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THE PROTECTION OF CULTURAL PROPERTIES:  
THE NEGLECTED SOCIAL SCIENCE  
PERSPECTIVE AND OTHER QUESTIONS AND  
ISSUES THAT OUGHT TO BE CONSIDERED

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OTHER QUESTIONS AND ISSUES THAT OUGHT TO BE CONSIDERED\*

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## INTRODUCTION

The primary intent of this paper is to present a different perspective, which has been mostly neglected up to the present time, on the protection of the cultural heritage. Our reference is to the general findings from the ever expanding social science studies of disasters, which could improve the planning for and the managing of disaster-related aspects of cultural properties. After a selective introduction to and a history of the attention given to protecting the cultural heritage from various threats, we note in the passing the limitations of the current dominant technical approach to the problem. After that, the bulk of the paper discusses the social science perspective on disasters, and from that advances a dozen themes or general observations derivable from research findings developed over the last half century. At the same time we note how these might be applied to problems associated with protecting cultural properties especially from natural and technological disasters. Our paper concludes with an examination of three general questions that need to be dealt with by anyone interested in disaster aspects of the cultural heritage.

## HISTORY

Societies have not always attempted to systematically protect their cultural heritage from hazards of different kinds. It is only after World War II that attention has increasingly focused on protecting the world cultural and natural heritage from damage and destruction from whatever source. It appears that the wartime losses from direct and indirect attacks finally forced systematic and continuous attention to the problem. Thus, one of the earliest efforts along this line was the signing in May 1954 of a "Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict." (Although one of the very earliest treaty on the protection of artistic and scientific institutions and historic monuments came from a prewar meeting in April 1935).

But perhaps the most important and probably the turning point meeting on the protection of the world cultural and natural heritage was held in Paris as far back as 1972. In this significant meeting which was sponsored by the United Nations, the cultural heritage was defined as:

Monuments: Architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;

groups of buildings: groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;

sites: works of man or the combined works of nature and man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view

The natural heritage was defined as:

Natural features consisting of physical and biological formations or groups of such formations, which are of outstanding universal value from the aesthetic or scientific point of view;

geological and physiographical formations and precisely delineated areas which constitute the habitat of threatened species of animals and plants of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation;

natural sites or precisely delineated natural areas of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science, conservation or natural beauty.

That there is a Western civilization point of view implied as to what is valued and to be protected may not be easily recognized. But we will discuss this later when we question an implicit distinction between "high" culture and "popular" culture.

This initial meeting in 1972 was followed through the rest of the 20th Century by a number of other meetings. These have especially accelerated in the last decade. A very recent meeting was an International Congress of Cultural Heritage at Risk held September 1999 in Paris. The titles of the 40 papers presented from around the world are available in English, French and Spanish on [www.unesco.org/culture/heritage-risk/html\\_eng/list.htm](http://www.unesco.org/culture/heritage-risk/html_eng/list.htm)).

Now partly as a result of numerous meetings, a great variety of other activities and outcomes related to the protection of cultural properties have appeared. These include treaties and other international agreements. We have identified at least 15 such agreements ranging from a Buenos Aires Draft Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage to a Final Communiqué of the NATO Partnership for Peace Conference on Cultural Heritage Protection in Wartime and in State of Emergency (see [www.tufts.edu/departments/fletcher/multi/cultural.html](http://www.tufts.edu/departments/fletcher/multi/cultural.html)). A number of different international organizations involved in some way in protecting the cultural heritage have emerged. These range from the World Heritage Centre, to the Organization of World Heritage Cities, to the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property. (see [odin.let.rug.nl/CB/Cbe\\_sites.html](http://odin.let.rug.nl/CB/Cbe_sites.html)).

Illustrating at a more national level, we can note that early in 1995 in the United States a National Task Force on Emergency Response was established. It essentially was a partnership of 30 federal agencies, national service organizations and private institutions. A major goal was to safeguard America's cultural heritage from the damaging effects of natural disasters and other emergencies. Related to this is the Heritage Preservation which is an organization that works to insure the perpetuation of America's collective history and culture. One of its programs, taking the place of the National task Force on Emergency Response, is the Heritage Emergency National task Force which helps officials and organizations protect their collections in times of disaster. Similar national groupings have emerged around the world, from the Netherlands to Japan to Argentina.

In addition, there are now related but non-disaster infrastructure elements such as journals. For example, *The International Journal of Cultural Property* (see [www3.oup.co.uk/intjep/hdp](http://www3.oup.co.uk/intjep/hdp)) which in some issues discuss hazards and risks to cultural properties. Then there are newsletters (e.g., *The World Heritage Newsletter*) who sometime list natural and human created disasters affecting heritage sites.

While most groups and activities which we have just mentioned are of a governmental nature, there are corresponding private sector entities. For example, in 1996 an International

Committee of the Blue Shield (ICBS) was founded by four non governmental organizations. Its mission is to collect information, and to coordinate action, in emergency situations by providing authorities and professional with expertise and networks in the case of armed conflict or natural disasters that could affect the cultural heritage (see [www.skene.be/RW/ICOMOS98c4/198023.html](http://www.skene.be/RW/ICOMOS98c4/198023.html)). For other selected resources available on the Internet see the International Protection of Cultural Property, at [www.international.icomos.org/icomos/otherwww.htm](http://www.international.icomos.org/icomos/otherwww.htm).

