Chapter 20

Epilogue

Maaike S. de Waal, Ilaria Rosetti, & Francesca Giliberto

Learning from living (World) heritage cities: people-centered approaches and dynamic historic urban landscapes

This book presented a wide regional and disciplinary variety of case studies investigating current practices that affect the living heritage of cities by exploring the dynamic and ever-changing relationships between local inhabitants and the historic urban landscape in which they reside. Throughout 18 diverse contributions, more than 30 authors from different world's regions shared theories, approaches, successes, and challenges in the management of change and continuity of living heritage through the implementation of people-centered approaches to heritage practices in urban contexts worldwide.

Section one focused on values and uses of urban heritage. It presented five contributions with case-studies from the Netherlands, Palestine, Turkey, England, and Iran. They addressed the active role that communities can play in preserving heritage practices, shaping the use of urban areas, and fostering a sense of belonging. Moreover, they reflected on the effects that decision-making can have on heritage management and urban development, on the prioritization of uses and values in urban regeneration processes, and on the role of intangible heritage in defining public spaces.

Section two explored current challenges and opportunities for World Heritage cities. With its four contributions, it presented the outcomes of a Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat (SWOT) analysis of participatory heritage practices by mayors and city officers, and practical experiences from heritage cities in Sri Lanka, Turkey, and Barbados.

Section three shed light on the implementation processes of the Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) and Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) approach, and on the role they play in supporting the adoption of a living heritage approach in cities in Indonesia, Chile, Iran, and Peru.

Section four discussed the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on living (World) heritage. Five contributions, presenting cases from Italy, the Netherlands, Finland, and China, showed how travel and mobility restrictions dramatically affected the heritage sector in historic cities. Moreover, they outlined how, in the context of this global health crisis, citizens have mobilized and claimed back their 'right to the city', revealing new emerging values and needs, as well as the flourishing of digital innovation and entrepreneurial activities for the development of new ways to experience heritage amidst the pandemic.

An overarching topic addressed in multiple contributions across all sections of the book is the role of communities, groups, and individuals in heritage practices, and the need to improve the definition, promotion, facilitation, management, and monitoring of their participation. On the one hand, some authors discussed the difficulties encountered in identifying communities

and integrating them in heritage processes in dynamic cities and developing settlements (chapters 3, 5, 6, 8, and 16). Others presented bottom-up and spontaneous initiatives, stressing the need for communication among stakeholders to leverage the full potential of these actions (chapters 2, 12, 14, 15, and 17).

Every chapter depicted a peculiar form of urban transformation, highlighting its local characteristics, dynamics, and approaches to change management. For instance, chapter 4 sketched a diachronic overview of transformations in a heritage district in relation to changing motivations of public decision-makers. Other chapters focused on developments over shorter periods of time and presented social and economic effects of transformations on local communities (see for example chapters 5 and 8).

Although each case presented in this book has its own local particularities, some cross-cutting similarities and parallelisms can be drawn. For example, the preservation of the continuity of the relation between communities, groups, and individuals and their heritage in the context of urban transformations is still generally perceived as an ongoing challenge. In chapter 10, for instance, the author concluded that the expectations (by the Ministry of Culture, heritage specialists, and scholars), associated with the attribution of World Heritage status to Historic Bridgetown, Barbados, have not been fully met during the past ten years. In fact, despite the increasing public awareness on heritage conservation, the research showed that the preservation of this living heritage remained a challenge.

The diverse and multidisciplinary 18 case-study chapters in this volume have raised and addressed multiple questions in relation to the preservation of living (World) heritage cities. The following four sections provide a synthesis analysis on how these contributions addressed each of the leading research questions of this publication.

How do (World) heritage cities preserve their living heritage?

It emerged from the different chapters that (World) heritage cities preserve their living heritage in their very own and unique ways, depending on social, political, cultural, economic, and environmental factors, as well as the type of urban heritage involved. Even in the same context, the values attributed to the local heritage have proved to change over time, depending on different uses, developments, bearer communities, and conservation choices that select and prioritize some values over others (see chapter 4). For example, observations and oral history activities revealed that the Tell Balata archaeological area in Palestine is used by many people in their daily lives as a meeting place or as transit, being part of their environment, shared stories, collective memory, and identity. This is valid even for those who are not aware of its historical narrative. As such, the archaeological area

plays an important role in the daily life and wellbeing of the residents of the village, which needs to be taken into consideration in case of planned changes in the area due to conservation interventions (*e.g.*, a World Heritage nomination process). These processes can have an impact on the surrounding environment and may bring benefits as well as unforeseen challenges to communities, groups, and individuals. For heritage places like Tell Balata, which lack a present-day descendant or core community, it is not yet a common practice that residents are given a leading role in decision-making processes, as recommended by the living heritage approach (see chapter 3).

