

Between opportunity and challenge

Mayors' perspective on participatory heritage practices in World Heritage Cities

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Abstract

The participation of multiple stakeholders, communities, groups, and individuals in heritage processes is considered an important component of good heritage governance, which presents diverse challenges and opportunities. Much research has explored the communities, researchers, and practitioners' perceptions of these challenges and opportunities, offering insights into current practices. However, little research has investigated governmental actors' perceptions, mainly focusing on specific cases, without comparing their perspectives across regions. To address this gap, during the 2017 OWHC XIV World Congress, a Mayors' workshop was organized to unveil the perceptions that WH cities' representatives have of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) of participatory heritage practices in their World Heritage cities. Results revealed strong interconnections among the different SWOT elements, as well as commonalities and differences among cities worldwide. *Participation* itself emerged as the most mentioned element across the SWOT, highlighting the strong influence that the factors affecting it have over the positive or negative outcomes of participatory heritage practices.

Keywords: World Heritage Cities, participation, SWOT analysis, mayors' perception

Introduction

Participatory practices are widely considered as a crucial component of heritage management and governance, having been the subject of growing research worldwide (e.g., Li, Krishnamurthy, Roders, & van Wesemael, 2020; Mogomotsi, Mogomotsi, Gondo, & Madigele, 2018; Ripp & Rodwell, 2017; Rosetti, Bertrand Cabral, Pereira Roders, Jacobs, & Albuquerque, 2022), reports (COE, 2018; Göttler & Ripp, 2017; Halme, Mustonen, Taavitsainen, Thomas, & Weij, 2018), and international regulations of democratic cultural processes (COE, 2005, 2017, 2018; ICOMOS, 2017), inclusive heritage institutions, practices, and development (ICOM, 2019; UNESCO, 2015, 2018, 2019) and participatory urban governance (ICOMOS, 2011; UN HABITAT III, 2016; UNESCO, 2011). Participation can be shaped in a multitude of meanings and practices, depending on its dynamics, inclusivity of stakeholders, level of engagement, types of activities, time, and place (Rosetti, Jacobs, & Pereira Roders, 2020a, p. 512, 2020b, pp. 108-109), which can affect their outcomes and impact.

In research, it's important to investigate these practices from the perspective of different stakeholders, which perceptions can significantly affect their implementation. The perceived challenges and opportunities of participation in heritage processes have been largely researched, revealing the perspectives of researchers, practitioners, and communities. For instance, studies show how opening the dialogue on heritage regulation and management to new voices implies the need to rethink and negotiate roles and responsibilities, posing new opportunities and challenges for the facilitation of participatory processes (Giglietto, Ciolfi, & Bosswick, 2021; Jacobs, 2014; Simonsen & Robertson, 2013). Information and communication technologies (ITC) provide additional tools to support the work of facilitators and make decision-making more accessible; however, new skills are required to implement e-governance systems, generating new needs for education and training (Giglietto, Claisse, Ciolfi, & Lockley, 2019; Marconcini, 2018; Paskaleva-Shapira, Azorin, & Chiabai, 2008). The engagement of multiple stakeholders in heritage practices can open interpretation to multiple values and narratives, creating more inclusive institutions, offering the chance to foster intercultural understanding, and overcoming prejudice, but also exposing discrimination, exclusion, and extremism (Battilani, Bernini, & Mariotti, 2018; Giglietto *et al.*, 2021). Nevertheless, the establishment of intersectoral partnerships for the development of projects, strategies, and management plans, offer alternative perspectives, informing the development of common solutions and shared responsibilities (Dauvin *et al.*, 2004; Han, Yang, Shi, Liu, & Wall, 2016; Landorf, 2009; Nakamura, 2013). However, the process of negotiation among a wide variety of interests could also potentially lead to further cultivating conflicts and exacerbating power imbalances (Paddison & Biggins, 2017). These examples show how, often, in different heritage-related fields, each opportunity offered by participatory practices presents its challenge counterpart. Therefore, it is important to investigate what factors affect their positive or negative aspects and what decisions could better foster opportunities, resolving challenges.

Recent research has concluded that the key stakeholders in decision-making processes remain governmental actors, particularly for the allocation of resources and prioritization of actions and policies (Rosetti, in prep.; Veldpaus, 2015, pp. 93-94), making their perception of participatory heritage practices important to their success and sustainable implementation. Fewer case study-based research has focused on investigating politicians' perspectives on opportunities and challenges of participation (Snis, Olsson, & Bernhard, 2021; Yang & Wall, 2021). However, no research was found exploring the perception of multiple governmental actors on an international scale, looking at trends, commonalities, and differences among cities with common traits, such as those including World Heritage

properties in their urban areas. This research aims to address this gap and answer the questions "how do mayors of World Heritage Cities perceive the opportunities and challenges of participatory heritage practices, and what implications does it have for their implementation?"

Mayors' perspective in World Heritage Cities

Cities have historically been the cradle of democracy, where communities are strengthened, dwellers become citizens, and can participate in the urban life. In this perspective, they become important arenas to foster a wide participation in (heritage) governance processes, as complementary to the role of States. With the rising number of people living in urban areas and globalized mobility, cities can offer the stage for a *civic "glocality"*, allowing a local participation and a global cooperation through national and international networks, which can be based on pragmatic solutions to common challenges (Barber, 2013, pp. 24-25).

