

Measuring links between cultural heritage management and sustainable urban development: An overview of global monitoring tools



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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 5 April 2016

Received in revised form 2 September 2016

Accepted 6 September 2016

Available online xxxxx

Keywords:

Cultural heritage management

Sustainable urban development

Urban indicators

Cultural heritage indicators

ABSTRACT

The role of cultural heritage conservation has proven beneficial for the development of cities and communities. However, a lack of systematic assessment methodologies for adequate consideration of the gap between sustainable urban development and the conservation of cultural heritage, has been long noted by academia. This paper contributes to bridge this knowledge gap, by discussing the state of the practice from the urban perspective on the integration of cultural heritage as mean for sustainable development (SD). With a mixed-methodology, 19 reports on urban development, management and competitiveness were analyzed. The research identified three levels of inclusion: (1) at the strategic level; (2) at the operational level; (3) at the monitoring level. From the urban development perspective, two main approaches to heritage were identified: as cultural capital and as an urban phenomena requiring tailored urban management. Current links to the sustainability pillars and correlations of cultural heritage with wider urban factors are discussed. Conclusions highlight that a more thorough conceptualization and clearer correlation between cultural heritage management with wider urban phenomena is yet to be developed. Therefore, more efficient tools and more appropriate methodologies to correlate cultural heritage protection as an urban resource are still lacking.

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1. Introduction

In recent years, the impacts of rapid development and urbanization processes have framed sustainability practices to be achieved at the urban level (Mori & Yamashita, 2015; Shen, Jorge Ochoa, Shah, & Zhang, 2011; UN Habitat, 2008, 2013b; United Nations, 1992). As such, for a city to be sustainable, “economic and social benefits need to be maximized in order to enhance living standard as far as the city target is sustainable in terms of environmental limitations and socio-economic equity” (Mori & Yamashita, 2015). The sustainable development (SD) paradigm is broadening and including more social and intangible themes; governance, quality of life, environmental psychology, green space, and natural and cultural heritage are reaching policy-making attention (Colantonio, 2007). Cultural heritage is being referenced in the international agenda for sustainability (Nurse, 2006; Pascual, 2012; United Nations, 2012) and for its role in defining the distinctiveness of cities and improving their competitiveness in an increasingly globalized world (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2012; Shmelev, 2012; Tweed & Sutherland, 2007). The current global agenda on SD emphasizes, for the first time, the relationship between the sustainability of urban areas and cultural heritage. From 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), Goal 11 aims to “make cities and human settlements inclusive,

safe, resilient and sustainable” by “strengthen[ing] efforts to protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural heritage” with target 11.4 (General Assembly, United Nations, 2015). The SDGs require the development of integrated approaches and methods as well as the establishment of a specific target for cities to be assessed through indicators. However, current studies on sustainable cities give little attention to cultural heritage (Shmelev & Shmeleva, 2009). The lack of systematic assessment methodologies for adequate consideration of cultural heritage management and sustainable urban development (SUD) reflects an academic gap (Bandarin & van Oers, 2012; Bond et al., 2004; Nijkamp & Riganti, 2008) that needs filling. Nowadays, cultural heritage is also being recognized from the SUD perspective at the global level. This paper contributes to filling this knowledge gap by providing a critical review of global monitoring tools and indicators and the extent to which these methodologies measure cultural heritage from the urban development perspective. First, we address theoretically the general conceptions of urban sustainability and its monitoring by means of indicators. Second, we discuss the relationship between SUD and cultural heritage management as so far addressed in literature. Section 4 describes our methodology based on mixed qualitative and quantitative analysis designed to achieve the following objectives: (1) search and selection of urban reports according to a sampling plan; (2) analysis of references related to cultural heritage; and (3) analysis of cultural heritage-related indicators. Results and discussion in part five build a “state of the practice” on three levels of inclusion of cultural heritage as the key resource in SD from the urban perspective: (a) at the strategic

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level, (b) at the operational level, and (c) at the monitoring level. Approaches by type of reports are also analyzed. Conclusions confirm the positioning of cultural heritage as an important urban resource and highlight the need for wider correlations between these two fields to measure the effectiveness of current practices more holistically.

2. The links between sustainable development and cultural heritage within the urban context

Heritage is often the subject of debate regarding its meanings, conservation discourses, and the drivers behind management approaches (Fredholm, 2015; Smith, 2006). For the purposes of this paper, we retain the globally agreed definitions of cultural heritage provided by global cultural frameworks. These allow for a baseline to compare local adaptations and interpretations while having a global acceptance and recognition but, also, to strengthen conceptual linkages with the sustainability concept. UNESCO defines heritage as “our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations” (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/about/>). Such definition implies a temporal and cumulative conceptualization, which in its many forms, has to be sustained (Soini & Birkeland, 2014). Heritage has been found following wider dimensions than cultural domains and/or processes, it is “an economic asset and a social good,” and a “product and a dynamic process that undergoes continuous change” (Pessoa, Deloumeaux, & Ellis, 2009); UNESCO, 2011). Therefore, it is possible to state that, for the conservation of cultural heritage to be considered sustainable, it also needs to be economically, socially, and environmentally viable. With a list of outstanding natural and cultural properties increasing every year, the UNESCO World Heritage List is evidence to the global commitment to preserve heritage. UNESCO (2016) has confirmed the contribution of cultural heritage to the creation of a sustainable city.