Putting all these elements together, we can say that there now exists a critical mass of relevant personnel, organizations, laws, etc. focused around efforts to protect cultural properties. To the extent that such things are happening in Italy, they are consistent with a world wide move in a similar direction. However, it is also clear to us that many national efforts as well as the different elements involved at the international level, are not all aware of one another, and there may be some unnecessary overlap particularly internationally. Only occasionally are there calls in the literature for using a larger framework. An example is a paper by Moulin-Acerado (1999) who wrote a paper on "Disaster reduction in the next millennium: The need for an international framework for action." Our paper hopes to call everyone's attention to what is going on elsewhere that is relevant, although our major goal is to indicate the relevance of a social science approach to protecting the cultural heritage from disasters.

What has led to this accelerated interest in protecting the cultural heritage? At this point we can only speculate but we suspect it has something to do with the development of an industrialized and urbanized way of life which started to spread especially in Western Europe and North America in the last century. Interest in safeguarding cultural properties while not totally absent in primarily agricultural and rural societies only seems to emerge as a significant activity when those social systems evolve into what are usually called "modern" societies.

#### LIMITATIONS OF THE CURRENT TECHNICAL APPROACH

Social science researchers have studied disasters now for about 50 years. However, they have for all practical purposes ignored the area of cultural properties. It is very difficult to find a single study or publication on the topic despite voluminous research on different aspects of human and group behavior associated with natural and technological disasters (for summaries of this literature, especially in the last 10 years, see the Bibliography). The sole exceptions to this are a few studies on the popular culture of disasters (whose relationship to cultural properties we discuss as a general question later.).

But just as disaster researchers have ignored the topic, those concerned with the protection of cultural properties have likewise generally ignored a substantial body of literature which could be useful for planning and managing purposes. This neglect can be illustrated by looking at either the professional backgrounds of authors or the disciplinary coverage in bibliographies on the protection of cultural properties. Through a search on the WWW, we found and examined three major bibliographies produced by professionals working in the area of cultural properties. There are no social scientists cited or references to the social science literature in 88 sources listed in a bibliography on Disaster Contingency Planning and Recovery: A Selected List of Print and Non-Print Resources (1988). The same can be said of a multi-language 157 items bibliography published in the same year (Henry 1988). Only in a 1997 bibliography on how to write a disaster plan, are there three authors with an identifiable social science background among the 164 sources cited (Disaster Preparedness Bibliography 1997). Other bibliographies

or professional publications on the protection of cultural properties are also generally devoid of any references to the social science disaster literature. A closer look at the disciplinary background of authors and the topics they discuss in what might be called the professional literature on the protection of the cultural heritage confirms this last point.

That the dominant focus is almost exclusively of a technical nature is illustrated by a special issue appearing in May 2000 on "Disaster Response and Recovery" in the *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation*. It features 14 articles discussing the handling of cultural and artistic artifacts involved in a disaster. Among the titles are;

- Seismic Stabilization of Historic Adobe Structures.
- Response to Collection-Wide Mold Outbreak; How Bad Can It Be-How Good Can it Get?
- Disaster Recovery at the University of Alberta or Every Flood Has a Silver Lining.
- Atomic Oxygen Treatment as a Method of Recovering Smoke-Damaged Paintings.
- The Fire at the Royal Saskatchewan Museum 11: Soot Removal and Cleaning During Recovery.
- Access Denied: Asbestos Contamination as Catalyst and Hindrance to Collection Retrieval and Preservation.

These and the other topic discussed are undoubtedly of practical value. But it is as if in more general discussions of rural floods, most of the foci were on restoring agricultural lands to productive use by indicating the technical means available to remove toxic or seawater contamination, and ignoring other consequences for farmers, villages, etc.

Similarly, the technical nature of much of the current approach to disaster related aspects of cultural properties can be seen in the modules proposed for a professional development course to be placed on the WWW concerning "natural disaster mitigation and the cultural heritage" (Spennemann 1999). It is said that the course "focuses on the principles of disaster management" but the titles of the modules are as follows:

- Module 1. Introduction
- Module 2. What are cultural heritage resources?
- Module 3. What are natural disasters?
- Module 4. The legal dimensions
- Module 5. Vulnerability of cultural heritage to natural disaster impacts
- Module 6. Case studies-Geohazards
- Module 7. Case studies-Climatological Hazards
- Module 8. Case studies-Human-induced Hazards
- Module 9. Planning for disasters.

Undoubtedly, such a course could be of some practical value to some narrowly focused specialists. But basically this would seem to be a course about hazards rather than disasters (for the conceptual distinction see below). It is a course that appears to us to assume agent-specific aspects are important rather than focusing on general or generic principles regarding mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. The course, despite an assertion to the contrary, does not focus on principles, at least of the social aspects of these four processes.

Many disaster-relevant publications on the protection of the cultural heritage are if not site specific, are at best country-specific. As an example see, "Seismic hazard and cultural heritage in the city of Cusco" by Kalafatovich and Carreno 1999. It is very rare to find descriptions and analyses that cut across national boundaries although a few have appeared (e.g., "Community-based protection of cultural heritage against natural disasters" by Affeltranger, 1999).

