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Understanding the tensions in place: conflict and conservation in Kashmir

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Abstract

The ongoing evolution of the global heritage movement has been marked by a move away from fabric-centred understandings of heritage, towards a language of 'place', 'values' and 'stakeholders'. Recent initiatives like the 'Vienna Memorandum on Historic Urban Landscapes' and the 'Seoul Declaration on Heritage and the Metropolis in Asia and the Pacific' represent important steps in such directions for managing the heritage of urban environments.

This paper examines these developments in the context of Srinagar, the capital city of Indian administered Kashmir. With the conflict in the region enduring for more than fifteen years, the city - regarded as one of the most important pre-modern urban landscapes in South Asia - has suffered extensive physical damage. Nonetheless, the city remains the cultural and political heart of a wider collective identity rooted in the Kashmir Valley. As such, Srinagar presents a rich example of a city that would strongly benefit from the insights gained from Seoul and Vienna; an approach that recognises how a sense of 'place' arises through an intimate dialogue between the built environment and the socio-cultural context within which it sits. However, as we shall see, a framework oriented around 'values' and 'context' opens up unfamiliar and difficult questions and challenges. If a city like Srinagar is to be discussed in more holistic, less fabric-based terms, the interfaces between heritage and its wider social values, such as cultural sovereignty, multi-culturalism or democracy require far greater attention than they have received to date.

Embracing the complexities of historic urban landcapes

Recent years have seen a major shift within the world of heritage towards understanding ideas of place, landscape and context. This has meant a departure from just conserving individual buildings, in favour of an appreciation of their values and the social, historical and environmental context within which they sit. Such factors have become pivotal to defining the significance of heritage sites.

Two factors can be identified as the driving forces of this shift: firstly, the expansion of a heritage discourse into ever more complex landscapes, and a gradual recognition of the discordant and competing agendas such environments inevitably deliver; and secondly, the widespread move that has occurred to conceive heritage in less elitist, more democratic terms. As we know, the concept of World Heritage, for example, first emerged in the 1960s as an overwhelmingly 'fabric' based discourse. While the basic premise and concerns of World Heritage have proved relatively robust, concerns about the validity of universalist approaches based purely on expert opinions have continued to grow. In the face of such critiques, there has been a widespread departure from earlier 'top down' models of heritage management in favour of more democratic approaches that valorise concepts like 'stakeholders' or 'values'. These terms reflect a concern for incorporating multiple perspectives, and a plurality of voices. It is now everyday practice for heritage planners to incorporate – and balance – the views of local residents, academics, local businesses, government offices and non-governmental organizations, with the needs of those consuming the heritage: tourists. As a result, the opinions and interests of central government or outside experts are now countered by more localized, everyday perspectives.

This shift from mere buildings to sites, places and landscapes has particular pertinence for our understanding of the role heritage plays in the complex and dynamic environments of cities. Indeed, it has become increasingly apparent that the foundational charters of today's heritage movement are inadequate for dealing with large urban landscapes and the myriad socio-political agendas they support. Accordingly, in recent yeas, two separate initiatives, the Vienna Memorandum of 2005 and the Seoul Declaration of 2007, have attempted to foster a more holistic approach to heritage in urban environments. As the Seoul Declaration states:

> Because of the complexity of urban development in metropolitan contexts, new approaches are needed to ensure that heritage outcomes and community needs are effectively integrated into the design and implementation of major development and infrastructure projects. These include the recognition of the underlying economic and strategic planning forces at play, and negotiations based on good understanding of the interests of all parties involved in the planning and decision making process. (Seoul Declaration 2007: 4)

In a similar vein, the Vienna Memorandum declares:

> The expanding notion of cultural heritage in particular over the last decade, which includes a broader interpretation leading to recognition of human coexistence with the land and human beings in society, requires new approaches to and methodologies for urban conservation and development in a territorial context. The international charters and recommendations have not yet fully integrated this evolution. (UNESCO 2005: 2)

By approaching heritage in urban landscapes in more holistic terms both documents work towards a language of 'place' narrated through ideas such as 'personality', 'life' or 'emotional quality':

> Heritage sites contribute to the life and memory of the metropolitan areas by the diversity of their uses…Alongside with geographical features and the living social ecosystem, cultural heritage contributes strongly to the personality and character of the metropolis. (Seoul Declaration 2007: 1)

