

SNIS / Project « Mapping Controversial memories » / Working paper

Memory and historic urban landscapes
An interdisciplinary research in Mexico-City, Rome and Beijing¹ -

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Introduction

In 2011, UNESCO formulated a new recommendation that aimed to protect the historic urban landscape (RHUL). This new instrument of the United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural organization completed a normative legitimacy of the legislative body of Conventions about heritage and cultural diversity², Memorandums on managing architecture in world heritage³, Recommendations about historic city⁴ alongside other tools such as Charters produced by international organizations (ICOMOS⁵ or ICCROM). What was the reason behind the redaction of this new proposal? Which gap did this RHUL aim to fill? It was more a comprehensive approach to better safeguard physical and immaterial traces of the past in cities than a binding convention ratified and applied by the 193 UNESCO's States Parties. This working paper examines to what extent this RHUL is understood in various cultural contexts and implemented by local authorities in charge of urban heritage.

The aim of our research is to study policies regarding sustainable heritage governance in cities that have undergone substantial transformation in recent decades and scrutinize their implementation at the local level. In order to contribute to a critical reflection on the HUL concept and the implementation of its recommendation, we selected three capital cities from different geographical areas—Beijing, Mexico-City and Rome—all well known for their historical resonance and the richness of their World Heritage sites⁶. These three case studies represent areas with different historic status and geographical distance (as central or peripheral) from a UNESCO labeled heritage item. The first is a UNESCO branded historical center situated in Mexico City, the second a residential area composed by alleys and *hutong* near the World Heritage Forbidden City in Beijing, and the third a post-industrial neighborhood in the periphery of Rome.

The first objective of the project was to study the relation between the built environment and local residents' collective memory. The existence of a mutual link between the identity of social groups and the physical space of cities was famously theorized in the first half of the twentieth century by the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs. His notion of "collective memory" (Halbwachs 1950) proved to be a key influence for European debates on architectural theory and urban conservation in the 1960s and 1970s (Falser and Lipp 2015). More recently, the notion has enjoyed new popularity within the field of international urban studies, as a consequence of the English translation and diffusion of the original work and in coinciding with the 'memory turn' taken by many social science debates after the 1990s (Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi and Levy 2011). The notion of collective memory can provide a useful tool with which to study conflicts in contemporary urban environments and to observe to what extent inhabitants can mobilize local memory as

² The Convention concerning the Protection of the World Natural and Cultural Heritage in 1972; the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2003 or the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions in 2005.

³ For instance, the Vienna Memorandum on World Heritage and contemporary architecture: managing the Historic Urban Landscape in 2005.

⁴ The Nairobi Recommendation concerning the safeguarding and contemporary role of historic areas city in 1976.

⁵ The Washington Charter for the conservation of historic towns and urban areas in 1987.

⁶ The Historic Centre of Mexico City and Xochimilco in 1987; the Imperial Palaces of the Ming and Qing Dynasties in Beijing and Shenyang was listed in 1987 and extended in 2004 with Shenyang, the Temple of Heaven: an imperial sacrificial altar in Beijing in 1998, the Summer Palace, an imperial Garden in Beijing in 1998; The Historic Centre of Rome, the Properties of the Holy See in that city enjoying extraterritorial rights and San Paola Fuori le Mura in 1990.

popular reactions, or to compliment strategies, facing the transformation of their neighborhood. The alteration of historic landscape illustrates the heritage dynamics defined as an on-going redefinition of conservation practices, through specific memorial processes that include the production, transformation and disappearance of collective memory. We empirically observed how popular memory practices are developing, not only in places that are officially recognized as being of high heritage value, but also in ordinary urban settings (social housing, local markets, streets, etc.). Reflecting practices or traditions of inhabitants' everyday life, we explored the way in which stakeholders identify with a space while, reciprocally, highlighting the role of memories in the appropriation of the built environment. The space that has been developed, morphed, or appropriated over time according to specific memorial references will be analyzed in the light of heritage dynamics that include tangible, as well as intangible, cultural heritage.