Actually the technical approach to the protection of cultural properties might have the greatest payoff if it made greater use recent computer and related technological developments. For example, Geographic Information Systems can be used to establish national inventories which allow among other things risk estimates. However, these recent technologies have their own problems and negative consequences of disaster planning and managing (see Quarantelli 1997).

In addition it should be remembered that often what is seen as "technical" problems are actually "people" problems. For example, whether a damaged historical building ought to be torn down in the debris clearance after a disaster, essentially rest on the prevailing values and beliefs of the society involved, and the social division of labor and power of the organizations that deal with the problem. The heart of the matter is about sociological issues, not design engineering judgements.

The general lack of attention to the social science disaster research literature can be attributed to several factors. Partly this is simply a lack of knowledge of the existing literature by disciplines, especially the social sciences that have studied extensively disasters. As we earlier documented, such literature either is not looked for or used by those working in the cultural property area. Perhaps also, if we read the technical literature correctly, there might be a feeling that somehow or other cultural and artistic properties require special treatment because they involve "special" things, a view widespread in the arts and the humanities.

## THE SOCIAL SCIENCE PERSPECTIVE

Our basic assumption is that the topic of the protection of the cultural heritage can be approached in the same way as any other area of life under destructive threat or attack. It is difficult to think why this would not be the case. There are no problems addressed in dealing with the protection of cultural properties that have not been dealt within a larger framework in the research studies of disaster social scientists. We may note that some other areas interested in protecting some particular property or activity have also initially started independent of the relevant social science literature. Disaster preparedness in the chemical industry and the nuclear industry at first tended to approach the problem as if what was involved was primarily of a technical nature and could only be undertaken by specialists or experts in the areas themselves. In time, the disaster preparedness in the chemical and nuclear industries have come to substantially incorporate many ideas from the social science literature and have recognized that the most important problems are of a human and group nature, and that even technical issues of safety and prevention for instance have to be understood within a social framework. While such a shift on the part of those interested in the protection of the cultural heritage will undoubtedly occur, at present those involved are primarily operating outside of a social science perspective.

This perspective on disasters, not only uses theories and ideas relevant to the social science disciplines, but also makes a number of distinctions that by now have been empirically

supported by research undertaken over the last half century. Among the more important and relevant to our discussion are the following:

1. The terms "disasters" and "hazards" refer to two different kinds of phenomena. A hazard has reference to some physical thing that might have negative consequences. But a hazard does not become a disaster until there are some bad or unwanted social consequences. Thus, an earthquake is simply the shaking or movement of land, a seismological happening. In itself it is not a disaster unless it has some significant negative consequences for human beings and social groups. Thus, the overwhelming majority of earthquakes are not disasters. In one basic sense, disasters are social occasions, social happenings.
2. Disasters cannot be behaviorally differentiated in terms of the natural or technological agents involved. They do differ in such dimensions as whether they give no forewarning (e.g., earthquakes and most explosions), or their duration of impact, but these are not single-agent specific features. The notion that technological disasters are more easily dealt with than natural ones is a reflection of an old but now discarded idea that "Acts of God" have to be fatalistically accepted, but that "Acts of Man" lend themselves much more to human control. In actual fact, both Acts of God and Acts of Man are the same in that fundamentally they are the results of human and group actions, a point easily understood if the distinction between hazards and disasters is accepted as just previously noted.
3. Disasters occur mostly at the community level. The great majority of disasters impact a community. There are non-community types of disasters, e.g., a plane crash in an isolated rural area. This affects behavioral responses (e.g., crash survivors do not receive the social support that emerges in a community where residents have undergone a common stressful experience). But overwhelmingly disasters impact the most basic of human groupings, the community. Not only is the impact at that level, but the greater part of measures for dealing with disasters have to be implemented at that local level, the community.
4. Behaviors in community disasters and everyday emergencies are both qualitatively and quantitatively different. There are behavioral differences both in degree and in kind. For instance, because of the typical massive convergence from the outside onto the impact site of a disaster, the responding organizations have to deal with far more and usually previously unknown groups than in an everyday community emergency. As an example, in a massive fire near Nanticoke, a Canadian research team identified 346 converging organizations, including 27 from the federal government and 10 from the regions, as well as 25 provincial government agencies, four new emergent groups, seven local government departments, 31 fire departments, eight voluntary groups, 41 churches, hospitals and schools, four utilities, and 52 other players from the private sector. Such a massive convergence does not occur in everyday emergencies.
5. Just as there are major differences between behaviors in everyday emergencies and community disasters, there are also differences between disasters and what might be called catastrophes. For example, in the typical disasters, the homeless overwhelming seek shelter with local friends and relatives. In catastrophes since most everyone around is homeless that cannot occur. Also, the facilities and operational bases of almost all emergency organizations are often directly hit in a catastrophe; this seldom occurs in a disaster. Different planning for



the managing of a catastrophic occasion than a disaster is required. Of course, what would be catastrophic for a small town might be barely disastrous for a metropolitan area.

