Plan dredges the ring road around the city on the inner side of the city wall and plans green belts to improve the environment around the city wall within the protected area on the outer side of the wall to protect the square city pattern (Figure 6).



**Figure 6.** General layout of the Ancient City of Pingyao, showing the defense system with the six fortified gates and major streets (Source: same as Figure 4)

In terms of functional continuity, the ancient city of Pingyao, with the South Street as its axis, forms a symmetrical layout structure according to the left city god (Chenghuang Temple), there are government offices (Xian Yamen), the left Wen and right Wu (Wenmiao and Wumiao), the East View (Qingxuguan), the West Temple (Jifu Temple), and the city building in the center, which is the characteristic of the

ancient city of Pingyao (Figure 7). The Plan protects the buildings that play an important role in forming this structure and restores the public activity function of the Wu Temple and Jifu Temple locations.



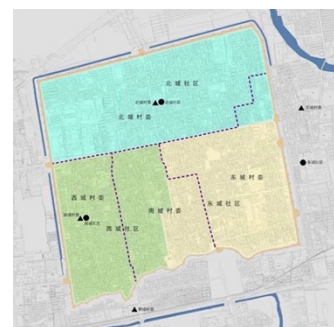
**Figure 7.** Commercial streets layout the Chinese character "土 (tu)" upside down (Shanghai Tongji Urban Planning & Design Institute, 2012)

In terms of traditional care, The ancient city of Pingyao contains an extremely rich cultural connotation, including Jin merchant culture, religious culture, folklore culture, etc. (Jinzhong City Institute of History, 2002), which is not only unique but also symbiotic with the tangible cultural heritage (Figure 8).



**Figure 8.** Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Ancient City of Pingyao (Source: same as Figure 5)

However, in the early period of the protection, Pingyao community faced the problem on lacking of community management. The population of the ancient city of Pingyao consists of residents, outsiders, and tourists, and a large number of transient people creates a destabilizing factor for the ancient community. Both non-agricultural and rural households exist in the ancient city, with the community committee managing non-agricultural households and the village committee managing agricultural households, while the two are not unified in terms of household registration management zoning, resulting in overlapping and interlocking boundaries for each management division, causing management and operational difficulties (Figure 9). Lack of cohesion and insufficient heritage awareness in heritage communities.



**Figure 9.** Pre-planning community management status (Source: same as Figure 4)

#### 4.4 The Authenticity of Pingyao as living heritage

The initial tourism development of the ancient city was rapid, but the protection and development of the ancient city were out of balance.

Except for the central part of the commercial street which has more capital investment and its decoration is more perfect or even excessive, the traditional courtyards on the back side of the street are not well protected, the courtyard pattern is destroyed and historical structures are missing. The infrastructure of the traditional courtyards cannot meet modern requirements and the living conditions of the residents are poor (Figure 10).



**Figure 10.** Poor living conditions in Pingyao before (Source: same as Figure 5)

Besides, there are uncontrolled construction development phenomena such as large volume of new buildings or antique buildings have a serious impact on the texture of the ancient city; large structures have a serious impact on the overall appearance of the ancient city; the scale and architectural form of new residential compounds do not match the traditional appearance; new building materials conflict with the traditional appearance (Figure 11).



**Figure 11.** Uncontrolled construction of the ancient city of Pingyao before planning (Source: same as Figure 5)

Pingyao's early years have been affected by the excessive development of tourism and the impact of foreign cultures on the heritage proper. However, as a living heritage, the basic form of Pingyao's use by local residents, including some collective activity places of community organizations, has been preserved, and the architectural fragments need further repair but maintain the original characteristics, which can be judged as basically authentic.

### 5. COMMUNITY CO-CREATION STRATEGY

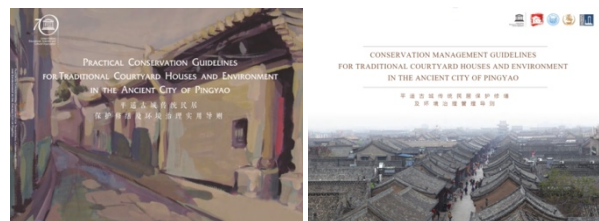
#### 5.1 Adjustment of the positioning of the ancient city

The conversation of Pingyao was adjusted from a single tourism-based development strategy for the Old Town to a "living" Old Town, planned as a livable World Heritage Site.

The goals of the plan have been adjusted for the plan's implementation: in 1980, when the ancient city was first conserved, a conservation strategy was developed to preserve the values of the ancient city; around 2000, a livability strategy was developed to establish a more robust management mechanism for the ancient city; now, an industrial strategy has been developed to improve the quality of life and economic standards of the residents of the ancient city, and to establish a The "Pingyao Co-Building" implementation model.