In this scenario, mayors play a fundamental role. They are elected to serve the city and its dwellers, securing services, and contributing to the creation of an urban environment where creative approaches to local problems can flourish (Barber, 2013, p.22). However, in the context of increasingly complex local politics and policies, a legitimate, inclusive, and effective urban governance requires the cooperation of multiple actors at different scales, and across-sectors (Cabria, Magnier, & Pereira, 2018; Denters, Steyvers, Klok, & Cermak, 2018, p. 275). In these networks, on the one hand, Mayors can flagship democratic principles, implementing and shaping them to local cultural, economic, and social contexts, strengthening participation at a neighborhood- and city-level, through effective communication processes and leadership (Barber, 2013, p.26; Denters, *et al.*, 2018). On the other hand, their role comes with a number of challenges related to place-specific dynamics, the management of internal and external networks of stakeholders, adapted leadership approaches, and conflicting political agendas at multiple scales and across sectors, among others (Denters *et al.*, 2018, p. 276). Moreover, mayors' agendas are populated with a variety of issues requiring attention, actions and coordination, but are also affected by mayors' policy priorities, both at a local and at an international level (Cabria *et al.*, 2018, p. 252). In line with these priorities, Mayors' role is increasingly expanding beyond the city boundaries, cultivating their political networks at a national level and reinforcing their global web of relationships (Stren & Friendly, 2019, p. 176). In this international arena, mayors can give voice to their city and citizens at a global scale by formally and informally interacting with mayors in leagues of cities, facilitating the sharing of best practices and fostering mutual learning (Barber, 2013, p. 47). In light of these changing role, mayors have been associated to 'network managers' who build and

maintain a coalition of actors, at a local and non-local level, that works together on key issues and priorities in line with their current policy agenda (Denters *et al.*, 2018, pp. 278-279).

There are many international organizations curating the collaboration within networks of cities, *e.g.*, URBACT networks (EU, n.d.); UCLG (UCLG, n.d.); UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UNESCO, n.d.); among others. Among those working on heritage-related topics, the Organization of World Heritage Cities-OWHC connects over three hundred cities worldwide that have World Heritage properties in their urban area, which are represented in the Organization by their major, with the active support and participation of public officers and heritage professionals (OWHC, n.d.). Therefore, through the organization of events on the topic of participation in heritage management, such as an Annual Meeting in 2016 and a World Congress in 2017, the OWHC offers an important platform for Mayors to contribute to the advancement of democratic governance worldwide by fostering participatory heritage practices in their city.

Methodology

During the third day of the XIV World Congress of the Organization of World Heritage Cities on “Heritage and communities: tools to engage with local communities” – held in 2017 in Gyeongju, Republic of South Korea – a workshop was organized to explore the Mayors’ perceptions of challenges and opportunities of participatory heritage practices in World Heritage cities, through a SWOT analysis (Helms & Nixon, 2010; Veldpaus, 2015). It was carried out as part of a 1-year project commissioned by the OWHC Asia-Pacific Regional Secretariat to a research team from the Eindhoven University of Technology, to foster the dialogue on communities’ engagement in heritage projects among cities in the network. The participation of the workshop was voluntary, open to all the mayors of the cities which are part of the OWHC network, attending the World Congress, without any additional selection criteria. Thirty-seven cities’ representatives – Mayors and city officers – from thirty-five cities, and twenty-four countries, from all the OWHC regional secretariats, joined. The workshop was structured in four parts: an introduction given by the team, an individual exercise, a group discussion, and a presentation of groups’ results (see figure 7.1).

After the introduction, participants were given ten minutes to independently do a SWOT analysis (evaluation) on the current participatory heritage practices in their own World Heritage city. The semi-structured worksheet was complete of four sections – strengths/what works, weaknesses/what does not work, opportunities/what are the gains, threats/what are the obstacles – which were later analyzed through post-coding. An extra section for comments was approached through content analysis. The worksheet was made available in all the three OWHC’s official languages – English, French, and Spanish – and

in Korean, to help participants to better understand and undertake the exercise. When the first exercise was completed, participants were divided in seven working-tables, according to their language of preference, to encourage the discussion of their results with the help of facilitators. During the discussion a representative for each group was asked to write on a white board the main Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats discussed at the table, and in the end five minutes were given to a spoke-person for each table to present the shared results to the whole group.

The exercise working-sheets were collected and the whole process was photo-documented and video-recorded. Data were processed adopting a global perspective to unveil international trends of key themes, topical of participatory heritage practice within the OWHC’s network, and dig deeper into specific common characteristics on a sectorial/local level, which can inform further research within the Regional Secretariats, and eventually overcome the geographical boundaries, spot communalities between unsuspected cities worldwide, and create new opportunities for mutual learning. The SWOT analysis enabled an in-depth and comparative exploration of the opportunities of (internal strengths) and for participation (external opportunities), as well as challenges of (internal weaknesses) and for participation (external threats), investigating the factors affecting participatory heritage practices and their potential impact on the outcomes.