The shaping of communities' and groups' sense of attachment and belonging to a place was also observed in the parks of Tehran, Iran. The use of the parks as a "non-place", where people meet to play Backgammon, results in the creation of a 'community of practice' and the continuation of the gaming activities, even though less players frequent the parks if compared with pre-COVID-times. On the one hand, this contributes to the attribution of temporary values to the parks as a cultural landscape through the activity of the players. On the other hand, it supports the preservation of the urban backgammon as living heritage (see chapter 6).

In many instances, formal procedures and guidelines, such as those from the HIA and HUL approaches, can play a decisive role in the preservation of local heritage (see chapters 12 and 13). The application of these approaches, however, does not always produce the expected results. Sometimes, less organized interventions driven by citizens themselves are fundamental to identify unrepresented values and coordinate action with local and national authorities for inclusive conservation practices, such as in the case of Lima, Peru, where citizens' action resulted in the preservation of a pre-Hispanic canal (see chapter 14).

What is needed to ensure future effective management and conservation of living urban heritage?

The contributions included in this volume provided several suggestions on how to move towards a more effective management and conservation of the urban living heritage. They stressed the importance of implementing inclusive practices and fostering multi-stakeholders' participation. A powerful way to work towards these goals is to create a favorable environment and opportunities for bottom-up initiatives to develop and flourish, through collaborations with local creative industries and the leveraging of intangible heritage practices. Consequently, grassroots approaches can contribute to a process of empowerment of multiple stakeholders, setting the basis for a more inclusive urban governance and heritage management (see chapter 2).

Particularly, meaningful communication and participatory processes between local communities and heritage practitioners are essential to prevent the implementation of conservation strategies and development solutions which are not supported locally, and that can be harmful for heritage and the rights of core communities. For instance, the outcomes of research projects like the one in Tell Balata can offer significant guidance to support a decision-making process that is respectful of the living ecosystem of the archaeological site. In fact, the key insights presented in chapter 3 can be used by national, regional, and local authorities, as well as heritage organizations, to guide decision-making in the preparation of the UNESCO nomination for the inclusion of Tell Balata in the World Heritage List. Moreover, they can facilitate the identification of key stakeholders and heritage-bearers' communities as part of the planning of participatory and co-designed processes, and co-implementation of effective management and conservation strategies.

The consequences of a lack of communities' involvement in planning and redevelopment processes are shown in the case study of King's Cross Central in London (see chapter 5). The prioritization of commercial values over social ones has compromised the possibility for local communities and individuals to fully access this historic area and associated services. Furthermore, this approach has enabled the conservation of heritage attributes, providing the necessary – otherwise lacking – resources for the maintenance of built heritage. However, future urban developments could embrace a more holistic approach by acknowledging and integrating a wider set of (social, environmental, economic, and cultural) values for the preservation of a more inclusive and dynamic connection between citizens and the historic environment.

Another important point made by different authors is the development and implementation of regulations and management plans, which need to be regularly updated to ensure the adequate preservation of the evolving values of the urban heritage. This should be done through the effective involvement of various stakeholders, clear coordination and communication processes, and the provision of sufficient financial and human resources, including well-trained local specialists (see chapter 10).

Finally, more sustainable urban development processes can be developed through 'zero land consumption' processes, such as urban reuse and regeneration (see chapter 9), which can also bring social, cultural, and financial advantages for local communities, groups, and individuals, as well as for the management and conservation of values and attributes of built heritage.

What approaches are currently used to safeguard living urban heritage?

Many contributions presented in this book highlighted the relevance of the HIA and the HUL approach to safeguard the living heritage of cities. In fact, they can constitute useful toolkits to improve heritage processes and ensure the effective planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of management and conservation practices (see for example chapter 13). For instance, the Valparaiso case presented a situation where the implementation of the HUL approach was, unconsciously but successfully, used by citizens' organizations in their protests against developments that could potentially impact the local heritage. Furthermore, the case of Lima in Peru (chapter 14) testified that bottom-up initiatives, implemented for example through citizen campaigns, can be effective in steering decisions over heritage management and conservation, increasing inclusivity in terms of actors and narratives, and fostering awareness about the significance of particular heritage elements, such as the pre-Hispanic irrigation canal.