6. Disaster-related behavior is very complex. Part of the complexity is because it takes place at different social times in the life of a community. We can see this if we make an ideal type four fold distinction between the phases or times of disaster phenomena. The four phases typically differentiated in the research literature are:

Mitigation includes measures taken at a time distant (usually before) from an actual disaster impact and are intended to prevent or reduce damaging impact. Examples are building codes, land use regulations, zoning, educational programs, training, insurance, etc.

Preparedness has to do with the actions planned and undertaken when the probability of a disaster in a particular locality is at hand. Examples are such actions as warnings and evacuation, positioning of needed resources, closing of vulnerable locations, etc.,

Response refers to crisis-relevant actions engaged in during and immediately after impact. Examples are search and rescue, the providing of emergency medical services, the opening of shelters, distribution of emergency food to victims, etc.

Recovery includes activities undertaken after the response in the crisis period is over and is intended to restore "normal" community life. Examples are the restoration of utilities, the rebuilding of homes, the reopening of stores and schools on a regular schedule, etc.

The stages should not be seen as linear. They are best seen as linked in a semicircle. What is done at a previous stage affects later stages. For instance, if evacuees are relocated back to flood plains, this undermines a mitigation action that would involve relocation away from such risky areas.

We will now discuss some of the general points or themes derivable from the research findings of social scientists. Under each of the four phases of disasters, we primarily discuss three themes that seem particularly relevant for our purposes here. In no way, should what is said, be seen as a systematic coverage of all the research findings, but only those as we see more relevant than others with regard to our topic. Our focus is on those general social science disaster research findings that can be seen as having implications for the protection of the cultural heritage.

## MITIGATION

Among the more relevant research-derived themes of the social science literature on disaster mitigation are:

1) Mitigation as a whole is given low priority by almost everyone, from the individual to the social level. The average citizen seldom bothers undertaking long range steps to protect against future hazards. Disaster mitigatory measures are also seldom on the agenda of most organizations. There are sometime exceptions to this general neglect. Particularly in recent years, especially in Western Europe and North America in such private sector segments like the banking and the insurance industry (and those that have always placed a high priority on safety such as the chemical and nuclear power industries), more and more attention has been turned to trying to prevent or at least mitigate the effects of disasters.

However, as a general principle, it is very difficult to institute measures to prevent or at least weaken the probable impact of disasters. There are several reasons for this. For one, disasters although of potential high impact are low probability happenings. For any given locality they may or may not happen, they may have little or much impact. Also, many persons as well as some societies have a high degree of fatalism with respect to disasters and it is difficult in such a context to see the value of any mitigation measures. In addition, many mitigation measures are often costly. Given that funding for everyday problems that effect many is usually in short supply, giving high priority to those that affect fewer numbers is not seen as a good use of resources. Finally, every day absolutely certain concerns of living, will necessarily take priority over very low probability occasions such as disasters. Exceptions to being interested in mitigation sometime does occur in communities subject to many recurrent crises (generated for instance by floods), and also where activist citizen groups exist such as around hazardous waste sites or chemical plants. These exceptions are known as disaster subcultures.

2) To the extent that mitigation is advocated and implemented, there is a strong tendency to focus on structural or physical measures. Several factors influence this. One is the importance of engineers in modern societies. They tend to think in physical terms, to dealing with objects that can be actually handled and measured. Also, from the point of view of disaster and management agencies, measures or actions that can be physically pointed to are seen as good talking points when applying for funds before legislative groups. Nonstructural measures are simply less thought about (even though social science disaster research suggests that they may have a greater payoff than structural measures).

3) Particularly with respect to structural mitigation measures, for a variety of reasons, what is accepted as probably valid, is often not implemented in practice. A common observation is that especially after a disaster, there often is much talk of doing things to prepare better for future threats. However, the talk is seldom turned into concrete steps. What actually might be a window of opportunity is frequently squandered. And even when some mitigation step is implemented it often is not carried out in the proper way. For example, it has long been known that by using the proper building codes it can almost be insured that houses, bridges, etc. can be built in ways that will enable them to withstand all but the most powerful earthquakes, hurricanes, etc. But time after time, and ranging from Armenia to the United States, it has been found in certain disasters that while the building codes were the appropriate ones for the threat involved, the required standards had simply been not implemented in practice. Sometime this has been because of corruption and the paying off of building inspectors to ignore that the codes are not being followed. Sometime it has been because money can be saved by building

to much lower standards. For example, the tremendous losses and destruction of housing in Hurricane Andrew in the United States were not the result of low or poor building codes. It was found after the disaster that the correct building codes existed which would have considerably reduced the impact of the hurricane, but the legal requirements were simply not adhered to in the building and inspection processes

What are the implications of these observations for the protection of cultural properties?

