

Theme 1: Lessons learned and new challenges in the practical implementation of the Valletta Principles

2. INTEGRATING HISTORIC URBAN VALUES IN THE CITY PLANNING AND GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES OF TODAY: CULTURAL CHALLENGES IN A CHANGING WORLD

Elena Dimitrova, M Arch (1976), PhD (1990), assoc. professor at the University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy in Sofia, Bulgaria

The Valletta Principles document was developed to set the planning and governance frame for historic cities (ICOMOS, 2011). During the eleven years following its official adoption, it acted as an important guiding tool for urban practice but also as a meaningful message on the importance of a value-based approach to the historic city. The ongoing effort to update the document stemmed from the awareness that the new challenges faced in a fast-changing world require an enhanced understanding for the growing urban complexity, uncertainties, and vulnerabilities in a continuously urbanizing world.

The current work builds upon the understanding that, because of being living cultural heritage, the historic cities of today are also complex urban systems responding to the general objectives and tendencies of urban development and to the changing urban planning and governance culture. It aims to outline the broader relevance and potential of the intended new document in conceptualizing the cultural dimensions of urban policy, where the paradigm of sustainable urban development had provided a meeting area for the evolving theoretical concepts and practices of both urban governance and heritage preservation.

The discussion on what urban values we want to preserve and communicate in the historic city and how to practically achieve it, relies on a brief overview of (1) the theoretical interpretations of urban complexity and its implications in the urban planning and governance field (Crawford, 2016); and (2) the global urban policy framework for sustainable development as interpreted by the New Urban Agenda (UN, 2017). The analysis of the results identifies gaps and opportunities for acknowledging culture as vital development and governance factor and for insisting upon the introduction of urban governance principles respecting historic urban values and enhancing the existing capacity of the active planning and governance systems to deal with urban continuity.

The author claims that interpreting the new Valletta principles from the point of view that “what is not appropriate for the historic city, is not appropriate for the city at all” could be a chance for spreading a meaningful message about the importance of respecting the cultural dimensions of the urban process to the broader community of actors involved in urban governance and heritage preservation.

References:

ICOMOS (2011) Valletta principles. Adopted by the 17th ICOMOS General Assembly on 28 November 2011. Available at:

https://www.icomos.org/Paris2011/GA2011_CIVVIH_text_EN_FR_final_20120110.pdf

United Nations (2017) The New Urban Agenda. Available at

<https://www.habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda>

Ron Crawford (2016) What can complexity theory tell us about urban planning? New Zealand

Productivity Commission Research Note 2016/2. Available at:

<https://www.productivity.govt.nz/assets/Documents/d58b01f117/What-can-complexity-theory-tell-us-about-urban-planning.pdf>

Theme 1: Lessons learned and new challenges in the practical implementation of the Valletta Principles