The symbolic importance of UNESCO that claims to “be converted into power and material gains in many domains” (Meskell and Brumann 2016: 22) drove our reflections and experiments on the historic urban landscape approach as defined and implemented by diverse actors, both at the international and local levels. The research scrutinizes potentials or impacts of the RHUL according to the specificity of its urban heritage setting, including recent development of national policies, local regulations, and land rights and uses, and this perspective constitutes the second objective of the project. Each case study—singular neighborhoods of Mexico-City, Beijing and Rome—has been investigated in order to analyze multiple layers of expertise engaged in the process. Local teams examined the roles played by institutional actors and their discourses toward the RHUL in the transformation of each urban setting. They studied positions of: 1) those in charge of urban heritage governance and management (administrators in, and professionals concerned with, heritage from national bureaucracies and the field) who incorporate the RHUL international principles into their local policies; 2) the legitimate experts from several international institutions (UNESCO, ICCROM or ICOMOS), academic institutions (scholars from various disciplines (anthropology, sociology, architecture, urbanism, geography, history, economy, etc.), universities or specialized institutions (academies, research institutes), local organizations (civil associations, NGOs, social clubs, etc.) or independent consultants (architects, urban planners, creative workers...) who may challenge their administrative understanding of the RHUL and introduce other modalities of its implementation; and 3) the local inhabitants directly involved in the rapid urban change who do not necessarily get organized into formal structures (such as a “community”), but who raise their scattered voices in all directions.

The analysis of different narratives that unfold a specific situation intersect in particular directions, enter into practical or conceptual conflicts, and even produce local controversies about the urban heritage government, need to be confronted with the actions undertaken by institutional and local stakeholders. The results of such a comparative investigation, which do not intend to generalize or look for homogeneity within these three case studies, highlight an economic logic that structures the nature of global cities. The historic centers of both Mexico-City and Beijing, and the industrial zone of Ostiense, reveal, in different ways depending on the cultural context, complex relations between authorities and the real estate market that contribute to these urban transformations.

The working paper is organized as follows. First, it reviews contemporary issues related to the theory and practices of the relations between memory, production of urban spaces and heritage. Second, it briefly explains the methodology used to collect data in the multi-sited fieldwork. And third, it discusses the principal findings of the three case studies structured

using two main issues: a) plural memories and urban heritage; and b) the potential and limitations of the RHUL.

Memory and urban space: thickness and fragmentation

While scholars reflecting on collective memory recorded in specific temporalities have already examined the relationship between time and memory in some depth⁷, the relationship between space and memory requires further scrutiny. Exploring the modalities in which the materiality of a city can be expressed is fundamental in order to better understand the transformations of contemporary cities (Vincent *et al.* 2016) and the role played by the collective memory—social by nature and therefore dynamic—that is anchored in the material hardness of cities (asphalt, concrete, stone). As Brecht (1970 [1937]) notes, this goes along with, or resists, urban changes. In his seminal work, Halbwachs (1950: 132–139) already noted a homology between the resistance of stone and the resistance of cities' inhabitants to being displaced or effaced. To what extent can this reflection based on European context can be translated across continents or even from one city to another? In the late 1980s, scholars already challenged Halbwach's theories with the reality of a globalized world in which urban memories comprise an assemblage of memories that are simultaneously local and global.

This working paper aims to revisit the “resistance of the stones” in three labeled World Heritage cities: Beijing, Mexico City and Rome. It seeks to rethink the materiality of the memories that stand beside official urban history and are appropriated by inhabitants in order to resist to oblivion. At the beginning of the 21st century, residents of neighborhoods threatened with gentrification processes need to acquire skills or “tactics” for inhabiting, occupying and appropriating these “ordinary” spaces (de Certeau 1990) in order to be able to survive such urban changes and to nurture local memories with which they can identify as a social group to better face the present situation (Benjamin 1926, Traverso 2016).