For one, it is to be expected that interest in mitigatory measures will typically be very low. This is true across the board. And with many cultural properties there are no prior concerns about most of them being or having inherent everyday threats as would be the case for many chemicals in an industrial plant. Safety in that sense is not usually thought of say in terms of the collections of a museum, for example. Thus, interest in mitigation for cultural properties can be expected to be low and rare. On the other hand, here and there one can find examples of where mitigation measures are accepted and implemented. This suggests that those interested in cultural properties ought to look at such success stories. What accounts for those instances? There are hints that leadership of some kind is important (especially in the sense that some organization or other take a lead role) and that advantage can be taken of windows of opportunity (e.g., right after a disaster has occurred in a particular location). Of course, advantage might also be taken of the seeming general background of audiences most likely to be interested in cultural properties (that is persons from higher and highest socioeconomic status). Members of elite groups have the knowledge, resources, and influences that could be put to good use in pushing for saving and protecting cultural properties from disasters. In our looking at the existing literature on protecting the cultural heritage, it is clear to us that the greatest emphasis by far is on structural measures (as we illustrated in earlier examples). There is no doubt that some structural measures can be of use. But we would argue that nonstructural activities in the long run would have greater payoffs. For example, much can be done by way of education and training and knowledge acquisition and sharing. Through education, persons and groups can be informed about what actually are the threats, what steps can be taken, what can be learned from others, etc. But even with respect to structural measures, many of them cannot really be instituted unless there is real knowledge about such measures as building codes, zoning, land use management, etc. and recognizing that most of these are the province of higher level and/or governmental agencies. Put another way, it is very difficult for any given single organization to do anything about these measures unless they are already a part of a larger community effort and responsibility. It is very difficult to protect a single building against flooding, for instance, unless there is an overall land use management program in the community. In fact, in a fundamental sense, mitigation ought to be part of community or regional developmental planning, but cultural properties are not often part of such a process.

As to actually implementing in practice what is desirable by way of mitigation measures, there is no reason to think that organizations dealing with cultural properties, will not be subject to the same ignoring and neglect as are other community groups. To some extent this depends on the larger social setting. For example, in some societies, the construction industry and the real estate industry are subject to a great deal of corruption. Or local government officials can be easily bribed. But if there is knowledge of such matters, it behooves those responsible for mitigatory efforts in protecting cultural properties to pay even more supervisory attention to what is or is not done.

## PREPAREDNESS

Among the more relevant research derived themes of the social science literature on disaster preparedness are:

1) Warnings of impending disasters are taken seriously only and if certain supportive conditions or factors are present. For example, possible victims take seriously those warnings that clearly indicate the threat is fairly certain, will occur soon, and will directly impact self and/or significant others. Furthermore, in those situations where there is forewarning, the reaction is usually quite rational and socially oriented. Also, in general, those with major work responsibilities will not abandon their organizational roles in the faces of a threat or a warning about it.

2) To the extent that non-emergency types of organizations undertake preparedness planning, and relatively few do, but they often plan incorrectly. For example, there tends to be a focus on written disaster plans. But good planning instead focuses on such processes as: undertaking public educational activities; establishing informal links between key groups; assessing, monitoring and communicating information about local risks; holding disaster drills, rehearsals and simulations; developing techniques for training, knowledge transfer and assessments; convening meetings to share information; obtaining the involvement of citizens, businesses, and non-emergency public agencies and relevant non-local groups in the planning process, and updating strategies, resources and laws as necessary. The production of a document or a written plan, while sometimes legally necessary or to meet a bureaucratic mandate, is never as important as the planning process.

3) Preparedness planning at the community level is usually very uneven. It also is often rather problematical. In part this is because to the extent attempts are made, existing or preimpact community cleavages, disputes and conflicts often make the effort very difficult, if not impossible. For example, there are often everyday stresses and strains between different police agencies, between them and fire departments, between police and fire agencies and local emergency management or civil protection groups, among hospitals and emergency medical service entities, and between public and private sector groups. Such differences act as major barriers to disaster planning.

There are implications in these observations for preparedness planning for the protection of cultural properties.

For one, the general finding about the responses of individuals and officials to disasters suggests that those dealing with cultural properties can be expected to carry out their responsibilities when a threat appears. Also implied is that any responses to warnings are likely to be taken seriously and responded to appropriately. On the other hand, a constant refrain that there might eventually be a disaster is not likely to be taken too seriously. And there is always the danger that warning after warning without anything happening, is likely to create a "cry wolf" syndrome, so later "warnings" tend to be ignored.

Also, it is particularly important that preparedness planning go far beyond only the writing up of a disaster plan. As indicated, it is the process of planning that is crucial. Insofar as we can judge those interested in cultural properties have a long way to go with respect to this kind of orientation. The importance of focusing on the process clearly indicates why too technical an

approach to the problem will be of very limited value. In fact, this may be the major weakness of the current dominant approach to taking steps to protect the cultural heritage. Process rather than a product is what is crucial. It may also be noted that written plans can never cover everything, cannot deal with the contingencies that always surface at the time of crises, and are usually outdated by the time they are written.

There is no reason to think that organizations dealing with cultural properties will have any different sets of interorganizational relationships that all groups have. That means that preexisting cleavages, disputes and conflicts have to be taken seriously. In fact, since there are almost always in any given community, multiple organizations with different responsibilities for cultural properties, it might also be expected that there will be intra as well as inter organizational problems. Popular stories of museum vying with one another for audiences, collections, items, etc., certainly suggest that efforts ought to be made to build alliances and coalitions with other organizations of a similar nature, even though each may be independently governed.

## RESPONSE

Among the more relevant research derived themes of the social science literature on disaster responses are:

1) In all societies, the saving of lives is given the very highest priority, even if that involves

losing or destroying property and material things. For instance, there is little hesitation in destroying whatever structures might be in the way if there is a perceived need to build a levee to reduce the spread of a flood or to blow up buildings to prevent the spread of a massive fire. Very frequently this is done without obtaining the consent of the property owners.

