

Historic Urban Landscapes: An Assessment Framework

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ABSTRACT: Current theory defines conservation as ‘managing thoughtful change’ and recommends a landscape-based approach towards heritage management. The recent UNESCO (2011) recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) provides guidance on such a landscape-based approach at international level. Yet, it is now up to the national and local governments to implement it. The research aims to develop an assessment framework to reveal the differences and resemblances between existing local policy and management practices and those recommended by the HUL approach, defined for four variables: attributes (what), values (why), stakeholders (who) and strategies (how). The part of the framework presented in this paper is to reveal how the attributes of cultural significance are addressed in current policy.

1. Introduction

Current theory on cultural heritage management defines heritage management as ‘managing thoughtful change’ and recommends a landscape-based approach towards heritage management (Fairclough et al., 2008; Bloemers et al., 2011; Bandarin and Van Oers, 2012). Over the past decades the definition of heritage management has been evolving from an object-based approach towards a more all-inclusive approach that also includes notions such as the intangible, setting and context, and urban- and sustainable development, accompanied by a greater consideration of the social and economic function of (historic) cities. This approach is known as a landscape-based approach.

The recent UNESCO (2011) recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) provides guidance on such a landscape-based approach at international level (fig 2). Yet, it is up to the national and local governments to adapt, disseminate, facilitate and monitor its implementation (fig.1). Implementing a landscape-based approach, such as HUL, is not an easy task (Getty, 2010, Veldpaus et al., 2013). The research presented, aims to assist on such implementation, taking HUL as a starting point. To understand how to adapt those general guidelines for local use and vice versa, an assessment of current policy is needed, to determine how it already reflects those guidelines. This paper aims to present one part of

Figure 1: implementation of HUL (adapted from UNESCO, 2011)

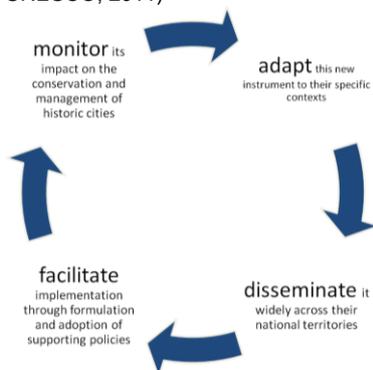


Figure 2: critical steps of HUL (adapted from UNESCO, 2011)



a framework for such assessment, the part concerning the definition of heritage.

1.1. Historic Urban Landscapes Approach

A landscape-based approach, such as the HUL approach, is the expected to be future path in heritage management, as well as, a key indicator for sustainable urban development (Veldpaus *et al.* 2013). Additionally, both intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations such as CoE, (2000) and ICOMOS (2011) have accepted this approach and as such have been defining strategies to address it. The combination of the process of implementing HUL (fig.1) as suggested by the recommendation, and the steps proposed in the recommendation (fig.2), allows identifying cultural significance and change agents, proposing measures or alternative scenario's and monitoring impact of urban development and other change agents on cultural significance, and as such, it strongly depends on integrated Environmental Assessment.

2. Method: building a framework

Theory on the landscape-based approach is in place and literature on the history and theory of HUL is already growing (e.g. Bandarin & Van Oers, 2012). The HUL recommendation as adopted in 2011 provides guidance on such approach, and does so by building on the wide range of preceding standard-setting instruments in the field of human and urban development and heritage. The evolution of concepts behind HUL therefore is expected to reflect evolution of the application of global theory into local policy. As such they are taken as the base of the assessment framework to assist evaluating current policies and determine the local application of the HUL approach. The framework builds upon the principle of a Leopold-matrix (Leopold *et al.*, 1971), a proven method to relate (project) activities to (environmental) parameters (Thompson, 1990).

2.1. Defining activities and parameters

The activities in this case are fixed: the steps defined by HUL (figure 2). The development of the set of parameters depended on the evolution of concepts behind HUL. Determining them followed three stages: first, a qualitative content analysis was conducted to reveal the main concepts of HUL. The concepts of HUL were identified by analysing the recommendation on: the definition of heritage (what is heritage); the general principles behind it (main aims); the defined strategies and tools recommended to manage heritage (how is heritage being managed); and the stakeholders (who is involved).