Taking into account the emotional connection between

human beings and their environment, their sense of place, it is fundamental to guarantee an urban environmental quality of living to contribute to the economic success of a city and to its social and cultural vitality. (UNESCO 2005: 3)

The documents recognise that in order to understand the 'current and past social expressions and developments' which together constitute a 'place' (UNESCO 2005: 2) ideas of conservation need to move away from 'individual architectural or archaeological sites' (Seoul Declaration 2007: 2) towards an awareness of the broader social and political histories of an urban environment. In other words, the shift in emphasis towards understanding urban 'places' as lived spaces and sites of collective identity foregrounds the broader socio-cultural and political contexts within which heritage sits. As we shall see shortly, this raises interesting questions and challenges for cities like Srinagar.

This realisation of how places and landscapes are socially realised strongly reflects recent academic debates on the subject, and the emergence of more humanist, phenomenological approaches capable of addressing socio-cultural, symbolic and relative values (Rose 1993). By paying greater attention to localised environments, such perspectives have discussed ideas of 'place' in order to read landscapes as variegated and specific social settings. In contrast to earlier conceptions of space as abstract, objective and value neutral, notions of place invoke ideas of meaning, social action and ideologically charged regimes of values. In other words, the notion of place captures a sense of how landscapes are made meaningful, encountered and socially actualised. To illustrate this Tilley states 'place is a centre for action, intention and meaningful concern…fundamental to group and individual identities' (1994: 18). And as Duncan and Duncan remind us, 'the web like character of places and landscapes means that they are capable of sustaining multiple meanings, and that multiple narratives criss-cross and thread through them' (1988: 123).

Not surprisingly, this analytical progression towards spatial multiplicity has also given rise to an understanding of landscapes as inherently political (Macnaghten 1998; Bender 1993; Prazniak and Dirlik 2001). Bender, for example, discusses how certain voices and values pertaining to Stonehenge have been marginalised in the face of institutionalised and hegemonic value systems. She demonstrates how Stonehenge has been encapsulated within certain institutional frameworks, in this case English Heritage, in an attempt to establish a normative historiography which legitimates a particular form of governance and ownership over the land (see Bender 1993 and 1999).

Similarly, in her description of the Acropolis in Athens as a material heritage layered with multiple framings and historical narratives, Yalouri (2001) demonstrates how the need to re/present the site for both national and international tourism has created a tension around the selective presentation of memories and their mode of narration. By discussing the relationship between identity, place and history in terms of memory, Yalouri switches attention to the ways a place like the Acropolis is continually constituted and reconstituted. In this respect, as *lieux de mémoire* (Nora 1998), landscapes conceptually emerge as the medium through which multiple temporalities are simultaneously remembered and forgotten. Yalouri's account thus identifies the complex political web arising from a discourse of heritage attempting to encapsulate intersecting local, national and global memories of place.

Of course, the issues Yalouri, Bender and others raise are most politically and emotionally charged when heritage sites have some association with war, trauma or atrocity. When heritage and the events of war or conflict come together the interface between the two is mediated in one of two ways. Firstly, heritage can be a tool for commemorating past conflicts, a mechanism for prolonging the memory of destruction, suffering or the loss of lives. This invariably takes the form of either custom-built memorials or the preservation of iconic structures that attempt to capture past horrors. But heritage sites can also become associated with war and conflict in a second way: by becoming embroiled in the conflict as it takes place. Among the many places that have been symbolically and/or physically fought over, the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem and the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya are two notable examples.

To date, these two ways in which episodes of war and conflict, past and present, interface with heritage have been negotiated by conservationists and architects through a fabric based discourse, which, in part, creates a disconnection between the material culture and its immediate social context. In the case of memorials, monuments or preserved structures, these are set aside from the everyday as places to visit. Their symbolic value depends upon being demarcated as depopulated, museumified spaces. The Tuol Sleng Museum in Phnom Penh and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum are vivid examples of this process. For those sites that form part of the contours of a conflict, they do so precisely because they are part of the everyday. To overcome this, the heritage industry imparts a value system that transcends the context of the dispute. Assertions of 'outstanding universal value' remove a heritage site from its immediate context by elevating it to a higher socio-cultural plane. Notions of 'civilisation' or 'humanity' are the tools by which the heritage industry attempts to depoliticise and thus safeguard. The degree to which these attempts succeed or not, has been illustrated in the fate of structures like the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem or the Buddhas of Bamyan in Afghanistan.