Spatializing memory in the urban environment is not neutral. Memory betrays time by not “remembering” correctly, as material space betrays its memory by providing fragments of palimpsest (Corboz 2001), which reactivates “correct” memories that fit political contexts and tend to make invisible related resistance practices or those seeking spatial justice (Soja 2010). With the complexity of cities and their constant transformation, current memory is even less inscribed in only one place—perhaps becoming an archipelago of dispersed, real ‘places.’ Since forms of narration and official memory have dislocated memory in most of ordinary places of the fragmented city, it is crucial to look for the survival of such scattered memories embedded in neighborhoods that contain as many official dimensions as subaltern forms of history. Indeed, although these dislocated memories seem distant, probably distorted in line with political agenda, they are sometimes, paradoxically, safeguarded by those who are responsible for reformatting local memory.

A city's permanent a transformation is reflected as both result and process. As the Italian architect Aldo Rossi (1966) mentions, the city as a material and temporary fact acquires consciousness and memory of itself. This process leaves traces in the urban setting, which are not necessarily continuous. The urban historian Christine Boyer (1994) defines city as composed of an incongruous mishmash of surplus pieces that are ingeniously assembled. The collective memory of the city is thus made of overlapping layers, the stratification of

⁷ For EPFL, an important first step was, for example, the Research Project “Mémoire collective et urbanisation”. See: Daghini et al. 1987/1988.

these does not necessarily maintain a historical continuity due to poor transmission between layers that can generate discontinuities or cuts in the city (Boyer 2012).

Understood as a process of construction, collective memory contains the ability of a society to keep—“remember” (causative) or “remind” (reflective)—experiences and information about the past that are recognized through social frameworks as language, time, or space shared by the group (Halbwachs 1925). Each society imposes memorial frames on individuals that determine ways of perceiving social and physical environments. Paul Connerton (1989) observed a virtual mapping that takes place in the mental context—individual and/or collective—that is proposed by society. In addition, the perception of a physical territory is entirely connected with its social imaginary. And it is only this imaginary that has the capacity to transform territory using projections or representations (understood/defined as social constructions) linked to the individual (de Alba 2010). It is worth mentioning that the collective memory of a place has not necessarily been lived by individuals, but has been transmitted to him/her. The importance of this transmission resides in the perception of the landscape, as well as the in the form of representations that are realized collectively. That is to say that what counts in the perception of landscape is both its objectivity (on the infinity of juxtaposed tangible layers), as well as the subjective value attributed by social groups through collective memories. Hence the importance of how much of the past survives and continues to affect forms of perception of present urban reality (de Alba 2014; Jodelet 2010).

However, the memory of material places does not necessarily coincide with the space as the result of social representation, because what exists in the built environment are the most recent arrangements, where the layers—or parts of layers—that have been erased, destroyed, suppressed and forgotten are imperceptible to the human ‘eye’ (Marot 2010, Corboz 2001 [1983]). Nonetheless, the memory connected to these spaces that no longer exists may still survive. Hence, invisible fragments, or parts of them, are not included—or are simply ignored—by urban planning. This is especially true of the fragments belonging to the popular classes, who continue to be the least involved in urban planning (see the case studies below). However, these invisible fragments could be preserved through an analysis of memory thickness. It is possible to access previous states—and to observe their transparencies and opacities (Marot 2010)—as well as their traces and mutilations. These traces make visible the disappeared conditions of the place, as well as manifest the dynamics and recognition of change, showing its future potential⁸.

Consequently, the imaginary—or representations—of the city go beyond the present physical environment. Thus we can speak of the “thickness of memory” and the possible activation or manipulation of it. Collective memory is shaped by the transformation of material data and it is the fragments that have the capacity to “revive”—update—memories that are dormant or those whose function and original purpose have been erased (Boyer 1994).