Nevertheless, their adoption and implementation at local levels is still a challenge in numerous cities worldwide. For example, in Indonesia a HIA was carried out to reduce the negative impacts of development projects affecting heritage, however, according to the reports, this was done without receiving the necessary technical guidance for its correct implementation (see chapter 11). Similarly, whenever the principles and tools of the HUL approach are not integrated into heritage and development regulatory frameworks, their adoption risks being limited to the provision of recommendations on processes that do not translate into concrete actions (see chapter 14). A critical review of the application of the HUL approach at local levels was provided by the case of Valparaíso in Chile (see chapter 12). In fact, the adoption of such an approach highlighted the need to re-negotiate the boundaries of the heritage site with urban developers to harmoniously address new social, economic, and cultural needs, and integrate them into heritage and urban policies.

Other approaches focused on possible ways to reach communities and engage with them. In doing so, they attempted to respond to the critical need of engaging with communities and broadening stakeholders' participation to support the effective management and conservation of living urban heritage. Examples of bottom-up approaches demonstrated how citizens can take a leading role in connecting stakeholders and establishing collaborations, while strengthening their relationships with heritage at the same time (see chapters 2, 14 and 15). The use of social media offers new tools and opportunities to facilitate this role (see chapter 15). Another participatory approach was provided in chapter 3, which explained how communities and individuals can provide input to research activities and share their outcomes for

example via accessible brochures distributed among local residents. In this case, the brochures represented an important return on engagement that allowed local voices to be heard by local authorities and international scholars, and foster community cohesion and pride.

What challenges and opportunities are encountered in preserving living urban heritage?

An important challenge related to the preservation of living urban heritage is linked to the process of musealization of historic centers. This process can have implications related to socio-cultural homogenization, economic stagnation, gentrification, and the exclusion of local inhabitants, whose values and ways of living are affected by the pressures of (mass) tourism. In fact, the tendency to develop an urban monoculture, which is a consequence of unilateral top-down heritage and urban policies, impoverishes the pluralistic meanings of heritage and the intrinsic dynamism of cities. Ensuring the continuity (conservation) of heritage attributes without adopting people-centered approaches (values and uses), and an open attitude to change, might undermine the richness and complexity of living urban heritage and its long-term sustainability (see chapter 2).

Furthermore, the lack of inclusion of multiple perspectives in the preparation of World Heritage nomination processes and definition of Outstanding Universal Value might exclude important heritage narratives, values, and uses that are fundamental for the conservation and management of tangible and intangible heritage attributes. In addition, unilateral decision processes might generate unbalanced solutions that favor the interests of dominant groups of stakeholders over others, leading to gentrification processes and affecting particularly marginalized communities and individuals (see chapter 8). For instance, the prioritization of economic interests over social, cultural, and environmental ones could easily lead to situations where communities might experience the privatization of public space, damaging public interests and accessible fruition. This process can also support the promotion of constructed narratives, jeopardizing the conservation of the living heritage (see chapter 5). Ultimately, such imbalances in urban development, management, and governance might lead to uncontrolled touristic flows that can affect the livability of historic centers (see chapters 16-17).

Several contributions highlighted challenges in identifying and defining *living* urban heritage. Even if heritage does not directly relate to a local communities' past, single individuals and groups can still take ownership of heritage and consider it to play a significant role in their lives. They can also stress the need for heritage practitioners to engage with local actors to best understand how to support them in preserving the living heritage (see

chapter 3). For example, in the so-called multi-layered cities, which are constituted by historic stratifications and a variety of heritage attributes, it is frequently possible to observe the co-existence of conflicting values and multiple perspectives over development processes that are charged with great political and social implications. For instance, the case of the Hacı Bayram district in Ankara, Turkey, illustrates how selective approaches adopted by local authorities in conservation choices and urban interventions can affect and shape the development of the living urban environment (see chapter 4).

In other cases, the necessary tools, skills, and approaches to preserve the living urban heritage were found to be deficient or even absent. Often, heritage policies and regulations are not developed and adopted locally and nationally, or do not integrate people-centered approaches or tools, such as those offered by the HUL and HIA (see chapters 10 and 14). Additionally, the necessary skills to adopt tools and approaches at a local level are not matched with capacity strengthening activities and training for their successful implementation (see chapter 11).

In terms of urban heritage management, the representatives of World Heritage cities emphasized how participation, regulation, resources, awareness, and tourism were found as the most common challenges faced, among others. Furthermore, the scarcity of financial and human resources, very frequent in the heritage field, negatively affects both heritage preservation and the effective implementation of participatory practices. As a result, a diffused lack of awareness among communities on current projects and planned interventions generates tension and compromises fruitful participation in many World Heritage cities. When participation is not regulated nor supported and facilitated through the allocation of the necessary resources, it can also represent a challenge as it is vulnerable to politicized dynamics (see chapter 7).