#### 5.2 Traditional management mechanism construction

**5.2.1 Livability Strategy Construction.** In 2012, Pingyao developed the "Implementation Method of Funding Subsidies for the Protection and Repair of Traditional Residents of the Ancient City of Pingyao", adopting a public-private partnership mechanism, "government-led + resident autonomy + expert guidance". The government uses part of the revenue from tourism entrance fees to establish funds for the repair of traditional residents, and the residents independently propose repair plans that meet the requirements, which are then evaluated by an expert committee and given subsidies for repair. The implementation of the scheme leveraged financial resources and effectively mobilized the residents' enthusiasm for conservation. At the same time unified repair standards, to avoid repair damage, as far as possible to protect the traditional style. The improvement of the living environment, the continuation of traditional living customs, and the inheritance of social and cultural functions have a greater role.



**Figure 12** Management Guidelines and Usage Guidelines (UNESCO, 2014)

In order to better facilitate the residents' own restoration work, the "Guidelines for Residents' Restoration" were developed in 2015. The guidelines are divided into two parts, the Management Guidelines for professionals and the Practical Guidelines for local residents (Figure 12). The practical guidelines are in plain language to enhance local residents' understanding of the conservation plan and to further regulate their restoration behavior. At the same time, they take into account the needs of local residents and aim to improve the living environment, promote mutual cooperation among residents, and enhance the community's ability to govern itself (Figures. 13 and 14).

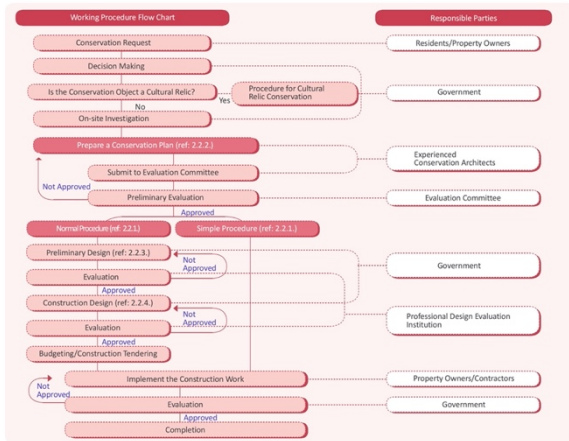


Figure 2.1: Working procedure flow chart and responsible parties

Figure 13 Steps for residents to repair (UNESCO, 2014)

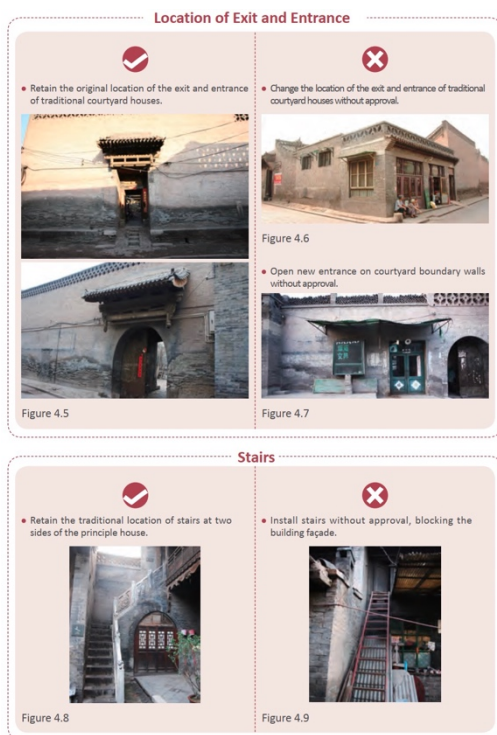


Figure 14. Easy-to-understand guidance rules (UNESCO, 2014)

### 5.2.2 Industrial Strategy Optimization

#### (1) Heritage-driven exhibition and other industries

The Plan changes the previous single tourism development strategy, which was vulnerable to external influences, by using heritage resources within the ancient city to drive industries such as exhibitions and conventions, such as the Pingyao Film Festival, the Pingyao Photo Exhibition, the Sculpture Exhibition, and the Pingyao Chinese New Year (see Figures 15-16). Relying on cultural extravaganzas such as the film festival, it has brought huge crowds and new development opportunities to the ancient city of Pingyao. According to the statistics of the 2019 Pingyao Film Festival, the number of admissions reached 270,000, with an attendance rate of 91%, of which 42% were from outside the province, 57% were from Shanxi, and 21% were from Pingyao citizens. The shaping of the industry has attracted young people and made some entrepreneurs form a gathering effect in Pingyao.

On the other hand, by converting abandoned sites in the Old City to function as cultural growth spaces and encouraging the emergence of new cultural industries. For example, the abandoned diesel engine factory in the old city is now being reused as the Pingyao Film Palace, which is an important venue for the Pingyao Film Festival, as well as a ballroom, a cafe, a public open space for the community and a convention.