Opportunities

Participation, communication, tourism, pride, awareness, and education, among others, are the most mentioned opportunities (see figure 7.2). Among them, *participation* (17), *heritage initiatives* (9), *regulation* (7), and *communication* (7) are considered by the most mayors the four main strengths of participatory heritage practices in World Heritage cities.

Participation of multiple stakeholders in heritage management can contribute to the preservation and promotion of cultural and natural properties in World Heritage cities (George Town, Arequipa). It can result in a high turnover at organized events and activities or in social initiatives (Rimac, Mexico City), and it allows to better understand problems and needs of communities in relation to heritage processes, generating opportunities and shared solutions for future local developments (Cidade Velha, Cuenca). Citizens’ participation can be structured through neighborhood’s councils or left spontaneous (Quebec City), nevertheless, it is generally increasing due to a raising awareness on the positive impact that heritage practices can have on people’s quality of life (Cordoba). Educational programs and gaming activities can foster more youth’s participation (Morelia), which is crucial to the future conservation of cultural heritage properties and practices (Valparaiso).

CITY	COUNTRY	REGION	REGIONAL SECRETARIAT
Vienna	Austria	Europe and North America	Eastern and Central Europe / Northwest Europe and North America / Southern Europe and Mediterranean
Icheri Sheher (Old City-Baku)	Azerbaijan	Arab States	other
Denpasar	Bali-Indonesia	Asia and the Pacific	Asia-Pacific / Euro-Asia
Olinda	Brazil	Latin America and Caribbean	other
Quebec	Canada	Europe and North America	Northwest Europe and North America
Cidade Velha	Cape Verde	Africa	Southern Europe and Mediterranean
Valparaiso	Chile	Latin America and Caribbean	other
Cuenca	Ecuador	Latin America and Caribbean	Southern Europe and Mediterranean
Levuka	Fiji	Asia and the Pacific	Asia-Pacific
Lamu	Kenya	Africa	other
Luang Prabang	Laos	Asia and the Pacific	Asia-Pacific
George Town	Malaysia	Asia and the Pacific	Asia-Pacific
Oaxaca	Mexico	Latin America and Caribbean	Central America, Caribbean and Mexico
Zacatecas	Mexico	Latin America and Caribbean	Central America, Caribbean and Mexico
Querétaro	Mexico	Latin America and Caribbean	Central America, Caribbean and Mexico
Morelia	Mexico	Latin America and Caribbean	Central America, Caribbean and Mexico
Tlacotalpan	Mexico	Latin America and Caribbean	Central America, Caribbean and Mexico
Mexico City	Mexico	Latin America and Caribbean	Central America, Caribbean and Mexico
Lalitpur	Nepal	Asia and the Pacific	other
Arequipa	Perú	Latin America and Caribbean	other
Rimac	Perú	Latin America and Caribbean	South America
Vigan	Philippines	Asia and the Pacific	other
Loboc	Philippines	Asia and the Pacific	other
Miagao	Philippines	Asia and the Pacific	Asia-Pacific
Krakov	Poland	Europe and North America	Eastern and Central Europe
Angra do Heroismo	Portugal	Europe and North America	Southern Europe and Mediterranean
Suwon	South Korea	Asia and the Pacific	Asia-Pacific
Gyeongju	South Korea	Asia and the Pacific	Asia-Pacific
Granada	Spain	Europe and North America	Southern Europe and Mediterranean
Córdoba	Spain	Europe and North America	Southern Europe and Mediterranean
Visby	Sweden	Europe and North America	Northwest Europe and North America
Tunis	Tunisia	Arab States	other
Colonia del Sacramento	Uruguay	Latin America and Caribbean	other
San Antonio	USA	Europe and North America	Northwest Europe and North America
Philadelphia	USA	Europe and North America	Northwest Europe and North America

Figure 7.1. List of cities represented at the Mayors' Workshop.

Heritage initiatives gather communities around cultural heritage properties. They are diverse, ranging from religious festivities and public celebrations to cultural activities (Krakow, Zacatecas, Tlacotalpan). They can be organized by responsible public institutions (Morelia) and by communities themselves, which occasionally act independently, self-funding heritage activities in their city (Denpasar). All sorts of events attract and connect different people, such as concerts organized for music lovers in historic areas or in heritage sites, workshops for the broader public, and conferences for academics and professionals. Cultural programs can include special activities for children, which aim to educate, explain, and create bonds between new generations and World Heritage (Angra do Heroísmo).

Regulation of a more inclusive management of cultural heritage already exists in some cities across the OWHC network (San Antonio, Granada, Quebec City), while in other cities is under development (Oaxaca). Many cities adopted policies that specifically regulate participation in the conservation of cultural heritage and the historic urban landscape (Krakow, Luang Prabang). Public engagement policies can regulate processes and timing of engagement, making the consultation of communities at an early stage of the management process mandatory, before operating or planning any change in the area under development (Quebec City).

Communication between government bodies and communities is important for an effective and inclusive heritage management system. They enable discussions on individual or shared problems, needs, and interests of different stakeholders, offering opportunities for the formulation of new solutions, and allowing coordination among heritage actors in the field (Quebec City). Particularly, in case of shared ownership and responsibilities over the conservation of heritage assets, as in the case of religious buildings, effective communication mechanisms between stakeholders facilitate interventions and preservation activities (Queretaro, San Antonio, Loboc, Miagao). The continuous communication over ongoing projects is necessary, but it is also important to start new conversations about upcoming projects at a very early stage (Colonia del Sacramento).

