



# HABITAT III ISSUE PAPERS

## 4 - URBAN CULTURE AND HERITAGE

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## ISSUE PAPER ON URBAN CULTURE AND HERITAGE

### KEY WORDS

culture-based regeneration, urban heritage conservation, urban landscape, cultural and creative industries, cultural values, cultural diversity, creative economy, inclusive development, social cohesion, right to cultural heritage, density, mixed-use, strategic territorial governance

### MAIN CONCEPTS

1. Culture, according to the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001), is “the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of a society or a social group that encompasses art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs”. Urban culture thus covers the notions of culture within an urban setting, from both a functional and anthropological perspective.
2. Cultural and creative industries are those sectors of activity that have as their main objective the creation, production, distribution and consumption of goods, services and activities that have cultural and artistic content. They are characterized by being at the intersection of economy and culture, having creativity at the core of their activities, artistic and/or cultural content, and links to innovation. Cultural and creative industries include cinema and audio-visual arts, design and crafts, media arts, music, performing arts, publishing and visual arts.
3. Creative cities are defined as urban complexes where cultural activities are an integral component of the city’s economic and social functioning, for example through support to cultural and creative professionals, enhanced investments in cultural infrastructure, creative industries and new ICTs, or the adoption of bottom-up approaches to urban development.
4. Historic urban landscape is an urban area understood as the result of a 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: sites’ topography, geomorphology, hydrology and natural features, built environment, both historic and contemporary, infrastructures above and below ground, open spaces and gardens, land use patterns and spatial organization, perceptions and visual relationships, other urban structure elements. It also includes social and cultural practices and values, economic processes and the intangible dimensions of heritage as related to diversity and identity.
5. Urban heritage represents a social, cultural and economic asset and resource reflecting the dynamic historical layering of values that have been developed, interpreted and transmitted by successive generations and an accumulation of traditions and experiences recognized as such in their diversity. Urban heritage comprises urban elements (urban morphology and built form, open and green spaces, urban infrastructure), architectural elements (monuments, buildings) and intangible elements. Urban heritage conservation or urban conservation



relates to urban planning processes aimed at preserving cultural values, assets and resources through conserving the integrity and authenticity of urban heritage, while safeguarding intangible cultural assets through a participatory approach.

## FIGURES AND KEY FACTS

- Culture plays a fundamental role in urban economies, through monetary and non-monetary values. The safeguarding and promotion of cultural heritage and creative industries open major opportunities for cities. In the developing world, they have become a key asset to create qualified jobs and reach out to vulnerable populations, in both the formal and informal sector.
  - ✓ The volume of world trade of creative goods and services doubled between 2002 and 2011, reaching \$ 624 billion. Exports of creative goods in developing countries grew 12.1% annually on average over this period. Cultural industries account for a growing portion of urban jobs, representing 16% of all jobs in Mumbai or 12% in London.
  - ✓ Cultural tourism is a rapidly developing sector for cities. Tourism represents 9% of the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and higher share of Least Developed Countries (LDCs') economies (16% of GDP in Cambodia). While 40% of all trips include a cultural element, cultural tourism grows 15% a year (against 4 to 5% for overall tourism growth).
  - ✓ Urban heritage conservation is a strong economic driver. Official Development Assistance (ODA) increasingly targets urban heritage to harness this potential. Over the last 20 years, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) provided US\$ 670 million in loans for the conservation and development of cultural heritage in Latin America. Built heritage renovation and maintenance represents 27.5% of the value of European construction industry.
- With booming rural to urban migrations, urban societies have become more culturally diverse. However, the lack of appropriate urban planning and governance has affected the historic role of cities as platforms for the promotion of culture: social and spatial segregation has now become an overarching issue and new types of threats have emerged.
- Threats to urban culture and heritage have significantly increased over the last 20 years. With the mounting pressures of urbanization, urban heritage faces severe conservation and safeguarding issues. Damages resulting from conflict situations have also become an important issue.
- While globalization processes, facilitated by the development of ICTs, enhance interaction between cultures, they also represent a challenge for cultural diversity and the safeguarding of traditional cultural practices, with higher risks of imbalances between rich and poor countries.
- Municipal authorities have become key actors of culture-based urban governance. The decentralization processes over the last decades facilitated the integration of cultural assets into urban development strategies due to an enhanced awareness of local issues by local authorities and increased participation of local communities, in both developed and developing cities.