2) The typical response problems are often not the expected ones. For instance, human beings generally rise to the challenges of a disaster. As a whole, they react very well.

Although

many rumors about them abound, actual instances of panic flight and looting are very rare or nonexistent, at least in Western type societies. These in fact have become known in the research

literature as the "myths" of disaster behavior. Instead, prosocial behavior predominates with, for example, the great bulk, up to 90% plus of search and rescue, being undertaken by those civilian

persons around impacted sites. Persons or officials occupying key positions, despite the great stress they will undergo, can be expected to carry out their roles and act in a responsible manner;

they are very unlikely to abandon their responsibilities.

In contrast, organizations react much more poorly. But while organizations typically have many problems in coping with the crisis time period of disasters, these problems usually are not the expected ones. For example, there is the often asked question about "who is in charge" is mostly

a meaningless question since research shows that any attempt to impose a command and control

model on any disaster occasion is both impossible and useless. However, there typically are at least three sets of crisis management problems. They are: (1) Information flow problems in the

communication process within and between organizations, as well as to and from organizations and citizens. (2) Organizational decision making problems resulting from losses of higher echelon

personnel because of overwork, major conflict regarding authority over new disaster tasks, and confusion over jurisdictional responsibilities. (3) Problems in interorganizational coordination results from a lack of consensus about what constitutes "coordination," strained relationship created by new disaster tasks, and the magnitude of the disaster impact.

3) Emergent behavior and emergent groups are a major feature of this disaster time period. The greater the disaster, the more there will be the emergence of new behavioral structures and functions at the crisis time period. As shown in Figure 1, a fourfold typology captures the phenomena well. Type I organizations are established ones that do not markedly

change their general structure and functions at times of crises (e.g., many police and fire departments maintain their traditional forms and spheres of activities) Type II organizations are expanding ones that have new structures but old functions (e.g., Red Cross chapters who by preplanning incorporate many volunteers into a new social structure but carry out traditional agency tasks. Type III organizations are extending ones that have old structures but new functions (e.g., a construction company using its traditional group structure to undertake building or street debris clearance). Finally, Type IV groups are new entities had no preimpact existence but which carry out new disaster functions (e.g., informal search and rescue teams, or damage assessment groups). This last type of group plays crucial roles in the crisis period of a disaster.

However, even the best of preplanning is limited in preparing for all emergent behaviors. In fact, it appears that the greater the disaster, the more and increasing involvement of the organized entities going from Type I through Type IV. An ordinary, everyday emergency could be handled solely by Type I organizations, but a catastrophic disaster will require the multiple presence of all four types of organized behavior. It goes without saying that the presence of many such groups of differing structures and functions creates major problems of coordination at the community level.

What are the implications of these observations for responding in disasters on the part of those responsible for protecting cultural properties?

It is to be expected that if worse comes to worse, property and goods will be sacrificed if it means the saving of lives. For instance, sometime historical buildings only partially damaged at worst have been demolished after a disaster. As an example, after the Loma Prieta earthquake in the United States, a survey found in one area that 78 out of 472 designed historical buildings were demolished, even though in retrospect it seems that it was unnecessary from a safety point of view. But under the argument that the damaged structures were an imminent threat to adjacent buildings and to life safety, the structures were razed to the ground. Such efforts to protect "lives" while understandable in terms of the great value attached to saving people in all societies, ignores other values people have about the cultural heritage. In fact, it is somewhat ironic that in some cases, such as old churches in Armenia after the earthquake, and the historic district of Charleston, South Carolina after Hurricane Hugo, withstood damage much better than more modern built structures.

On the other hand, some priorities should be developed on which cultural properties ought to be saved first if a choice has to be made among them. As an example, in a major fire in a historical building near where we live, outside fire personnel who came in, simply grabbed and salvaged whatever documents, ornaments, etc. that were in line of sight or seemed "valuable." It turned out that much of what was saved were ordinary duplicates or copies while many irreplaceable historically original items of considerable historical worth were ignored and left to burn.

Good planning can prevent such errors being made in any disaster response. Real organizational problems need to be addressed in any group that is facing a disaster. We have listed a number of the typical problems that appear. There is no reason at all to think that organizations dealing with the cultural heritage will not have the same kind of problems. Knowledge of what really needs to be dealt with is a necessary first step in good planning. This does not require setting up a disaster "czar." It necessitates addressing the communication, decision making and coordination problems that will be present. In particular, those officials in cultural property organizations must recognize that they will always be only one of multiple actors in the disaster response.

However, in any disaster of any magnitude there will always be emergent groups and emergent behaviors that do not lend themselves very well to prior planning. In fact, by definition, this kind of emergent phenomena is generated by the contingencies, the unexpected elements, and the "luck of the draw" that will be present in major disasters. While one cannot specifically plan for such things, it is possible however to think through ahead of time what might be some likely scenarios. For example, historical examples suggest that there will frequently be a convergence of "volunteers" both from within and from outside the affected community to help protect or save cultural properties (as occurred in the Florence flood in the 1960s). Thought can be given and planning can be undertaken on how such volunteers ought to be handled, what tasks might be assigned to them, etc.