Secondly, those concepts were traced back in international cultural policy to reveal their evolution. For this, the 28 international policy documents (1962-2008) have been considered to narrow the sample of documents to be surveyed. Those are the ones referenced in the recommendation (UNESCO, 2011) and the preliminary study of the technical and legal aspects (UNESCO, 2009). The documents were analysed using NVivo9, a data analysing tool that supports qualitative and mixed research methods. The found evolution was complemented by, and compared to, concepts and frameworks found in literature study, and constructed into a set of parameters.

The last stage comprised a definition of the scale to which the activities and parameters will be held in order to assess their relation. This scale is to be used to 'fill in' within the matrix, allowing the assessment to reveal the level of compliance with HUL in an objectified manner.

3. Results: The framework parameters

3.1. Stage 1: main concepts

The main concepts of the HUL approach as identified by analysing the recommendation are the following:

What is heritage: the Historic Urban Landscape is defined as “the urban area understood as the result of an historic layering of cultural and natural values and attributes, extending beyond the notion of “historic centre” or “ensemble” to include the broader urban context and its geographical setting.” As such the definition of cultural heritage is being stretched to include a wide – nearly unlimited – range of tangible and intangible attributes, without a specific geographic demarcation. Such concept considers all layers of cultural significance conveyed in the urban landscape, and their varied interpretations, as possibly valuable, so not only the aesthetic, historic, and scientific values, but also values of e.g. economic, social, ecological or political background.

Why is heritage being managed: the main aim of HUL is to provide guidance on sustainable urban (heritage) management, by means of a comprehensive and integrated approach for the identification, assessment, conservation and management of the significance of urban landscapes within an overall sustainable development framework.

How is it being managed: national and local authorities are stimulated to (re)develop instruments and tools sensitive to local values and needs, related to 1) regulatory systems and measures; 2) environmental (impact) assessments; 3) participation processes; and 4) capacity building and sustainable socio-economic development.

Who is involved: HUL addresses the policy, governance and management concerns involving a variety of stakeholders, including local, national, regional, international, public and private actors in the urban development process. It strongly promotes a participatory approach involving communities, decision-makers, professionals and managers.

3.2. Stage 2: from evolution to parameter

The evolution further revealed here is that of the first concept, determining *what is heritage?* The definition of cultural heritage as a concept is dependent on zeitgeist; as such it is not strange that it was adapted in its meaning in multiple directions over the past decades (e.g. Jokilehto, 1998; Mason, 2008). The analysis of the set of 28 documents revealed that in the sixties, there is a clear, tangible and demarcated what e.g. the object, building, or ensemble, and their direct context. This changed along the last quarter of the 20th century. First, the size of the demarcation grows towards historic area and cultural landscape. Later, a shift towards values-based management that starts to put the protection of the ‘significance’, before the protection of the ‘thing’ (what) itself. The *what* remains important, but the significance is no longer only the reason for preservation, but also something to preserve in itself. In, other words: the process itself becomes target of protection as an intangible attribute. This means, the intangible became an independent attribute to be valued not necessarily attached to a tangible result. It also led to raising the demarcation of areas of significance, and instead considering significance (attributes and values) as spread along the whole urban settlement. This can be described as a shift from exclusiveness (singling out buildings or areas) to inclusiveness (considering the whole). It even seems to lead up to the idea that everything is heritage; the limits of acceptable change depend on the level of (cultural) significance attributed to it and not on its location within a designated area. This can be seen in table 1 (grey), read from left to right.

Based on this evolution, categories for data collection (table 1 and 2; grey) and the overarching categories for assessment (table 1 and 2; black) have been constructed.

Respectively eleven (grey; table 1) and five (black; table 1) categories are defined for the tangible attributes, ranging from object, ensemble, and demarcated area to cultural landscape, and urban settlement. Those categories range from exclusive, tangible and demarcated (object) to inclusive, intangible and without demarcation (urban settlement), and from what (buildings) to why (levels of significance).