Participation, heritage initiatives, regulation, and communication are strongly interlinked. A more organized and regulated participation can facilitate a better communication and collaboration among stakeholders, fostering the organization and effective implementation of local initiatives, and potentially generating opportunities for new resources to be deployed for heritage management. While *participation* and *heritage initiatives* are the most mentioned strengths of community engagement in heritage management – positively affecting heritage’s use and conservation, communities’ development, and wellbeing –

on the other hand, *communication* and *regulation* seem to be essential tools to make inclusive management smoother and sustainable in time.

Tourism (9), *consensus* (8), *communication* (7), and *participation* (6) are indicated as the four main opportunities for participation in heritage practices (see figure 7.2). At a local level, *tourism* can offer communities the chance to get involved in the promotion and development of touristic activities and businesses (Gyeongju, Vienna, George Town), unlocking potential economic benefits both for locals and for heritage itself, enabling the deployment of new resources for conservation (Oaxaca, Agra do Heroísmo, Icheri Sheher/Old City Baku, Lamu). When pressure of tourism becomes too high, cooperation with local stakeholders can help to redirect tourists’ flows, and develop a more diffused, diversified, culturally sensitive, and responsible offer (Krakow, Oaxaca, Philadelphia, Granada).

Reaching *consensus* among citizens and other actors over decisions on heritage management can further stimulate participation through the implementation of inclusive governance and effective communication mechanisms (Cidade Velha). Pre-obtained consensus can positively effect projects’ results, contributing to a good and sustainable preservation of cultural properties (Granada, Morelia, Philadelphia), and determine the successful collaborations among stakeholders, facilitating sharing responsibilities between public and private actors in heritage conservation (Arequipa, Rimac, Cuenca). Consensus can also legitimate decisions taken over heritage management by authorities in charge and stimulate the active involvement of citizens in heritage governance (Rimac).

Communication between private and public stakeholders can raise awareness of heritage significance, opening the discussion about cultural values to all communities, groups, and individuals (Cidade Velha). It can also facilitate the better understanding of local needs for the development of important skills to heritage conservation, informing the organization of appropriate education, training, and capacity-building activities, and generating new opportunities for sustainable preservation initiatives (Queretaro). At the same time, an ongoing communication between government and citizens over heritage management can facilitate a broader participation (Tunis), empowering people in decision-making and unlocking the potential of inclusive heritage management for community and territorial development (Cidade Velha).

Participation in management processes is indeed considered an opportunity to foster more inclusive heritage governance systems (Córdoba, Gyeongju). Through people-centered approaches citizens can actively contribute to the identification, interpretation, presentation, and promotion of local heritage, and take an active role in its preservation (Morelia, George Town). Organized forms of participation through councils and forums enable communities’

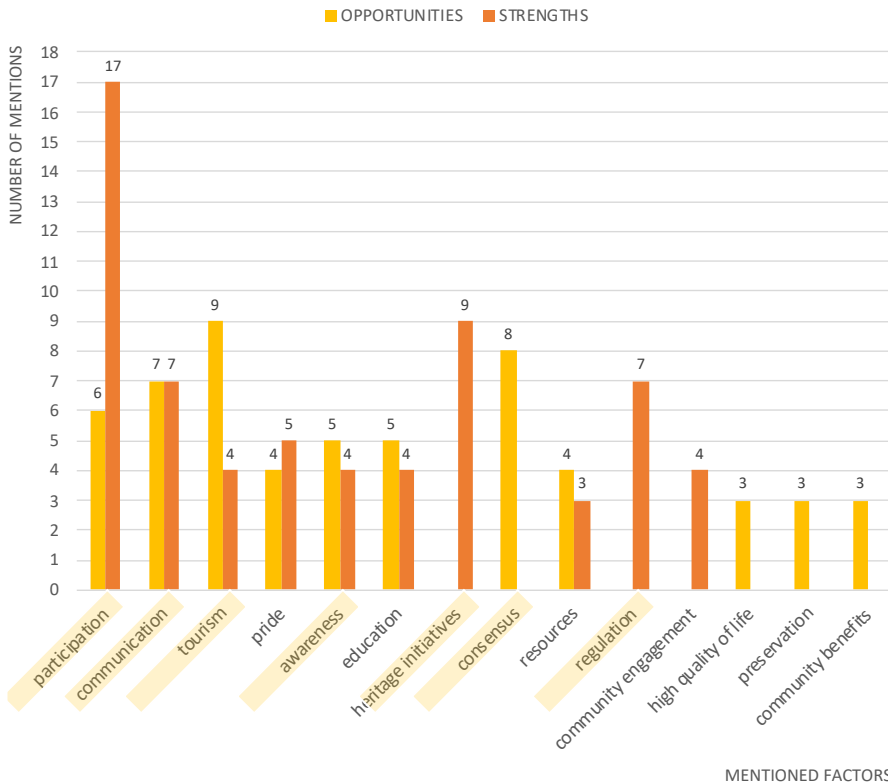


Figure 7.2. Most mentioned opportunities of participation (internal-strengths/ external-opportunities).

engagement since the early stages of projects, allowing the consideration of multiple values in developments and planning, and creating space and resources for citizens' initiatives (Quebec).