## RECOVERY

Among the more relevant research derived themes of the social science literature on disaster recovery are:

- 1) The huge convergence of outside assistance that is typical of the response phase usually drops off substantially in the recovery phase. The world's attention, usually through the mass communication system, turns to the next major disaster elsewhere. This is another way of saying that the recovery period is when the situation is no longer seen as being of a crisis nature.
- 2) Recovery efforts are plagued not only by conflicts on how to proceed, but also by the re-emergence of preimpact conflicts, whatever they are. The temporary setting aside of the last during the response phase is seldom maintained in the recovery period. The muting of preimpact community differences that exist at the crisis time period, disappears in this later time phase. In addition, there are new problems that stem from

the disaster impact, for example, differences appear on whether and how a devastated business or residential neighborhood should be rebuilt.

In this time period there is a strong tendency for the mass communication system to focus on conflictive aspects and atypical problems. In a sense, this time phase is marked by the mass media going back to normal time news gathering norms. These stress not the reporting of agreements or routines, but emphasize conflict situations and what is out of the ordinary (i.e., not does dog bite person, but does person bite dog).

3) The usual outcome of recovery efforts is more or less to reestablish whatever the preimpact situation was. Radical change of any kind, or even just change, is rare. For example, there is only selective organizational change at best from those social groups that undergo a disaster. It is true that after a disaster there usually is much talk within organizations on improving their planning for crises. However, such talk seldom is actually implemented by way of any actual structural or functional changes. However, changes that were underway before a disaster occurred might be accelerated if organizational leadership is present.

As to the protection of cultural properties, what are the implications from these research based observations on recovery?

It should be assumed that whatever offers of help might be made during the crisis or emergency period will very seldom be what aid will eventually be provided in the recovery phase. This is true whether the offers are of people, things, money, or anything else. On the other hand, organizations dealing with the cultural heritage could do a better job of following up on earlier offers of help. This is because in most cases the offers are made with reference to specific cultural properties, often recognizable ones or at least known in some sense to the offering party. Advantage could be taken of that link or bond between those making offers and the objects involved.

As said, in the recovery period, there are the new organizational and community problems that result from the disaster, as well as the re-emergence of older problems that existed before impact. The mass communication system plays a crucial role in all of this, and on who gets defined as "good" or "bad" actors in the recovery. This suggests that organizations responsible for cultural properties ought to work out good relations with mass media representatives. However, this cannot wait until the disaster has occurred. While the end goal might be to insure a good recovery effort, the planning as well as relevant actions and activities will have to occur long before the disaster happens.

Finally, planning for recovery should be realistic. Too often, grandiose plans are initially set forth. While there is nothing wrong with trying to take advantage of a disaster to improve on whatever the predisaster situation was, the probability is high that relatively little change can be brought about. It is true that there are exceptions to this. Sometime disasters can be used to initiate major or even radical change, but that is a relatively rare occurrence.

To summarize. We have indicated a number of problems at different times that generally exist. Some of them could be reduced or even eliminated by better planning and managing. However, it should be recognized that there are limits to what can be done to change what happens at different times of disasters. This is not a counsel of despair but to suggest that it is important to remain rooted in reality, especially as established by systematic research. Even simple and



general knowledge of what is likely to occur can be very helpful. We have presented some of that Research-based knowledge.

### THREE SPECIFIC QUESTIONS AND ISSUES

1) Is it true that those who talk about cultural properties seem implicitly seem to make a distinction between high and popular culture, and generally ignore the latter? That is our perception of the matter and it does rest on certain historical happenings. Especially in terms of the Western civilization tradition, long ago a distinction was made between high culture and what was usually dismissed as mass or popular culture. We do not want to discuss this contentious point. However, we raise the question because it is neither obvious nor self explanatory what high culture is, except that it usually reflects a top down or elitist view of art and other artistic productions. To many, we think, the explicit definitions given in meetings, treaties, or other sources (such as the UN definition we quoted earlier) appear to be assuming a high culture standard. However, it should be noted that recently UNESCO has advanced recommendations on the safeguarding of traditional culture and folklore (which appears to us at least to partly overlap with what is widely known in the literature as mass or popular culture, see [www.unesco.org/culture/heritage/...le/recommandation.html\\_eng/index\\_en.htm](http://www.unesco.org/culture/heritage/...le/recommandation.html_eng/index_en.htm)).

In fact, in looking at numerous documents about protecting cultural properties, we found very few exceptions to the typical ignoring of and/or not including mass or popular culture. The only major exception we found was in a government document from Japan that did indicate that among the cultural properties to be preserved and protected were folk arts, both tangible and intangible ([www.monbu.go.jp/laramashill1998engle6O2.html](http://www.monbu.go.jp/laramashill1998engle6O2.html)). Furthermore, in a very legalistic document entitled "Toward More Universal Protection of Intangible Cultural Property" a major point made was that most legal and other discussion of cultural properties "

include only physical forms of property by specifying "movable or immovable property." Protection is not extended to the non-physical or intangible aspects of cultural property (Berryman 1991).

