

The Making of Cultural Heritage: revitalizing urban spaces through community engagement

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Abstract

This paper addresses the topic of Urban Heritage Management with focus on community participation. Community participation became, during the last twenty century, a central topic of discussion for heritage management; with the shift from the idea of heritage as merely “monumental” to a deeper analysis of the relation between people and the surrounding environment, taking into account people’s needs became a fundamental requirement for heritage management.

Unlike “single monument sites”, an urban landscape has multiple and different components, each of them with its contribution to shape the landscape as we see it today. Urban spaces are an agglomerate of functions with different needs: the diversity of needs of residents, tourists and businesses poses challenges for the urban governance which require a planned balance. Involving communities in urban management helps to prevent conflicts, identify priorities and needs and enhances awareness and belonging to the site. The Old and New Town of Edinburgh is brought as case study for being a remarkable example of integrated heritage management of an urban landscape; the focus on the needs of local residents, on the creation of an enjoyable living environment as well as involving them as policy advisors, represents one of the most important factors of success in its sustainable management. The focus on the Historic Urban Landscape concept contributes to create an urban management strategy which is focused on both the built environment and its intangible values, where the residents are actively involved in its conservation and transmission to future generations.

Key words: community, participation, urban heritage, historic urban landscape, governance