Figure 15. Pingyao International Film Festival, Film Palace and Pingyao International Photography Exhibition (Source: Internet)



Figure 16. Pingyao International Sculpture Festival and Meet Pingyao Sitcom (Source: Internet)

#### (2) Optimization of industrial strategy: "non-foreign heritage" incubates cultural and creative industries

The intangible cultural heritage of the ancient city of Pingyao such as Pingyao beef, traditional handicrafts, and promote their transformation into the creative side of the industry (Figure 17). As of 2019, entrance fees ended up accounting for only about 1% of the total tourism revenue within the ancient city of Pingyao, with the economic benefits of the cultural and creative industries gradually increasing, as well as the opportunities for residents in the community to earn cultural and creative income.



Figure 17. Pingyao Intangible Cultural Heritage Cultural and Creative Industries (Source: Same as Figure 5)

#### (3) Culture-led Industrial Development Model of Pingyao

The current industry in the ancient city has formed an industrial development model centered on cultural heritage, cultural heritage preservation, cultural interpretation and display, cultural event planning, cultural tourism development, and cultural industry cultivation as a path (Figure 18).



**Figure 18.** Pingyao Cultural Heritage Industry Development Model (Source: Self-drawn by the author)

### 5.3 Core Community Maintenance Practice

**5.3.1 Object of work: from "object-centered" to "people-centered".** The first phase of the project focused on the preservation of physical space, such as the restoration of buildings and the creation of infrastructure. But after 2010, the project gradually shifted to a people-centered approach, understanding the history of the city and its people, understanding the current needs of people and promoting their development. The plan has gradually shifted the work to the local residents by organizing seminars, distributing online questionnaires, recording oral histories, holding workshops for residents, and following up with artisans (Shao Y., Zhang P., 2015).

**5.3.2 Working methods: from "elite planning" to "co-creation".** The first is to provide channels for public participation and expression, such as the distribution of questionnaires on the lives of ancient city residents through new social media channels, and the collection of suggestions for the transformation of heritage communities. In 2020, a "Better Pingyao" workshop was held for five communities in the ancient city of Pingyao to collect local residents' perceptions of the ancient city and their expectations for its future development as a World Heritage Site (Shao, Y., Hu L., Zhao J., Chen H., 2016). The third aspect is to strengthen the participation of the peripheral communities and heritage conservation and to involve the wider general public in the conservation process. For example, a World Vernacular Architecture Record event was held in 2019 with the participation of international volunteers and local residents (e.g. Figure 19), as well as a volunteer work camp for architectural heritage conservation every three years starting in 2012.



**Figure 19.** Beautiful Pingyao Workshop and Pingyao Vernacular Architecture Documentation Work Camp (Source: UHC Urban and Rural Heritage Conservation Studio)

## 6. CONCLUSION

The theory of living heritage emerged in response to the increasing emphasis on social rights in non-Western countries and the revival of local cultures. It was first introduced by ICCROM in 2003, with a focus on the functional and intrinsic values of heritage, as well as the preservation of cultural diversity. Living heritage places a strong emphasis on the relationship between heritage and the community, with residents playing a central role as stewards of the heritage, possessing the right to use, decide, and manage it.

Compared with other conservation methods, the living heritage conservation approach is conducive to solving the long-term conflict between conservation and development. From a sustainability perspective, the inhabitants of Pingyao are the creators of the ancient city, and only if the life of the community can be made the primary object of conservation can the historical value be continued. It is through community co-creation and the continuation of everyday living relationships within the ancient city, rather than simply as a tourist attraction, that the originality of such heritage sites can be reflected and the inherent unity of historical and everyday values can be achieved.

In contrast to the international approach to living heritage conservation, the local residents of Pingyao, the core community, are not involved in the development of conservation measures at the early stage of heritage conservation, nor are they involved in the early evaluation of heritage sites and grading of heritage values. The assessment of heritage values is still mainly the responsibility of experts, while residents are only passive recipients. This is because the cultural level, economic level, and grassroots democracy of traditional Chinese residents are different from those of foreign countries, so the implementation path of living heritage summarized internationally cannot be fully applied to the Chinese context.

With the continuous development of conservation planning, Pingyao has gradually developed a co-creation model: the local government leads the construction of public services, realizes urban management and economic operation, coordinates the use of funds and ensures the implementation of the plan through the formulation of relevant policies; at the same time, it strengthens community co-creation, including the autonomy of use and maintenance, the co-construction and co-management of heritage and industry, and the continuous improvement of cultural identity; Finally, there is the collaborative governance of professional platforms, providing professional consulting services, capacity training for heritage professionals and heritage education, and the introduction of resources from NGOs and later publicity and promotion. The current conservation in Pingyao is to a certain extent able to meet the four continuities of living heritage conservation, i.e. maintaining the continuity of community groups (including local and foreign communities), historical functions, residents' concern for heritage, and cultural expression. In the future, Pingyao also needs to be conserved based on continuity, and the residents of the core communities should gradually take up a major part of the conservation decisions.

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