

EURA 2022 Conference

Defrag-Europe: fragility/antifragility at play in contemporary Europe

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS



Matteo Basso
IUAV University of Venice

Remi Wacogne
IUAV University of Venice
rwacogne@iuav.it

Preorganised Panel

SESSION 5

Unpacking the global/local nexus in world heritage sites: a pragmatic approach

Keywords:

World Heritage sites, sustainable development, governance

This special panel session focuses on the critical interplay between global and local dynamics in heritage sites inscribed in the UNESCO's World Heritage List. In fact, the management, planning and governance of these particular (and fragile) heritage sites of worldwide relevance is the result of a hybridization of standardized global principles and regulations, and local interpretation of heritage meanings and policy implementation. On the one hand, this session explores the role played by UNESCO and other heritage and non-heritage organisations in setting specific international goals, recommendations, policy guidelines and governance requirements. On the other, it discusses how the global/local nexus is affected by contemporary dynamics of change such as increasing touristification, marketing of local cultures, identities and landscapes for economic purposes, inconsiderate developments, and gentrification processes. Particular attention is paid to the (more or less explicit) conflicts generated by the friction between global and local heritage-based narratives, and between different priorities for local economic development (also through tourism promotion), conservation of heritage sites, and improvement of citizens' quality of life.

This panel discussion contributes to track 8 (Fragile Heritage Sites in a Globalizing World) by presenting a reflection based on (mostly European) case studies and an ever-growing literature on these topics. Key themes are: a) the global/local interplay in fragile World Heritage sites in historic urban environments, cultural landscapes and beyond; b) the suggestion of possible policy recommendations for a more sustainable planning practice in such contexts. The panel session consists in the following four contributions. Francesca Giliberto (University of Leeds, UK) examines the "heritage versus development dilemma" through the lens of a 21st century international approach to urban heritage conservation, management, and development. She highlights how, following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by the United Nations (2015), UNESCO and ICOMOS – among others– have issued a series of ground-breaking documents to advocate for the importance of heritage for sustainable development, and have provided guidance on how to take concrete measures at the local level in that sense. She critically discusses the discrepancies between the global narratives and recommendations suggested in these documents and their local implementation focusing on the two World Heritage Cities (WHCs) of Florence (Italy) and Edinburgh (UK). She sheds light on effective practices and existing challenges by examining their management systems and urban regulatory frameworks in particular. Finally, she provides recommendations to rethink and reframe current urban heritage management

practices for more sustainable WHCs, based on critical insights from “PRAXIS: Arts and Humanities for Global Development”, a research project led by the University of Leeds.

Matteo Basso (Iuav University of Venice, Italy) challenges the dominant and essentially positive rural imagery conveyed by the successful inscription of the Prosecco Hills of Conegliano and Valdobbiadene (Italy) in the World Heritage List. Through a qualitative analysis based on planning documents and interviews with key actors, he emphasizes frictions and contradictions existing not only between global and local heritage-based narratives and initiatives, but also between different values and territorial aspirations. He underlines how the massive vineyard expansion generated by the Prosecco’s global demand has generated environmental impacts and health consequences triggered by the use of chemicals, and thus a growing discontent among locals. These challenges, together with the impacts of the vineyard expansion on the cultural landscape and a set of recommendations formulated by the World Heritage Centre, have resulted in diffused conflicts among different actors. In this context, Basso questions the role of ordinary planning tools in addressing more effectively the interactions between vineyards and urban settlements, as well as between heritage and development.

Ilaria Rosetti (University of Antwerp, Belgium) focuses on participatory processes in managing WHCs, and their multiple roles with regard to sustainable urban development. International organisations acknowledge their relevance in official documents, promoting collaborative, inclusive, and equitable heritage processes at national and local levels. In turn, much research work has investigated the challenges and opportunities of implementing participatory heritage practices in WHCs. Different actors’ perspectives have been analysed, including local authorities and other organisations, practitioners as well as local communities, emphasising the role of governing bodies –especially elected ones– in decision-making processes. Still, although they play a key part in the identification and allocation of resources and in the prioritization of policies and actions, such actors’ perception of participatory heritage practices has been little explored. To address this gap, a mayors’ workshop was organized during the 2017 XIV World Congress of the Organization of WHCs, whose findings are discussed in Rosetti’s contribution. Beyond evident commonalities and differences, she analyses the challenges, both internal (weaknesses) and external (threats), that are perceived to hinder the implementation of participatory heritage practices in WHCs, as well as their implications for the quality of participation and sustainable heritage practices.

Finally, Remi Wacogne (Iuav University of Venice, Italy) identifies key highlights emerged from the three previous contributions, i.e. that stakeholders involved in processes related to WH sites act according to sensibly different agendas and procedures. Drawing on the experience of the “support to the coordination of UNESCO sites of Veneto” carried out by a research group of Iuav with a formal agreement with the Veneto Region, his contribution presents an application of the actor-network theory (ANT) in this dynamic context. Through a renewed mapping of actors and agencies involved in processes related to WHS, further practical implications for planning and public policy at the local, regional, national and international levels, are highlighted.

References

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