In both cases then, the heritage industry has utilised a scientific, fabric-centred discourse of heritage to isolate and de-contextualise. Indeed, the examples of the Acropolis, Stonehenge, The Bamyan Buddhas, and Tuol Sleng all support the argument presented here that the relationship between heritage and 'difficult' histories has been largely restricted to the construction or preservation of specific, stand-alone sites, whether it be buildings, monuments, engineering structures or archaeological ruins. The language of the Vienna Memorandum and Seoul Declaration, however, clearly calls for greater contextualisation, and a far greater emphasis on viewing heritage as a socio-material relationship. In moving in such directions, these initiatives not only pull heritage into more overtly politicised terrains, but also attempt to do so in the highly complex, dynamic and everyday spaces of cities. As densely populated, historically layered environments, today's cities draw upon their material and social fabric to express a multitude of values - including social equity, multi-culturalism, cosmopolitanism or nation-building. Invariably, it is these very values that define the city as place. If a language of historic urban landscapes is to incorporate such values, then it must embrace and negotiate the challenges that arise when the expression of such values is either being oppressed, denied or is a source of enmity and conflict. These unfamiliar philosophical and logistical challenges are nowhere more apparent than in a 'place' like Srinagar.

Srinagar – 'perhaps the most threatened yet valuable site in india'

The World Monuments Fund (WMF) has declared the old city of Srinagar as 'perhaps the most threatened yet valuable site in India', placing it on its 2008 List of Most Endangered Sites[1]. As the capital city of Indian administered Kashmir, and the political, economic hub of the Kashmir Valley, Srinagar has a rich and extensive vernacular heritage. Situated in a mountainous valley, and oriented around the Jhelum River and many lakes, most notably the Dal Lake, the city has a unique material culture comprised of houseboats, wooden bridges, mosques, bazaars and hundreds of wooden houses (Figure 1). It is also home to some of the finest and most elaborate Mughal gardens in the region (Khan 2007).

Records indicate that Srinagar has existed as a settlement from at least the third century BC. Not surprisingly, the built environment today reflects a long, complex history of shifting religious, cultural and political influences. Around the time the city was established, Buddhism was being introduced to the Kashmir Valley by Emperor Ashoka. By the end of the fourteenth century Hindu and Buddhist rule came to an end across the Kashmir Valley as the region came under the control of various Muslim leaders, including the Mughal Emperor Akbar. It later came under the influence of the Sikhs and then the Hindus, after the treaty of 1846 between the British and the Dogra rulers of neighbouring Jammu (Zutshi 2003). The Dogra rulers discriminated in various ways against the Muslim populace, and the anger against this rule intensified when the Dogra ruler Hari Singh acceded, under pressure, to India in 1947 – when the country gained independence and was partitioned. With India reneging even on the limited promises of autonomy, and with support from Pakistan, the movement turned violent in 1989. For the next 16 years, the valley was caught in a web of intensive and horrific violence. The situation has been returning to 'normalcy' over the last decade, though the political situation remains largely unchanged.

Srinagar, as a physical space, remains unique in various ways. Set at a high altitude in a mountainous valley, a lot of the architecture of the city is oriented towards either the Jhelum River or one of the lakes. There are wooden bridges and bathing areas (*ghats*) along the river, apart from the numerous old and beautifully crafted houseboats that, while they are a favourite of the tourists, are also home to many residents of the city. The long, joint rows of timber and masonry structures, with their sloping roofs and carved windows and doors, create a cityscape that is quite different from any other. At the crossroads of various civilisations, Srinagar has a rich cultural past that is reflected in its many mosques, shrines, temples, grand houses, gardens and bazaars. As Langenbach states:

> Srinagar, and other cities and villages in Kashmir are distinguished today for more than their monumental buildings and archaeological sites –they are unique in the world for their vernacular residential architecture. It is an architecture generated out of a distinctive use of materials and way of building, but in the modern world it is being rapidly displaced by reinforced concrete and other modern materials and systems. (2007: 9)

Located in an area prone to earthquakes, the traditional, vernacular architecture of Srinagar is also noted for its resilience to seismic activity. In describing this earthquake resistant vernacular construction, Langenbach identifies two distinct styles: *taq* and *dhajji dewari*. Although not specifically a Kashmiri term, *taq* refers to a type of buildings that employs a system of ladder-like horizontal timbers bedded into masonry bearing walls. These timbers ensure that the bricks, mud or stones of the walls are held in place and tied into the wooden floors. In contrast, the Persian term *dhajji dewari,* literally meaning 'patch quilt wall', relates to a style of panelled construction comprised of tightly packed wood and masonry (Langenbach, 2007). Characterised by hundreds of structures built from these two construction styles, the 'old city' of Srinagar remains a remarkable example of a large, relatively intact, historic urban landscape. Significantly also, it endures as a dynamic 'living' city. Many of the residences and shops in use today have been inhabited through generations.