Tourism, consensus, communication, and participation are interconnected with each other. Opportunities presented by the tourism sector for private businesses and communities' participation in developing the local offer can stimulate the collaboration between public and private stakeholders, initiating a communication that can facilitate reaching consensus and strengthening inclusive governance systems.

Challenges

Participation, regulation, resources, awareness, and tourism, among others, are the most mentioned challenges (see figure 7.3). Among them, *resources* (12), *participation* (9), *awareness* (8), and *regulation* (6) are considered by the most the four main weaknesses of participatory heritage practices in World Heritage Cities. *Resources*, such as time, financial, and human – both personnel and volunteers – are fundamental for the good implementation of participatory heritage practices. However, many actors in the heritage field experience scarcity of resources, which negatively affects both heritage preservation and the effective implementation of participation (Tunis, Oaxaca, Morelia, Cidade Velha, Cuenca). The lack of allocated funding for projects shortens the available time for their

development, limiting heritage processes and preventing the employment of specialized practitioners, who might be better professionally trained to mediate the collaborations among stakeholders (Queretaro, Morelia).

Participation of different communities in heritage management and activities can become weak and significantly decline in number of activities or stakeholders (Luang Prabang, Gyeongju), excluding whole sectors of society (Rimac), if it is not regulated and therefore not facilitated by the institutions in charge (Colonia del Sacramento). Especially, when politics don't support inclusiveness (Oaxaca) or participation becomes politicized, new interests come into place and new processes get activated that can harm both heritage and local communities (George Town).

Awareness of the existing heritage properties in a city, their values, communities, and state of conservation is important for an inclusive management of cultural and natural heritage properties (Tunis, Oaxaca, Zacatecas). Many people in World Heritage cities lack this awareness, having difficulties to relate the values they convey to the spaces they daily use to the outstanding universal value, recognized internationally, while no educational initiatives nor consistent communication connect these values (Queretaro, Rimac, Visby).

Moreover, sometimes communities are not informed about current projects and planned interventions due to the time-consuming character of communication processes, which leave citizens unaware of heritage and

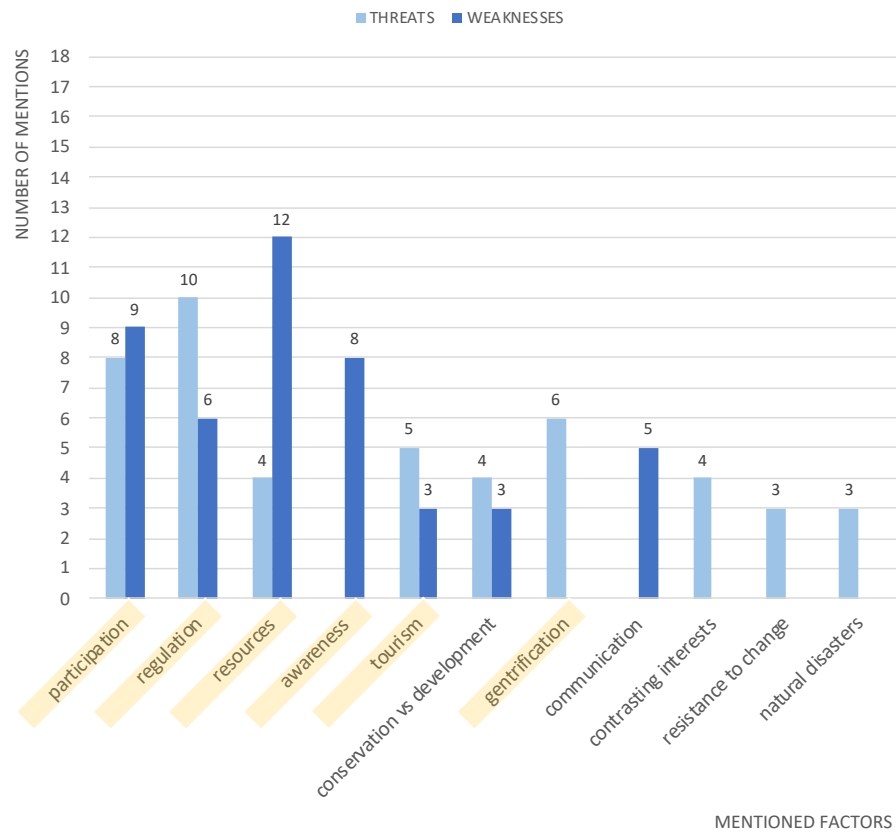


Figure 7.3. Most mentioned challenges of participation (internal-weaknesses/ external-threats).

development practices. Particularly, in historic urban areas lack of communication can have a negative impact on the preservation of cultural heritage properties and practices (Miagao).

Regulation on conservation, safeguarding and participation processes is not always in place, causing lack of coordination and inconsistency of practices (Morelia, Colonia del Sacramento, Olinda). Sometimes, regulations are included in local and national policies, but might not be enough or clear, missing to provide guidance for practices in the field (Arequipa). Despite the adoption of specific regulation, it might be not well communicated to the public, which can prevent its enforcement and slow down the implementation of international recommendations at the local level (Arequipa, Granada). Other times, regulation is in place, but can be considered to limit or obstruct urban development (Krakow).