Sustainability is an ambiguous concept that has led to multiple interpretations. However, it is commonly agreed that “the development of a given territory, in order to be considered sustainable, must integrate the qualities associated with the interactions of three dimensions”—social, economic, and environmental (represented in Fig. 1). Thus, development must be equitable (interaction between the economic and social dimension), livable (correspondence of the environment to social needs, which can refer to the concept of quality of life), and viable (economic development must abide by the supportive capacity of the ecosystems, and depletion of nonrenewable resource must be avoided) (WCED, 1987). Yet, there is no consensus regarding the tradeoffs between these three pillars. Regardless of a defined concept of SD, we will focus on SUD as an interdisciplinary problem (Holden, 2006; Shmelev & Shmeleva, 2009)—that is, as the need to assess interactions between the three dimensions in terms of benefits and constraints as fundamental requirements for monitoring exercises (Mori &

Christodoulou, 2012; Mori & Yamashita, 2015; Tanguay, Rajaonson, Lefebvre, & Lanoie, 2010).

Several scholars have defined heritage as a cross-cutting field of the three dimensions of sustainability. Bandarin and van Oers (2012) explain that cultural heritage and its values play an important role in historic areas and contemporary city change, specially benefiting the social and economic dynamics. Economic benefits are commonly evidenced in, for instance, tourism revenues, the attraction of investment, and the creation of jobs (Chen & Chen, 2010; Hampton, 2005; Orbasli, 2000; Zhang, Zhou, Wu, Skitmore, & Deng, 2015). An evolution of definitions in both cultural heritage and the social dimension can be noticed: from a traditional view focusing on material aspects and basic social needs and toward the inclusion of immaterial aspects such as intangible heritage and well-being (Axelsson et al., 2013; Colantonio, 2007). The social benefits of cultural heritage have been related to the improvement of inhabitants' quality of life for providing a sense of belonging, creating pleasant environments, mitigating excessive urbanization, and adapting to climate change (Bandarin & van Oers, 2012). Tweed and Sutherland (2007) highlight the contribution of cultural heritage to the development of local communities and to the satisfaction of human needs. Evans (2005) revealed the positive impact of regeneration and interventions of historic urban areas, having stimulated several local governments to develop culture-led urban strategies. In addition, cultural heritage is also seen as a soft advantage, which provides cities with a unique identity in their competition for global markets (Scheffler, 2011). However, a complexity of issues raises the urban context that challenges the conservation of cultural heritage and its compatibility with its setting that keeps evolving in form and function (Bandarin & van Oers, 2012; Pendlebury, Short, & While, 2009; Van Oers & Roders, 2012; Zhang et al., 2015). Thus, the ability of cities to integrate the conservation of these urban resources and to monitor impacts of development has been repeatedly questioned. On the other hand, the management of cultural heritage is evolving into a landscape-based approach that requires an interdisciplinary understanding of heritage. Such approach understands development as the management of “thoughtful change,” which should be the result of an efficient integration of heritage in urban development strategies. This integration requires not only the recognition of heritage values (e.g., historic, social, economic) and heritage-designated attributes (e.g., tangible: built structures, and intangible: traditional uses and social dynamics), but it also demands a greater consideration of the wider context (urban landscape) and its social, economic, and environmental processes (Avrami, Mason, & Randall de la Torre, 2000; Bandarin & van Oers, 2012; Jokilehto, 2007; The Getty Conservation Institute, 2009). According to Veldpaus (2015), the landscape-based approach is expected to assist the integration of heritage management in SUD. However, due to its novelty, this approach is rooted in limited theorization and methodological development on how best this integration is to be implemented (Pereira Roders, 2013).

3. Monitoring sustainable urban development and cultural heritage by means of indicators

The use of indicators to monitor the sustainability of practices was initiated “as an attempt to quantify environmental and social impacts of economic growth” (Niemeijer & de Groot, 2008). Today, indicators have become a common tool “to help build mechanisms to redress the often negative effects of adherence to mainstream approaches to development” (Portney, 2002). Their application at most governance levels—global, national, regional, and local—is constituting a basis of information for political decision-making and contributing to the establishment of a common language in practice, policy, and research (Mascarenhas, Coelho, Subtil, & Ramos, 2010; Mori & Christodoulou, 2012; Tanguay et al., 2010). Indicators are also used to measure and compare urban management performance and the cities' competitiveness. These two monitoring efforts are growing in integration because

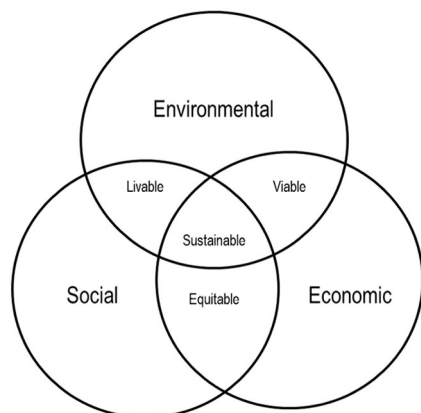


Fig. 1. Dimensions of sustainability and their interactions.

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