

Theme 2: The Historic Urban Landscape and Evolution of Urban Heritage Governance Concept.

13. Intangible Heritage as a driver of transformations in historic cities: Case of traditional craft practice in Jaipur, India

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The paper seeks to take reference from the historic Urban landscape approach. It tries to corroborate the principles and strategies listed in the Valletta principles with the ground realities. The Convention on intangible cultural heritage and the Washington charter remain the backdrop of the discussion.

Globally, the heritage legislation of individual nations is often based upon ratification of UNESCO conventions, as well as guidelines from charters put out by ICOMOS. But at times, there are gaps between the expert-driven guidelines and issues on the ground. The paper examines the Valletta Principles in the context of the findings on the ground and delves into the gap between the theoretical underpinnings and the existing situation.

There is a lack of understanding of the complexity of intangible values and their relationship with the physical structure within a historic urban area. The purpose of the research is to delve into the interrelationship and interdependencies between the tangible and intangible attributes in the historic areas. This has been realised through the study of the historic city of Jaipur - a UNESCO inscribed World Heritage site. The study contextualizes traditional crafts practices within the setting of the historic areas. Traditional craft practices have been part of the planning, political as well as economic strategies from the inception of the city. Even today they occupy a large footprint and have a major share in the economy in terms of use by the local community as well as souvenirs for tourists. The study delves into the spatial understanding and the impact on the socio-cultural fabric of the city and vice versa. The methods employed include spatial study as well as a survey of practices through structured and unstructured interviews. The result can make a difference to the predominant approach of considering management solely through the lens of tangible fabric. The paper proposes an approach on the ground that addresses both intangible and tangible aspects simultaneously for the sustainability and liveability of historic cities.

The paper advocates inclusion of intangible attributes to be considered at the heart of the management of historic cities. This will mean formulating the local level policies and strategies from the perspective of both tangible and intangible heritage. Though the Vallette principles have a lot of detailing in the document, the interpretation on the ground changes. There can be lessons learnt from the above case example about translations of these principles on the ground.

Though the Valetta principles extended beyond the tangible to include intangible aspects that represent the way of life of inhabitants, emphasis on the conservation of tangible still towers the heritage management discourse. This is due to the lack of understanding of the complexity of the intangible values and their relationship with the physical structure of the city, especially in South Asia. Exemplifying the traditional stone craft practice in Jaipur, the study examines the physical manifestation of the craft practices along with their contribution as the socio-cultural and economic resource of the historic cities that contributes to their sustainability.

The paper analyses the key factors that impact transformations of the living urban heritage and argues for the shift in existing monument-centric discourse. It proposes a heritage management approach on the ground that addresses both intangible and tangible aspects simultaneously for the sustainability and liveability of historic cities.