



Cordoba Path CityLab 1

Heritage narratives and urban regeneration

CONTEXT

World Heritage cities have tended to focus on preserving their heritage unchanged, and have generally chosen a single major territorial narrative for its attractiveness (territorial marketing) and the economic value of its tourism spin-offs. Excessive tourism and the crises that have been multiplying in recent years are undermining these strategies: The pandemic has led to a sudden halt in international travel, unexpected heat waves are worrying professionals, the influx of refugees is forcing us to adapt reception policies, and the pressure of tourism on land is revolting more and more inhabitants.

Faced with the effects of the climate crisis and contemporary urban issues that raise challenges in terms of diversity, migration and social and ecological justice, it is impossible to think of alternatives and new urban approaches with a single narrative as the collective imaginary and a single way of valuing it. We must dare to draw on human, narrative, symbolic and material imaginations and resources to create new “narratives” that inspire and mobilize. The narratives borne by historic cities and liberated by communities must nourish and energize an innovative urban project, yet rooted in local identities, capable of guaranteeing and reinforcing Habitability and guiding the city towards sustainable development.

PROBLEMATICS

At the level of society or the city, as in biology, robustness, or the ability to adapt, requires diversifying knowledge, know-how and available resources, as well as multiplying the relationships between them. Historic cities have always been able to adapt to crises with the resources at their disposal, be they material, human or symbolic. This is their strength and adaptability.

The diversity of narratives is inseparable from the diversity of the people attached to them and the diversity of the heritages in which they are embodied. This great diversity enriches the ability of the historic city to adapt, as it enables a plurality of options to be taken into account when considering urban evolution. All narratives, even the most minority, heterogeneous, eclectic, incoherent or conflicting, link and connect communities, and form the basis of a cooperative approach that generates legitimacy, political audacity and operational power in the face of crises.

The OWHC's New Urban Project aims to encourage the adoption of strategies and the development of innovative urban projects. One of the novelties of this approach is that every inhabitant, old and new, is asked to designate, interpret and share their narratives and the heritages that embody them. The Faro Convention proposes a paradigm shift in terms of heritage: it sees heritage as a shared resource, and places people at the heart of heritage processes, from the designation of what constitutes heritage, its interpretation and valorization, to participation in the ethical debates that this raises in the perspective of urban revitalization. The adoption of these principles reflects the attachment of local communities to public institutions, their desire for democracy and the willingness on both sides to cooperate and jointly assume responsibility for the city.



PROGRAM

The Cordoba CityLab will be proposing to integrate the principles of the Faro Convention on the Social Value of Cultural Heritage, known as the “Faro Convention”, into the process of developing the New Urban Project. They offer an opportunity to integrate heritage communities and the narratives they tell, as well as the heritages they bring to life, into the regeneration of Habitability in historic centers.

Three working hypotheses are proposed for discussion:

- Respecting the diversity of narratives, heritages and communities allows us to **reopen our imaginations** and produce the political audacity that drives urban transformation.
- Converging narratives by enhancing heritage as a **resource that can be activated by society** generates operational power in the face of crises.
- Sharing responsibility for our heritage enables us to act together - civil society and institutions - and provides the legitimacy we need to start thinking about the city, its development and its attractiveness.

CityLab will organize the reflection in different stages:

1. Using case studies, establish the link between the dominant or main narrative and heritage enhancement, or even the urban development it implies.
2. Round table: Why is heritage important to your city? What narrative does it tell? What is the value of this narrative for the city? Who does it attract? How is it enhanced: monuments, events, museums?
3. Is the dominant narrative sufficient / capable of supporting another urban strategy, called heritage? The discussion will document, in the light of the OWHC's 4 Strategic Axes on which cities agree to act, what a diversity approach reveals in terms of new mobilizable people, new desirable narratives and new resource values for:
 - Requalify the Habitat to remain hospitable,
 - Refresh the city to improve quality of life,
 - Transform Mobility to improve the living environment,
 - Regenerate the Urban Environment to revitalize the city.
4. Potential new contributions to the 4 strategic axes in terms of new mobilizable people, new desirable narratives and new resource values. Apart from the grand narrative, what are the other narratives of your city? What is their value? What do they tell? Who are they of interest to? Why is it worth taking an interest?
5. Establish Statements that are shared positions, likely to achieve consensus among OWHC member cities, that highlight the scope of the challenges posed by the communities and narratives linked to one of the Strategic Axes.
6. Transform the Statements into Strategic Objectives and Concrete Solutions to meet these challenges.