It should also be noted that, in other respects, the 'old city' remains similar to other old urban settlements in south Asia. It is a crowded space characterised by narrow, winding lanes and buildings abutting each other, with a mix of residential, commercial and religious structures. The city consists of many *mohallas* (quarters or neighbourhoods), demarcated variously by trades and communities. Some *mohallas* are identified as Shia Muslim or Hindu, for example, and the streets and bazaars are often distinguished by the predominance of one trade like silverware or spices or utensils (Khan, 2007).

Over the last two decades, the fortunes of the old city have been tied closely with the tumultuous political developments of this period. Since 1990, as noted, the city has been the site of sustained violent conflict. The conflict has still not been resolved, and the Kashmir Valley remains tense with regular incidences of violence. Naturally the preservation of the past is considered a relatively low priority for both residents and officials coping with the everyday challenges of living in a conflict zone. The conflict has involved and affected all sections of society, transforming the physical and socio-economic landscape of the valley. It has been a period of suffering with high levels of violence, stagnation of commercial activity and deterioration of the

Figure 1: *Bridge and Houses Over Jhelum River, (Tim Winter)*

Figure 2: *Abandoned Houses, Srinagar (Tim Winter)*

infrastructure (figure 2). The area that has suffered the most damage is the old city. It was the hub of the separatist movement and the site of various demonstrations and police action – with many structures being damaged in the crossfire.

The social constitution of the old city was affected too, particularly with the exodus of the Hindu minority of Kashmiri Pandits in early 1990. They were a small but influential community, settled in the area for centuries, occupying high positions in the bureaucracy and in educational institutions. Most of them lived in the old city, and some of the most beautiful houses belonged to them. Following a few selected killings and threats issued by Islamic militants in the local press, most Kashmiri Pandits fled the valley over a few weeks. They have not returned as yet, and it is unlikely they ever will. The social fabric of some localities in the old city has thus been irrevocably altered. In the aftermath of the violence, and coupled with other processes of unplanned and haphazard growth that affect cities throughout India, the challenges facing the preservation of heritage in Srinagar are immense. The following three sections outline some of the issues and challenges that, we believe, are pertinent if the city is to be conceived as an historic urban landscape.

Economies of urban renewal

The ongoing conflict has had a paradoxical impact on the architecture of the old city, with some areas being destroyed while others have actually been preserved by the war. The political and economic isolation of the region since the early 1990s has meant Srinagar has not witnessed the modernization and 'concretization' that has become commonplace in other Indian cities. However, this isolation, along with the ongoing conflict and resultant economic 'poverty' has also meant the old city lies in a bad state of disrepair with hundreds of buildings literally crumbling away. The civic infrastructure too has been neglected through this period, and the river and the lakes need to be urgently revived. The reclamation of waterways has also occurred at a more rapid pace, and with roads being built over canals it becomes a challenge to interpret the overall layout of the city today.

The realignment has led both to the development of new routes and the closure of old ones. This especially affects traders whose markets or areas have declined as the commercial centre has shifted elsewhere. The goldsmiths and traders of Saraf Kadal, a neighbourhood of the old city, where the Royal Mint was located in the fifteenth century can be cited as an example of such problems. It was an area that became known for the crafting of fine jewellery, and thus emerged as the main gold market of the Kashmir Valley. However, the area began to decline after the filling-in of the Nallah Mar canal in the 1970s. By changing the flows of people and commerce within the neighbourhood, this event eventually had a detrimental impact on family businesses, resulting in many goldsmiths closing and moving away (Malik 2007). Not surprisingly, such industries have further declined during the period of violence. The revival of jewellery making in this area is thus one example of an initiative activity that can achieve a number of goals. Firstly, by connecting with the collective memory of the neighbourhood, it will create valuable spatial-cultural continuities. Secondly, it will provide economic securities at the critical family level. And finally, such economic flows will provide the essential financial resources within the community that can be channelled into the maintenance and restoration of the architectural fabric. In addition, other handicrafts like brassware and woodcarving too have declined. A program of revival would aid communities and neighbourhoods, by directly increasing their earning capacity and by encouraging tourism. Tourism has been critical to the economy of the region through the last century. The challenge is to develop tourism in the old city of Srinagar, through a focus on its vernacular architecture and craft traditions.