In this context, traces play an important role. They operate as a form of history, as consciousness and as experience of the city. In addition, these circulate in the link we make with the tangible world and contribute to the construction of identity and the constitution of forms of appropriation. These traces can be perceived in the urban environment in three forms: 1) Physical, tangible in the urban environment e.g. ruin,

⁸ For example the huge work of the Swiss landscape architect Georges Descombes or the American architect Robert Smithson who tried to experiment such “thin” architectures in public spaces (Marot 2010: chapters 3 and 4).

vestige, clue, graffiti, etc.; 2) Mental, impregnated or implanted in social memory, having the capacity to be transmitted through generations; and 3) Institutional, deposited in different laws, regulations and urban plans (Cogato *et. al.*, 2013: 158).

According to Veschambre (2008), elucidating the difference between traces and marks in the urban environment is essential since these are usually used as synonyms. The meaning in their production, aim and use, however, are significantly different, especially when involved in urban research. For him, it is not only temporalities that make clear the difference between traces—as subsisted from the past—and marks—as inscribed on the present—but also the aim behind the inscription that is not intentional for the trace, but clearly intentional and visible for the mark that functions as a symbol or signature of and for social actors.

The implementation of architectural or urban projects that valorizes traces can be understood as forms or demonstrations of power. This use of traces as the manner of marks is a form of symbolic and physical appropriation. Sometimes such use of traces has given rise to the legitimization of historical periods by their recognition as forms of “official heritage”.

Likewise, these forms of appropriation of territories require the deposition of a mark through a double action—the valorization of certain traces and the erasure or devaluation of other types of traces—that, in practice, generates forms of spatial hierarchy. This double action allows a group, actor or institutions to invest in specific traces while depriving other stakeholders of their capacities to create markings and appropriate the urban space. Usually this process of marking removes the traces of less privileged classes. It is worth mentioning that over time certain marks can become traces.

Referencing the past as a way of legitimating a tangible or intangible heritage is entirely linked to the depth or thickness of memory, and its forms of representation (Ricoeur 2000). The forms of representation of an absent artifact, or part of it, can legitimize its presence, activation and duration. Within this framework, forms of representation such as maps or plans—including those in management plans or urban projects—are also forms of appropriation and can even create and justify mutilations (deletion or demolition), spatial hierarchies, and mark certain territories, as our case studies will demonstrate. The use of traces and/or marks can be understood as forms of violence within a context of urban planning or renovation. Maurice Halbwachs (1980 [1950])) argues:

The place a group occupies is not like a blackboard, where one may write and erase figures at will. No image of a blackboard can recall what was once written there. The board could not care less what has been written on it before, and new figures may be freely added (...). Hence, we can understand why the remains of demolished buildings or roads persist for a long time, be it only the traditional name of a street or locale or the signboard of a store. (ibid: 130-133 [138-140])

In other words, even after forms or intentional destruction or demolition, groups involved in the process always leave tangible signs or traces in the environment through a variety of artifacts, which have the power to activate memories. These kinds of symbols allow the imaginary dimension of the city to be seen through, which means to see and give power to the artifact as well as to create relationship with a tangible space that no longer exists (Vergara 2001: 51). Sometimes, the discontinuities of physical space and practices are interpreted as a loss of memory, or oblivion. However, the annihilation or destruction of a tangible mnemonic rest is not entirely possible because everything that once existed in psychic life never disappears (Marot 2010). Depending on the circumstances, these have

the capacity to resurface or reactivate, especially in political frameworks and situations when economic forms and power are at stake.

Therefore, our case studies speak of this “thickness of memory,” where different realities and “fragments” coexist in the same space, and of creating controversies in the way that territories are perceived. However, in each of the cases they operate differently. In Beijing, the activation of a specific memorial layer and institutional traces has profoundly changed its current landscape and generated displacement processes. In Mexico City, the coexistence and activation of certain layers and traces of all kinds have created controversies between different actors. In Rome, the activation and deactivation of certain layers has participated in forms of oblivion.