Table 1: framework WHAT – tangible attributes

	object	ensemble / complex	Area Demarcation	Cultural Landscape Demarcation	Urban Settlement no demarcation
	Building elements	Building	urban elements	Groups of buildings	Building(s)+ context
			District / townscape	Selection of cultural attributes	Interchange of cultural and natural attributes
				Collection cultural attributes	Layers
					Everything (all levels of significance)
A. map resources					
B. reach consensus on what to protect					
C. assess vulnerability					
D. integrate A, B,C in urban management					
E. prioritize actions					
F. define partnership					

Table 2: Evolution of intangible attributes

Asset	Use	Society	Process
Period /style	Character	Built context	Evolution
	Typology	Relation with society; man	Development
	Use, Functions	People, community	Human practices, Traditions

The concept of intangible, as soon as it appears, also evolves. For the intangible attributes respectively ten (table 2; grey) and four (table 2; black) categories have been defined, ranging from asset-related intangibles such as character, style and uses, to ‘people’ and processes. This evolution started with mostly addressing the tangible results of intangible elements in the sixties (e.g. character, style). Also the use and relation with the context were considered relevant as far as they protected or were reflected in the tangible heritage. Along the seventies and eighties the emphasis on communities and their (sustainable) development increased. This led to also including practices and traditions, people and communities as independent attributes to value. With the development of the concept of cultural landscape after its introduction (1992), also processes such as evolution and

development became valued on their own.

3.3. Stage 3: assessment scale

Analysing local policy using the in the framework should be done per HUL-step (A-F, table 1). The categories (and subdivisions) can be given a grey-scale showing the 'range of application' varying from no never to always. The range is based on the amount of times (once or multiple times) a certain activity is executed for the specific parameter, and the amount of projects (one or multiple projects) affected by it, as shown in table 3. As such the framework will reveal if a certain activity is done as a pilot or in a structural context (review) and on which scale.

Table 3: assessment scale

don't know
no never
yes once for one project
yes once for multiple projects
yes multiple times for one project
yes multiple times for multiple projects
yes always for everything

4. Conclusion

This part of the framework is expected to reveal the how heritage is defined within the policy framework. It reveals the *what*, e.g. what is being mapped, what is being defined as significant, what is assessed on its vulnerability etc. The combination of the level of application and the underlying evolution is to indicate in how far the 'what' as described in HUL is already present in the local policy. The level of application (table 3) will reveal how much of the city is taken into account e.g. is the approach project based or executed for the whole urban area. It will also show how common such approach is, and as such if a review cycle is in place.

Relating the outcomes of the framework parts will reveal the definition of heritage used in the policy assessed, both in terms of tangible and intangible aspects of heritage, and the combination. Then, this is also expected to indicate an inclination towards the concepts behind the definition and as such, the level of application of HUL e.g. if heritage management is object-based or a landscape-based, and exclusive or inclusive, and if it is focused on tangible or on intangible, and on assets or on significance. As such this part of the framework is expected to be already relevant on its own for understanding what is addressed in policy when it comes to the categories of cultural heritage being applied in practice. Revealing in how far HUL is already part of local policy will allow for a better decision on what changes in policy should or shouldn't be facilitated. It can for example reveal which parameters are or aren't in need of further development at the moment. If, for example, no human practices are being mapped, valued or assessed, it could imply the local system lacks a certain type of heritage management, though it could also imply such significance is not recognised by the stakeholders, and as such not in need of management in terms of heritage. However, when it's mapped and valued, but not assessed or integrated into a wider urban development framework, this indicates possible gaps in the current system.

The framework is currently being validated, using case studies methods and in a later stage it will also be tested at a broader scale as a monitoring tool, to monitor the change in level of application. Moreover, as the landscape-based approach is considered to be of growing importance to sustainable urban development, HUL is expected to further increase in relevance. As such it will influence requirements for EA's; both in urban development (EA) generally and in cultural heritage (H(I)A) specifically. If one of the main aims of a H(I)A is to reveal the impact of development on the attributes, this part of the framework will already be instrumental.

5. References

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