Despite the many challenges encountered in preserving living urban heritage, several contributions also emphasized some emerging opportunities. For example, a holistic assessment framework to foster circularity in urban regeneration practices adopted in different heritage cities may help to support a more integrated and sustainable urban development (see chapter 9). The outcomes of such assessment cycles can inform decision-makers on strategies and tools to employ for the adoption of a circular approach to urban administrative and financial structures, environmental action, and cultural valorization processes.

Another opportunity was identified in the Galle case in Sri Lanka (see chapter 8). On the one hand, the market-led gentrification has caused out-migration, displacement, and the weakening of neighborhood relationships. However, on the other hand, some communities and groups have adapted to the urban developments and changing dynamics, gaining economic benefits from the

increase of property values and gradually establishing new relationships with the historic landscape. The example of Galle Fort exemplifies the possible changes occurring in historic cities after a World Heritage recognition, which can have both positive and negative implications for local communities, groups, and individuals.

Other opportunities were found in the implementation of the HIA as a tool to mitigate the effects of urban development on heritage conservation and communities (see chapters 11 and 13), and in the adoption of the HUL approach in Valparaíso to promote the understanding of cities as living entities and stress the pivotal role of civic society in design and development processes (see chapter 12).

Other opportunities outlined in this book relate to efforts made by citizens, entrepreneurs, governments, and heritage practitioners in facing the COVID-19 pandemic (see for example chapter 18). Such a disruptive event offered a unique chance to heritage cities and organizations to reinvent themselves and find innovative solutions to economically survive during periods of mobility and social restrictions. Some coping strategies involved shifting the focus from big heritage attractions toward less popular heritage destinations, stimulating domestic tourism, developing slow and diffused tourism routes, and offering digital cultural tourism alternatives (see chapters 16, 17 and 19; also see below).

Finally, representatives of World Heritage cities indicated how the opening of heritage processes to a broader spectrum of stakeholders, supported by the organization of heritage initiatives could facilitate a better communication flow between public and private actors over urban development processes and inform the development of adequate regulation (see chapter 7).

Looking forward: what future is there for sustainable living heritage?

The 18 contributions presented in this book highlighted several aspects that need to be taken into consideration in order to preserve the living heritage of a city over time. Even if they presented a wide range of successful practices and lessons learnt, much still needs to be done to overcome existing challenges for the sustainable conservation and management of living urban heritage. Crucial elements include the fact that conservation practices cannot be conceived in a sectoral way and without taking into account and be guided by the evolving values of bearer communities. Moreover, participatory approaches should be implemented to incorporate new emerging needs in fast developing cities. This final section aims to offer three main points of reflection for the future implementation of a living heritage approach in cities worldwide.

1. *The comprehensive identification of stakeholders – including communities, groups, and individuals – is the first crucial step to define core communities, their needs, and the values they associate to (urban) heritage attributes.* In fact, a persisting challenge is constituted by an unequal distribution of decision-making power in heritage and development processes. This issue must be overcome through the proper identification and meaningful involvement of all stakeholders associated with the living urban heritage, including those who are generally excluded or marginalized. This process should move beyond the sole engagement of multiple stakeholders, and prioritize the needs of core-communities who must take a leading role in heritage management and conservation choices.

2. *A holistic and dynamic perspective – inclusive of cultural, social, but also economic and environmental values of the historic urban landscape – must be adopted when developing strategies for the safeguarding of living heritage in cities.* Balancing these values and associated needs, and effectively integrating them into inclusive and equitable conservation and urban management practices is key to a sustainable development of living (World) heritage cities. Considering that these values and needs continuously evolve over time, it is critical to foster dynamic and truly participatory processes able to ensure the preservation of the continuity of the relation between heritage and its bearer-communities, and also of the capacity of the urban heritage to change in the context of contemporary transformation processes without losing its meanings and values.

3. *Managing contemporary changes and negotiating a balance between different priorities, benefits, and values require effective communication, collaboration and coordination across disciplines, sectors and public and private actors, also through the use of effective tools to support policy and decision-making processes.* The living heritage approach requires the negotiation of existing resources and the development of new skills, tools, and approaches by the multiple actors involved. Awareness raising initiatives, capacity-strengthening and -building activities, and training for communities, groups, and individuals, governmental actors, and heritage professionals are necessary to foster effective communication and for the successful adoption, adaptation, integration, and implementation of relevant regulatory frameworks, tools, and approaches, such as the HIA and HUL, among others.

The COVID-19 pandemic together with the climate change crisis represent today an unprecedented opportunity to rethink and reframe our current urban heritage conservation and management strategies without repeating past errors and moving towards more sustainable and people-centered approaches. We hope that the contributions presented in this book and the proposed lines of action can support relevant stakeholders in defining and implementing innovative and more inclusive heritage practices able to balance heritage conservation with sustainable urban development in living (World) heritage cities, putting people at their core.