- Failures in urban planning models over the last decades call for culturally sensitive urban development models. The example of World Heritage Cities and Creative Cities can inspire new planning and governance models to mitigate urban conflicts and reduce cities' ecological footprint, with a view to build more compact, inclusive and resilient cities.

## ISSUE SUMMARY

### The urban crisis calls for renewed models of urban development

- Globalization and an unprecedented urban growth over the last decades bring out new challenges for cities to ensure equitable access to jobs and basic services – housing, sanitation, transportation, foster social inclusion and tackle inequalities. Urban planning models adopted over the last decades – notably based on zoning and private transportation – have shown their limits and contributed to urban sprawl. These unsustainable schemes have not only emphasized the cities' vulnerability and environmental footprint, but also contributed to dehumanize urban environments in terms of scale or sense of belonging.
- While cities as hubs for migrations have been enriched by a more culturally diverse population, new types of challenges to social cohesion have emerged. Social and spatial segregation, already underlined in Habitat II, have become a key issue in many cities of the world. The historical function of cities as melting pots and catalysts for intercultural dialogue is now jeopardized, as wealth generated by urban growth is unevenly distributed.

### Culture is now recognized as a key resource and asset for sustainable urban development

- Culture has historically been a driving force of urban development. Stemming from social and cultural processes, urban heritage reflects societies' identities, expectations and visions over time. Urban culture – understood as cultural and social practices, behaviours and assets developed within urban environments – is often characterized by pluralism and paves the way for cross-fertilization and innovation.
- Although the role of culture for the economic, social and environmental sustainability of cities has long been recognized at the local level, it has been marginal in most international debates on urbanization over the past 40 years. Culture was mostly addressed through a sector-based approach, but rarely in a comprehensive way as a lever for sustainable urban development strategies and improvement of people's well-being, identification and involvement.
- However, since 2010, the UN General Assembly has repeatedly acknowledged the role of culture for sustainable development through several resolutions and, milestone reports related to the Post-2015 Development Agenda, including the Open Working Group Proposal for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which encompasses a Target dedicated to culture under the SDG on "sustainable cities", culture is now firmly



recognized by the international community as a key component of strategic urban planning and a key innovation for the definition of a New Urban Agenda.

### Threats to urban culture and heritage have increased over the last decades

- Urban heritage conservation policies are increasingly challenged by urban pressures. While urban heritage is the most represented category on the World Heritage List, urban sites are faced with critical conservation issues (unplanned infrastructure, uncontrolled tourism developments, urban densification...) which impact the physical integrity of monuments and the authenticity of the urban layout. What is at stake is to preserve, for future generations, the cities' identities, the physical testimony of their multifaceted history and the cultural values they embody, while maintaining their accessibility for all.
- Cultural heritage is increasingly targeted, especially in conflict or post-conflict areas. As visible platforms of cultural diversity, cities and their cultural institutions or historic monuments are under threat of looting or intentional destruction. As core markers of people's identity, cultural traditions and expressions are primary targets for oppression and their interdiction constitutes a form of psychological warfare. Those attacks on cultural symbols are intended to weaken the foundations of social cohesion and threaten peoples' integrity and cultural diversity. Protecting this heritage is therefore a key security issue and heritage recovery, in post-conflict situations, becomes an essential source of resilience for local communities. Peace-building processes also include consideration for the multiple interpretations of heritage. The participation of all concerned and the promotion of intercultural dialogue regarding cultural heritage is in this context of utmost importance.
- Urban cultural practices – traditional and contemporary – can be weakened by globalization processes, exploitation of economic resources and promotion of tourism. Tourism can potentially harm the ability of communities to safeguard and transmit their cultural practices and sites, or tend to encourage standardized features. Minority cultural expressions risk marginalization. Local cultural values, practices or know-how can be affected through rural to urban migrations, leading to disruption in intangible cultural practices, loss of community memory, cultural impoverishment and homogenization. Gentrification processes in historic areas can also lead to exclusion of the vulnerable communities who are the historic dwellers of these areas and the repositories of their memory.