We raise this because even the concept of tangible seems to be colored by the different conceptions different social systems have of phenomena. An example of this is given in a recent discussion of sacred sites of Australian aborigine groups. From a Western civilization perspective, the sites are neither very obvious nor very tangible. Here again this may be an instance where something is quite clear in one societal system, but becomes very complicated in another.

For our purposes, however, let us note something that is perhaps less contentious and strange to Western eyes. We do think that some attention has to be given to the question as to whether items from popular or mass culture, many of which are of a tangible nature, should be included within the notion of the protection of cultural properties. If for no other reason, it is clear that the world is changing and the old distinction between high and mass culture is eroding. So if the current approach to cultural properties implicitly assumes a high culture position, the social changes occurring may soon undercut that position.

In addition, it is necessary to note that within the disaster research area, there recently has developed a strong interest in the popular culture of disasters. There have been sessions held on the topic in at least four different professional association meetings within the last four years, a web page is being developed for those interested in the topic, and a special issue of the international Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters focused on the topic in the year 2000. Finally, a volume on The Popular Culture of Disasters: Views From the Social Sciences and the Humanities and History will be published in 2003 via Xlibris by the International Research Committee on Disasters (Webb and Quarantelli, 2003) As researchers turn to the popular culture of disasters, it may be that what they study and find will have some implications for the question being raised here.

2) Is it possible to assign any monetary value to most cultural properties? In a sense, they are often seen as priceless. Many such items cannot be insured.

There is an important implication from this observation. Much disaster planning attempts to use economic cost-benefit analyses. How much does it cost to protect something given the value of the item in the first place or its replacement? However, such a methodology is not very applicable to cultural properties. What value can be placed on protecting the Pantheon on the Acropolis in Greece? We give this particular example in particular because when we asked that very question it bewildered an US official involved in disaster planning. Given this, to what extent will the protection of the cultural heritage be handicapped by the fact that it does not lend itself very well to any kind of cost-benefit analysis?

Actually we do not think that there are any clear answers to this basic question at present. As far as we know the question has seldom been explicitly asked. Likewise, we are not aware of any systematic studies on the matter. But we predict that it will increasingly come to the fore as governments and legislatures turn increasingly to economic justifications for whatever measures they financially support to mitigate, prepare for, respond to, or recover from disasters. The area of the protection of cultural properties will not be exempt from having to economically justify itself. Or if that will not be the case, what kind of non economic appeal can be made to those who will have to fund whatever is done. When funding of much space exploration is attacked because many in the population do not see any direct or immediate benefits for themselves in such endeavors, how will an expansion of disaster planning to cover cultural properties be justified?

3) Can all threats to cultural properties be approached in the same general way? Most self designated disaster researchers draw a distinction between disasters (which are consensus occasions) and conflict situations. The latter refer to such phenomena as wars, ethnic strife, terrorist attacks, riots, and all crisis situations where at least one party involved is deliberately attempting to continue or make a bad situation worse. This distinction does not seem to be made in the cultural properties literature. For example, of the 40 papers presented at the International Congress of Cultural Heritage at Risk in 1999, more than 15 dealt with wartime or conflict situations.

To be sure all crises have certain aspects or dimensions in common. But there are limits to thinking therefore that all crises can be dealt with in the same way. The very fact that some sort of conscious hostile action is always involved in a conflict has major consequences for whatever

planning or managing is attempted. Our strong belief is that those interested in protecting cultural properties take the difference into account.

We should also note that there is by far more damage and destruction to cultural properties in conflict situations than in disasters. This is because such properties are often the subject of direct attack, as was recently seen in Kosovo with the deliberate destruction of the tangible cultural properties of opposing groups; see also for Afghanistan (Dupree 1996). And of course the attack on the World Trade Center on 9/11 resulted in substantial losses of the nation's cultural heritage (see *Cataclysm and Challenge* 2002). As an aside, we might note that we are not aware of a single case in and during disasters of looting of cultural properties. Whatever losses or damages occur results from the disaster impact itself.

## CONCLUSION

It would be very wise for those interested in protecting cultural properties to pay attention to what systematic social science research has established. The great majority of problems in attempting such protection are general problems in protecting anything else from hazards and risks of different kinds. We have a good idea what these problems are, what can and cannot be done, etc. As the saying goes, there is no need to reinvent the wheel again. The wheel already exists and it is only a matter of using it in the context of protecting the cultural heritage.

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There is also a major professional associated called the ISA Research Committee on Disasters (IRCD) which involves mostly disaster researchers but also has as member disaster planners and managers, from about three dozen countries around the world. This organization publishes a journal, The International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters, a newsletter Unscheduled Events, and has a web site called Contemporary Disaster Review; which reviews books, films, web-based and multimedia material (see <http://muweb.millersville.edu/~cdr/>). There always is a major international meeting every four years in connection with the World Congress of Sociology held by the International Sociological Association (the next scheduled for South Africa in 2006 after past meetings in Australia, Canada, Spain, Mexico, Sweden and Bulgaria). The Committee has initiated a series of books on disaster topics, the first being Quarantelli (ed.) What is a Disaster? Different Perspectives on the Question, and the second a volume on methods of disaster research.

The current web site for the Research Committee is at  
<http://www.udel.edu/DRC/ircd.html> The current web site for the Journal is at  
<http://www.usc.edu/schools/sppd/ijmed>