

- which part(s) of the heritage conservation decision-making processes benefit the most from a participatory approach? Which benefit the least?
- decisions are made at all levels; how can capacity-building efforts in shared decision-making respond to this?

Advocating interdisciplinary decision-making

Communication gaps in multidisciplinary dialogue are a chronic issue within conservation. While multi- and even interdisciplinary action is generally championed in contemporary society, it is not easy to effect in practice. Professional roles are challenged and stretched when working in more interdisciplinary ways. Moreover, a common sentiment heard from professionals in one of the working groups was that of being “disowned”, “orphaned”, or existing in a “no-man's land” between disciplines as they participated in more interdisciplinary activities. The problem of balancing between multiple disciplines is encountered in many sectors, and conservation could advocate for and become a model for how this can be achieved. There was a strong feeling that the positive, exciting and stimulating aspects of working in cultural heritage conservation should be stressed.

As one of the working groups concluded:

“Conservation is a great platform for interdisciplinarity, and we should celebrate this.”

The community: beneficiaries or partners?

Since 2002, community involvement has been a growing theme in the SCD course. Here, the theme was further explored through posing questions such as: Who constitutes ‘the community’ in relation to the heritage? Who represents ‘the community’ in the decision-making process? What are the mechanisms of community involvement that can ensure transparency and effectiveness in various contexts? How does one reconcile consideration for local values and uses with ‘universal’ values of cultural heritage? Can conservation decisions contribute to the sustainability of a local community? The seminar group emphasized the importance of considering the claims of posterity, and striking a balance between present and future.

The issue of community integration and engagement is compounded by the fact that, in many situations, there is no such thing as *the* community – a single, homogeneous entity with fully shared interests and values. Communities have diverse voices with potentially different values, goals, expectations and interests, as well as internal conflicts. Identification of these is not straightforward, but is an essential first step toward the resolution of any conflicts that may exist in the decision-making process.

One observation struck a particular chord with the seminar group: “Who empowers whom?” This was at the heart of the debate, posing