### Promoting culturally-sensitive urban strategies is essential to build resilient and inclusive cities

- “Re-humanizing” the city should become a strategic objective of the New Urban Agenda. Enhancing local culture and recognizing cultural diversity can be a powerful way to mitigate urban conflicts, foster tolerance, preserve the social fabric and promote pluralism. Social inclusion of disadvantaged groups, particularly in the redevelopment of urban areas and cultural spaces, can be facilitated through wider recognition of their cultural identity.
- Access to culture and participation in cultural life should be an integral part of all urban policies. The representation and participation of communities in the design and implementation of culturally-sensitive urban



policies should be promoted, to fully respect the freedom of individuals to participate, access cultural heritage and contribute to the creation of culture, including through the contestation of dominant norms and values within the communities.

- Cultural infrastructures such as museums can offer civic spaces for intercultural dialogue and knowledge sharing and contribute to social cohesion and mutual understanding. Heritage conservation processes can serve as vectors for dialogue and inclusion, for different urban communities or social groups to build a consensus on the value of their common heritage and create a sense of belonging in the respect of their diversity.
- Good practices of urban heritage conservation can inspire inclusive and holistic approaches to urban development and lay the foundations for “fit-for-purpose” planning tools and legal frameworks. Historic centres offer living laboratories of dense urban areas, with mixed functions and quality public spaces, where innovative urban approaches are experimented (including soft transportation or mixed tenure) with a view to combine the requirements of conservation and the improvement of quality of life. Vernacular heritage – based on the use of local construction materials and building techniques adapted to climate conditions – can also inspire contemporary architectural models aimed at addressing climate change and reducing energy consumption. At the wider territorial scale, historic areas can serve as models of mixed urban development and density to plan and design city extensions that meet the requirements of compactness, connectivity and integration.
- Culture-based urban strategies can open new paths for job creation and locally-owned economic development. Cultural and creative industries, the performing arts and heritage conservation activities can be a reservoir of qualified jobs for urban poor, in both the formal and informal sectors. The cultural industries and the creative economy play a growing role in cities’ development and transformation processes and increasingly contribute to local economy and employment and need to be taken into account in urban development frameworks. Safeguarding and promoting culture at the local level is a way to develop endogenous resources and create conditions for sustainable revenue generation. The development of sustainable cultural tourism can also be a catalyst for revenue generation to upgrade urban infrastructure, especially in developing countries.

#### Local authorities have become key actors of culture-based urban governance

- In recent decades, cities from have expressed a growing interest in placing culture at the core of urban development strategies, especially as urban development is now increasingly addressed through a territorial, sector-based approach. Prompted by decentralization processes, municipal authorities are increasingly investing in culture as a key asset within territorial branding and urban regeneration strategies (for instance: cultural infrastructure, artistic and cultural activities, public/private partnerships on culture). Safeguarding heritage can also be a strategic priority for small to medium-sized historic cities in developing countries, where heritage-related activities account for most of the economic flows and local jobs. Investing in cultural infrastructure and industries, and promoting social participation through culture can help cities to build more inclusive societies and coherent urban territories, as illustrated by the example of Medellin, Colombia.



- Culture is now acknowledged as a key priority of local development by local authorities' networks. The Agenda 21 for Culture developed by the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) exemplifies this movement. The Indian Historic Cities' Network or the European Capital of Culture Programme are other examples. Regional training programmes on heritage or culture targeting local authorities were initiated in the past decade, among which EU-funded training programmes developed by the Francophone Association of Mayors (AIMF) in West Africa or South East Asia. Several programmes funded by multilateral or bilateral agencies – notably the European Union, the Inter American Development Bank (IDB), the World Bank or the French Development Agency (AFD) – laid strong emphasis on culture and heritage.