Resources, participation, awareness, and regulation are interdependent. The absence of specific regulations prevents the systematic allocation of resources, financial, human, and therefore time, that are necessary to facilitate participation and raise awareness of communities, groups, and individuals on heritage, weakening local engagement in heritage management and conservation.

Regulation (10), *participation* (8), *gentrification* (6), and *tourism* (5) are indicated as the four main threats of participation in heritage practices (see figure 7.3). The lack of *regulation* of participation disables control over

processes, leading to the inconsistency of practices and the inadequate support to stakeholders (Arequipa). Also, the adoption of insufficient or not specific laws can represent a threat, preventing their implementation at the local level, complicating cultural properties' management, and endangering their conservation (Tunis, Oaxaca, Rimac, Olinda, Valparaiso, Morelia). The same outcome is obtained through over-regulations, which limits heritage initiatives, especially in the rehabilitation of historic buildings and urban development (Mexico City). Sometime, regulation is not respected due to a communication gap between public and private stakeholders (Arequipa).

Participation can be a threat when it is politicized, especially when political actors intervene and use the disinformation of citizens to manipulate the public, facilitating oppositions, intransigence, and extremism (Queretaro, Colonia del Sacramento, Rimac, George Town, San Antonio). Moreover, participation can do harm when it is not well managed (Colonia del Sacramento), as for instance when it is superimposed at a later stage of the project, instead of being integrated since the beginning, excluding citizens from decision-making processes.

Gentrification is an increasingly pressing phenomenon which sees local communities moving out of cultural heritage properties and historic neighborhoods due to the rise of living costs, disabling them from taking part in the management of their heritage (Córdoba).

Tourism is a difficult phenomenon to control that has a strong impact on people's life and cities (Krakow). If badly managed, tourism can be intrusive and give a feeling of invasions to locals (Visby), who struggle to find balance between visitors' flows and their daily life activities, discouraging them from getting involved in heritage activities (Icheri Sheher/Old City Baku). Uncontrolled tourism can threaten the balance between the visitors' experience and the daily life of locals, who might feel invaded by the tourists' flow (Krakow, Icheri Sheher/Old City-Baku) and see the unmet increasing maintenance demand of the historic centers (Denpasar), which can discourage them from participating in the development of the tourism offer and the management of cultural heritage. Moreover, the need to provide accommodations for the many short-stay visitors is progressively turning properties in the city centers into hotels and homestays, facilitating processes of gentrification that create physical, economical, and interest distance with local inhabitants (Visby).

Regulation, participation, gentrification, and tourism are interconnected. The lack and/or inadequacy of specific regulations for participation in heritage management impedes a consistent development and support of practices, endangers properties' conservation, and leaves room for the politicization of practices, stimulating extremism, opposition, and exclusion. The consequent lack of participation prevents locals from actively contribute to the development of more responsible and sustainable tourism business, leaving tourism and gentrification processes uncontrolled.

Between opportunity and challenge

Five factors have been identified transversal to the SWOT, which mayors considered as a strength, weakness, opportunity, and threat of participation in heritage practices. They are respectively: *participation*, *resources*, *tourism*, *awareness*, and *capacity-building* (see figure 7.4).

Curiously, *participation* itself is overall the most mentioned factor across the SWOT (40), and the most controversial one, considered to affect positively and negatively participatory practices, generating their best and worst outcomes. Participation is mainly considered an opportunity (23), both as an external factor (6) that fosters the further development of participatory heritage practices, and as an internal one (17) that strengthens participatory processes. Participation is a strengthening factor when the range of stakeholders taking part in heritage preservation grows (Córdoba) – including youth (Morelia, George Town, Valparaiso) – engaging with social initiative, offered activities (Arequipa, Mexico City), and heritage promotion (Rimac). Participation is a strength when is organized, such as through neighborhoods' councils, and is systematically integrated in heritage

management processes (Quebec City), enabling a better understanding of local problems, needs, and opportunities, facilitating the formulation of shared solutions and giving the opportunity to communities' representatives to offer new perspectives (Cidade Velha, Cuenca). For some (6), participation represents an opportunity for the further development of participatory heritage practices when it is integrated since the beginning of projects, allowing stakeholders to agree on shared values and strategies (Quebec City). Moreover, it can contribute to a more inclusive promotion of heritage (Tunis), attract more tourists (George Town) and help develop a more sustainable and culturally sensitive offer that subsequently, contributes to heritage preservation (Morelia). High rates of participation can encourage the institutionalization of new inclusive forms of heritage management within public administrations, creating new spaces for citizens to participate through forums and councils (Córdoba, Gyeongju). A broad, diverse, and intergenerational participation to educational activities, such as through gaming, generates new opportunities to raise awareness over local heritage, stimulating citizens' engagement in urban heritage preservation and improving the livability of historic centers (Morelia, George Town, Valparaiso).