Understandably, given the conflict and poverty levels, the renovation of old structures and styles of construction is not a key priority for the residents of Srinagar today. In fact as we shall see shortly, traditional wooden housing has become associated with poverty and the suppressed development caused by the years of violence in the region. Rather than

Figure 3: *Residents of Housing on Jhelum River (Tim Winter)*

perceiving localised 'development' as a force that threatens the traditional structures of the urban environment, a conservation paradigm is required that carefully interweaves economic and commercial revival with the regeneration of the city's neighbourhoods. Understanding the connections between localised cultures of commerce and trade, traditional architectural forms and the socio-ethnic complexities of each neighbourhood needs to be at the heart of a conservation approach oriented towards ideas of place (figure 3).

Empowering community governance

Rowlands and Butler (2007) suggest that greater attention needs to be given to the value of seeing local communities as the 'curators' of their conflict transformation environment. This has particular pertinence to Srinagar where a concern for preserving the city's traditional residential architecture can be integrated into other humanitarian initiatives that prioritise 'community driven reconstruction' (CDR). The reconstruction of housing can be promoted as a precipitator to a revival in trust and dialogue between communities. One of the key challenges however, is cultivating a heritage consciousness within the city, particularly towards the crumbling, wooden architecture (Figure 4). There are few, if any, civic institutions that have the resources or expertise to create cross-community awareness concerning such issues.

More recently, a number of small groups, operating under the umbrella organisation Sheher-e-Khas Welfare Development Coordination Committee, have called for the old city to be referred to as *sheher-e-khas*, roughly translated as 'special city'. This is in response to media reports referring to 'downtown' Srinagar. The Sheher-e-Khas Committee suggests that the old city has been deliberately neglected by the

government, as it was the space from which the calls for Kashmiri sovereignty emerged most strongly. They would like to highlight instead its position for centuries as the 'nerve-centre' of Kashmiri culture, business and artistry. Though there has not been much discussion on this so far, the nomenclature *sheher-e-khas* is indicative of a desire to reclaim the space as their own heritage (Greater Kashmir 2007; Kashmir Observer 2007). The name has a particular resonance: while 'sheher' is the most common Urdu/Hindi term for a city, the suffix 'e-khas' immediately brings to mind the special chambers for receiving nobles, Diwan-e-khas, familiar to Mughal forts across north India. Clearly then, while such organisations can play a productive role in promoting the cultural values of the city among communities, ideas of community driven heritage programmes will be inevitably infused with the political complexities and sensitivities of the region.

The occupation by the armed forces of many historical structures, including the prominent Mughal fort of Hari Parbat in the heart of Srinagar, is strongly resented by Kashmiris. It has also precluded the possibility of participation by the people in any conservation efforts. The long simmering resentment against the army's overwhelming presence in the valley, leads to situations today where attempts by the army to forge some links with the community are rejected. This was apparent in the strong opposition to the Army undertaking repair and restoration of temples and mosques across the valley. The proposed project was named 'Operation Sadbhavana (Goodwill)', but was opposed by many people in the valley – most prominently by religious leaders, separatists and human rights activists – as a hollow attempt to cover up for its rights abuses (Swami 2002). The Grand Mufti of Kashmir even issued a Fatwa for the Army to halt these efforts, and the army called off its programme (Ahmad 2007; BBC News 2007; The Tribune 2007).

Indeed to date there has been little involvement of Kashmiris in even the small efforts at conservation undertaken by the Indian government and its armed forces. The Vienna Memorandum clearly advocates 'a vision on the city as a whole with forward-looking action on the part of decision-makers, and a dialogue with the other actors and stakeholders involved' (2005: 3). Such an approach seems particularly appropriate for the layered socio-cultural histories of Srinagar. However, in a situation of continued conflict and tension, there are real challenges in undertaking such dialogues. With an ever-shifting political landscape and a multitude of voices, whose position should be privileged is a question that will need to be confronted in some way. Moreover, how can calls for restoration and preservation be made relevant to a population living in a conflict zone, struggling to lead a 'normal' life?