### Innovative culture-based urban practices are observed throughout the world

- The conservation of urban heritage is promoted as a key strategy for cities. As the global number of World Heritage cities increases, innovative practices in heritage conservation and management are developed and experimented in many historic areas, such as pro-poor housing frameworks, micro-credit based support for economic activities or community maintenance of vernacular heritage. High-level skills and sustainable jobs are developed through capacity-building frameworks. Tourism-based heritage tax systems generate local resources and support municipal finance. Pilot projects are initiated to develop energy efficient vernacular heritage modules for housing or public buildings, fit-to-size urban infrastructure for drainage and access to water, or soft transportation systems in dense historic areas. Those examples demonstrate that urban heritage can be respected while ensuring access to urban services. Multi-functions adaptive reuse rehabilitation programmes multiply in former industrial areas to meet increasing demands for housing while valorising industrial heritage. Specific legal frameworks for architecture and urban control developed in protected areas provide interesting examples of tailor-made urban legislations, based on local realities and designed with participatory approaches.
- Innovative experiences of culture-based urban regeneration projects are observed across the world, notably in slum or deprived areas. Cultural practices and local know-how are harnessed to improve the living environment, strengthen the sense of belonging and facilitate transmission of knowledge. Vocational training programmes for artists and cultural practitioners are developed for vulnerable populations, particularly women and youth working in the cultural and creative industries, in order to upgrade traditional skills and facilitate access to world markets. Cultural hubs expand in many urban areas and harvest the economic potential of cultural industries for urban regeneration.
- As the quality of public spaces becomes a key item in the urban agenda, municipalities or civil society increasingly promote them as venues for cultural events, encounter and participation. New attention is given to the quality of urban design: local authorities invite urban professionals or artists to reshape urban environments and reinvent urban identity. Good examples of harmonious incorporation of contemporary architecture in historic urban fabric are also promoted.



## Professional practices and conceptual tools have evolved to encompass new challenges

- New concepts and professional practices have emerged over the last decades to integrate heritage preservation and management with territorial planning and development strategies and instruments. Urban conservation is now considered as a dynamic process within an urban system aimed at enhancing cultural values and managing change. Cultural professionals also play an increasing role in participative processes relating to urban regeneration, especially in Africa or Latin America.
- International normative tools address these challenges and propose refined concepts and practical tools. The UNESCO 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage and 2011 Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape focus on the dynamic role and function of heritage in contemporary societies and its inclusion in planning policies, which integrates social, economic and spatial components of cities to build a holistic approach for urban territories where cultural and environmental values serve as founding principles. The 2003 Intangible Heritage Convention and 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions provide additional instruments to include community-based traditional cultural expressions and cultural industries into urban development.

## A new culture-based urban model calls for a renewed governance system

- National and local legal frameworks must be adapted to facilitate the inclusion of culture in urban planning tools. The knowledge gap on culture and heritage at the urban level must be addressed, notably through partnerships with universities to identify assets and develop indicators, monitoring tools and financial instruments. Innovative public-private partnerships at the national and local levels should be explored. Bilateral and multilateral agencies should include a culture-based approach more systematically in their development strategies and project design. Training programmes of urban professionals should be adapted to include cultural issues in overall urban studies and policies.

## KEY DRIVERS FOR ACTION

- Fostering a territorial approach of urban development through culture-based strategic planning
- Learning from innovative practices in historic areas to plan more compact cities based on mixed urban development
- Stimulating urban regeneration through cultural and creative industries, events and institutions
- Improving the quality of and access to public spaces through culture
- Increasing culture-led competitiveness of cities, through investments on cultural infrastructure and industries, capacity-building programmes and new technologies
- Fostering sustainable cultural tourism to the benefit of local communities and individuals to encourage the renewal and revival of cultural heritage
- Building on culture as a factor of identity and dialogue among communities for education and social cohesion and in the fight against inequalities
- Ensuring cultural rights for all and respect for cultural diversity to promote inclusive cities
- Putting culture at the core of urban resilience strategies



- Developing follow-up tools and indicators to assess and quantify the contribution of culture to urban development

## PLATFORMS AND PROJECTS

- As part of the implementation of the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972), a thematic programme on World Heritage Cities was launched in 2001 to facilitate experience sharing and pilot activities on urban conservation issues, local governance, and strategic planning. UNESCO's Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape provides an additional normative tool for the conservation of urban heritage sites and the management of change of urban areas and cities. Dissemination and capacity building activities are being organized in different regions to facilitate its implementation.
- In synergy with the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Culture Expressions (2005), UNESCO initiated the Creative Cities network, whose objective is to develop international cooperation among cities that have identified creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable development and are recognized as creative hubs or socio-cultural clusters.
- The Convention on the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) provides conceptual instruments and practical tools to identify and safeguard intangible heritage through community-based approaches. The convention provides orientations on actions to be undertaken to strengthen the role of intangible heritage as a guarantee of inclusive social development, environmental sustainability, inclusive economic development, and peace and security.
- The United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) has developed, with the document Culture 21: Actions adopted in March 2015, an international guide to promote a culturally sensitive approach to sustainable development, and strengthen a global network of innovative cities. Collaborative and comparative work between the cities and with civil society and private partners is planned to develop over the coming years.

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