Participation is also considered a challenge (17), both as an internal weakness (9) of participatory processes, and as an external threat to them (8). If participation is not well organized and regulated, it can weaken participatory heritage practices (Colonia del Sacramento), resulting in "incomplete" exclusive and discontinuous processes (Rimac). Engaging people at an advanced stage of heritage management, with no room for their perspectives to be taken into consideration, can discourage them and disincentive their future participation (Tlacotalpan). In these cases, local governments and institutions might intervene in the attempt to stimulate participation, struggling with citizens lack of enthusiasm (Gyeongju, Luang Prabang). However, a politicized participation and the lack of the appropriate political support can also weaken participatory heritage processes (Oaxaca, George Town). Participation is mainly considered as a threat to inclusive heritage processes when political actors intervene in heritage management and transform heritage activities into a political forum, using citizens' disinformation to manipulate the public, facilitating oppositions and intransigence (Colonia del Sacramento, Queretaro, Rimac, George Town, San Antonio). This phenomenon is more prone to happen whereas participation is not well organized and happens at a late stage of the management process, excluding citizens from decision-making (Córdoba) (see figure 7.5).

Discussion and conclusions

Results revealed a strong interconnection among the different elements of the SWOT, depicting a complex scenario of interdependency of factors. It emerged that no factors are per se positive or negative, but that different dynamics in each city can make a factor (internal or external) fail or succeed. This confirms what observed in

literature, offering new insights on perceived challenges and opportunities of/for participatory heritage practices from the perspective of governmental actors.

All the mentioned opportunities and challenges, such as participation, resources, tourism, awareness, and capacity-building, among others, are known as relevant to the establishment of good democratic governance

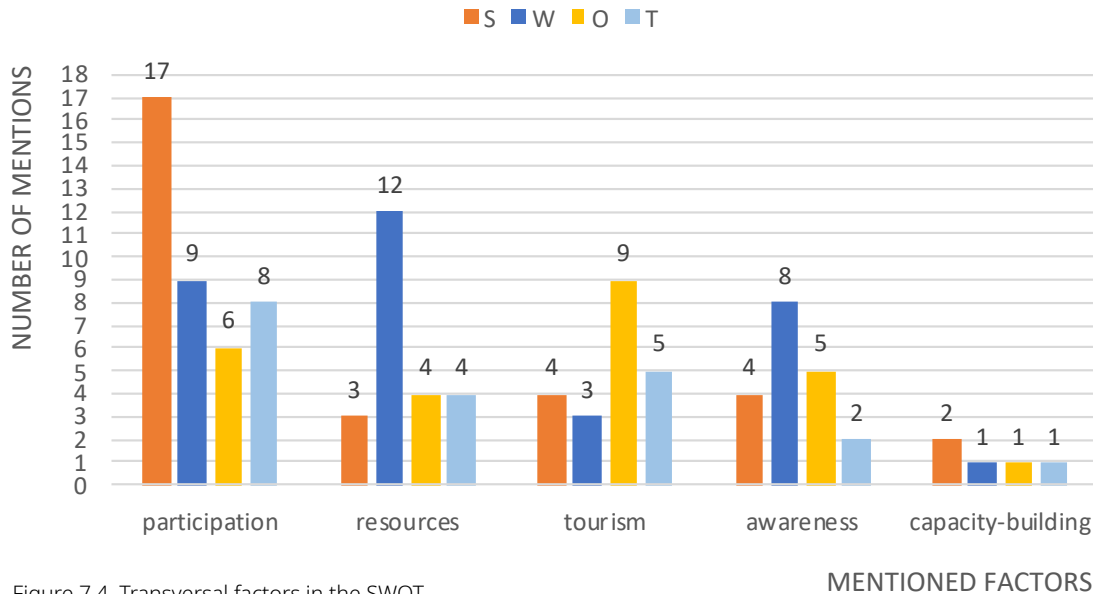


Figure 7.4. Transversal factors in the SWOT.