The materialities of aspiration

There is nostalgia in Kashmir today for a time when different communities lived together harmoniously. The loss of the Kashmiri Pandits is bemoaned in various ways; it is a loss of a way of life as remembered. This also gets intertwined with a general sense of despair and sorrow in the valley, and is seen by the Kashmiris as an indication of troubled times. However, concurrently all the residents of the city also feel a need to begin rebuilding their lives. The rows of abandoned, dilapidated Pandit houses, unlikely to be ever reoccupied by their owners, are a poignant sight, and to many in Srinagar the continuous reminder is also painful. Coupled with the shortage of housing space in the old city, this results in the desire to reclaim and possess these old houses.

Figure 4: *Local Tradesman, Srinagar (Tim Winter)*

The need to now move on and rebuild lives is constantly expressed. The consciousness of what the conflict has 'cost' is made more acute by the rapid development that has taken place in India over the last twenty years; an economic curve that has physically and socially transformed many cities. There is a strong desire now to catch up, and go the way these cities have gone – with shopping malls, concrete houses, and industries. Regeneration and modernisation thus leads to another set of challenges. If these aspirations are to be respected, if Srinagar is seen as

Figure 6: *Jalali Haveli, Private Residence (Tim Winter)*

a 'place' inextricably tied to the dreams and hopes of its residents, then any heritage policy will have to contend with these shifting needs.

Given that the violence has created a period of developmental incubation, Srinagar today represents a rare example in the subcontinent of a pre-modern city that has not been overcome by concrete and steel. But with stability new conflicts arise, and old ones raise their head again. It is clear that while violent conflict has impacted the city in various ways, it is not the only reason for the neglect of Srinagar's traditional architecture. Many of the issues around the conservation of Srinagar's 'old city' are not very different from those facing other old city centres across India. Much of the vernacular architecture was allowed to go to ruin in the decades preceding the conflict. In some case structures were rebuilt in new styles, with encroachments rarely policed. The lack of urban planning is a familiar story throughout India, as is the aspiration to renovate houses or shops using new or 'modern' materials. Invariably there is a strong desire to replace wood and masonry with concrete, steel and glass (figure 5). In semiotic terms, the 'traditional old' is equated with 'poor' and 'backward'. Not surprisingly, there are also logistical problems with materials not being available and skills in various crafts having been lost. To cite one example, the owner of the Jalali Haveli, a Persian style

grand mansion located near the old city, is currently unable to secure the craftsman capable of repairing the intricate woodwork of the windows (Figure 6).

In essence then, the situation in Srinagar today is characterised by two distinct and divergent trends. On the one hand there is a desire for maintaining the unique political and cultural identity of the city and the Kashmir Valley. At the same time however, there is a widespread desire for economic and social mobility – for modernisation and a sense of inclusion in the wealth and prosperity enjoyed elsewhere in India. Any understanding of Srinagar as an *Historic Urban Landscape* needs to account for, and negotiate, such competing forces.

Conclusion

The Vienna Memorandum and Seoul Declaration represent major steps towards developing heritage policies that are capable of conceiving historic urban environments in more holistic terms. As we have seen both frameworks advocate a shift towards a language of 'place' and a recognition of the need to understand the broader socio-cultural and political histories of an urban landscape. It has been suggested here that such approaches open up both opportunities and challenges. While it has long been recognised that places have 'character', the formal introduction of such ideas into policy frameworks raises interesting and difficult questions. To illustrate this, this paper has examined the historic city of Srinagar, Kashmir. For many of the city's residents, their immediate surroundings have become a 'place' intimately associated with feelings of frustration, anger and the sadness caused by nearly two decades of violence. Not surprisingly then, the city's historic architecture is enmeshed in a series of divergent cultural, economic and political aspirations.

The distinct cultural identity of Srinagar and its pivotal role within the history of the Kashmir Valley reaffirms the value of establishing a heritage discourse that captures the 'character' and 'life' of its urban environment. In considering such an

Figure 5: *Modern and Traditional Residential Structures (Tim Winter)*

approach, this paper has briefly explored three thematic areas which together illustrate some of the significant challenges that arise when that character or sense of place has become intricately tied to a period of prolonged conflict.

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