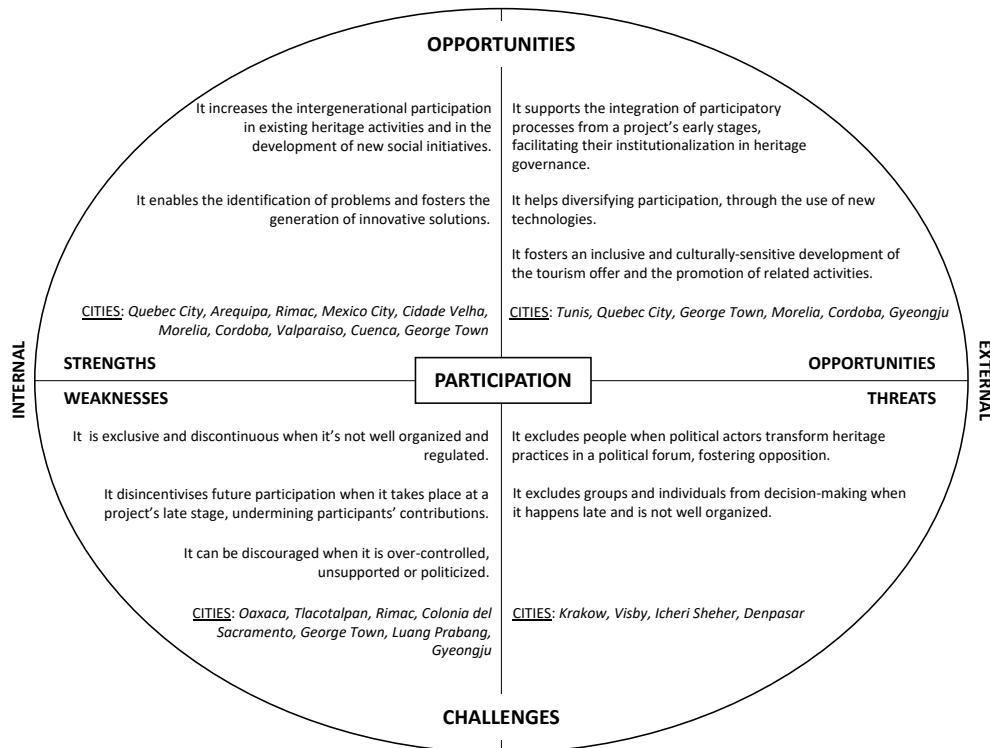


Figure 7.5. Between opportunity and challenge: SWOT of participation.

processes at the urban level (COE, 2017, p. 8). By acknowledging this, it can be said that supporting the implementation of effective participation in local heritage practices can be considered a great opportunity for mayors worldwide to enable the fulfillment of cities' potential role as democratic hubs (Barber, 2013).

Differences and similarities between cities have been identified among OWHC Regional Secretariats, but also within the same regions and states, creating dialogues on common challenges and opportunities that are crucial to generate and share new knowledge and stimulate mutual learning at a local, national, regional, and international level. This acknowledgement is in line with the idea that creating opportunities for mayors and their collaborators to discuss and share best practices in international arenas is important to support the fulfillment of mayors' role in advancing democratic governance at a 'glocal' level (Barber, 2013), in this case, through participatory heritage practices in their cities. Future research can explore more in depth some of these differences and similarities, monitoring the related knowledge-exchange among cities, to assess the impact that such discussions in international forums can have in the development of participatory heritage practices at a local level, as well as the role that the mayors can play in it.

The mayors participating to the workshop generally showed awareness of the discourse developing around participation in heritage governance, revealing previous knowledge and engagement with those practices. However, it is important to keep in mind that the participation of these mayors to the workshop stands for their previous political will to join, or remain, in the network of the OWHC. Therefore, it implies that all these mayors chose to include heritage governance in their political agenda and – to possible different degrees – in their policy priorities, not only at an international level, but also at a local one (Cabria *et al.*, 2018; Denters *et al.*, 2018; Stren & Friendly, 2019). On the other hand, by being part of the OWHC network, they might have been previously exposed to the topic of participation in heritage practices before the XIV OWHC World Congress (e.g., during the 2016 OWHC Annual Meeting), which makes these mayors more familiar – and arguably more sensitive – to heritage relate-issues, independently from their policy priorities. This reflection further supports the idea that mayors' international engagement can be a fundamental activity to address local issues, particularly when considered the decision-making power that they can have, according to previous research, in the allocation of (limited) resources and prioritizations of actions and policies (Rosetti, in prep.; Veldpaus, 2015). However, it also raises questions on the affecting factors and necessary conditions that need to be in place for mayors to join the dialogue, open up to knowledge

sharing, engage with identified solutions, and facilitate change at a local level. Future research could investigate these factors and inform the role that international heritage networks can have in creating the optimal environment for mayors to embrace and fulfill their role of glocal network managers for the advancement of participatory heritage practices.

In this perspective, the fact that *participation* itself emerged as the most mentioned and controversial common SWOT factor discussed during the workshop seems emblematic of this emerging new role of mayors. It supports the idea that beyond all the possible differences among these mayors and these cities, the management of the participation of different stakeholders in their personal network is one of the perceived common challenges of their role (Denters *et al.*, 2018, p.279).

While other studies investigated case-specific participatory dynamics, this research provides a first exploration of international trends, revealing key connection between – sometime unexpected – cities across the OWHC sectors, and informing future collaborations for the exchange of best practices and the formulation of innovative common solutions.

Results offered insights on participation at the time the research was carried out, and despite much has happened in the last five years, latest studies suggest that while the COVID-19 pandemic posed new challenges to the management of our cities, it also exacerbated existing ones, as showed in the fourth section of this book. Therefore, this research still offers relevant insights and inputs for a better understanding and improvement of participatory practices in World Heritage Cities.

This study has revealed the perception of World Heritage cities' mayors of participatory heritage practices, which – as such – is subjective and variable, but it's important to be investigated as it can significantly affect decision making processes throughout heritage processes. Therefore, further research should continue investigating global trends, and look deeper into common regional and local dynamics. Particularly, network-led research is important to explore the impact of mayors' global activity at a local level and the role of international organizations in creating a favorable environment to foster mutual learning and change in cities. It can inform specific recommendations for the development and implementation of policies and programs, and create the basis for future work and collaborations, both globally and locally, both academic and practitioner-led, to better understand how these opportunities and challenges emerge in different contexts, how they are addressed, and what cities can learn from each other to make better use of strengths and opportunities of participatory heritage practices, overcoming weaknesses and threats.

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