In the study of this memorial thickness, due to the diverse issues of each of the case studies, different methodologies were proposed through which we could detect traces of underlying layers retaken by the plurality of memories, as well as the positioning of the various social actors related to these landscapes, in particular to the RHUL. It has also been possible to detect traces and marks in the urban fabric of collective memory belonging to the groups “excluded” from official space history, which operate in the form of mental “barricades” against their physical elimination.

Collecting data in multi-sited fieldwork

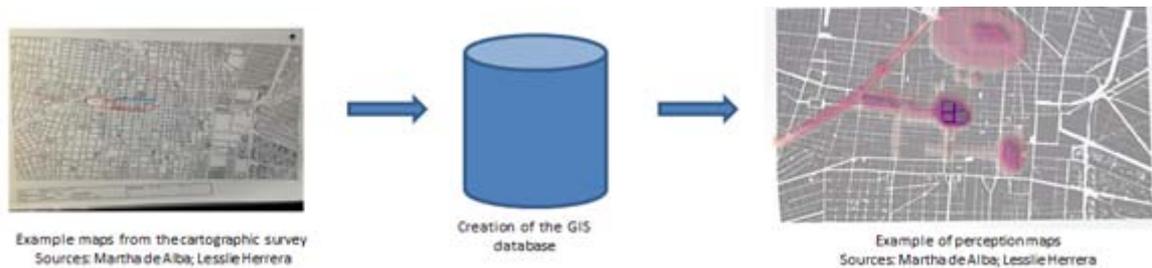
The common research project was based on the combination of ethnographical methods, approaches derived from the fields of architecture and urbanism and, eventually, an innovative, *ad hoc* mapping method inspired by previous experiments conducted in the field of geo-governance⁹. Taking advantage of their diversity of background, the three local teams have worked with this variety of approaches, adapting them to the reality of the fieldwork and proposing some specific interpretations that seemed relevant with regard to their contexts. In Beijing, the local team conducted about 25 interviews of inhabitants and about 5 in-depth interviews with preservationist experts. Contact with local authorities was difficult. Participative observations were undertaken over more than four months between 2015 and 2017. As the selected area was politically sensitive at the time of the research, participative workshops with inhabitants based on GIS mapping and focus group were not possible. The local team focused on ethnographic methods (Falzon 2012) and took advantage of a previous mapping of historic courtyards produced by a local association who sought to protect architectural buildings from demolition in order to reflect upon available material, such as maps of urban planning and architectural analyses of the area. The Chinese research was interested in scrutinizing the controversies around two successive projects that faced strong reactions from the local population (see annex 2¹⁰). In Rome, apart from about 40 interviews carried out with local stakeholders from drawn from various fields and interests, participative workshops with focus groups and walking interviews with residents, the local team concentrated its analysis of architectural and

⁹ The annex 5 presents the results of the implementation of this method on the various fields of study. During the project, we were able to add a field of experimentation (Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic) in a Bachelor Dissertation (see annex 6). The different maps of this work are added in the annex as a supplement. We also discuss the complexity of the implementation of this study and the epistemological and interdisciplinary questions it raises.

¹⁰ All annexes mentioned in that working paper refer to annexes that have been submitted with the Final Scientific Report to the SNIS.

urban maps including, the emblematic industrial buildings of the Ostiense zone (Mattatoio, Marcati Generali or Mira Lanza Factory) that embodies an interesting “reuse sample” (*campionario del riuso*) ranging from examples of abandonment to rehabilitation and from public heritage reuse to privatization. The Italian research was interested in studying representations of progressive landscape transformations and unfolding new urban governance patterns at the city level (see annex 4).

The project also sought to test another methodological approach based on participative spatial modeling techniques with empirically collected qualitative data. The protocol aimed to bring together data collected in the practice of fieldwork (interviews, participative observation) and data reflecting spatial visual perception within the process of analyzing collective memories linked to singular urban territory. The proposed strategy was inspired by an approach already tested in France (Loubier 2013, Dubus et. al. 2015) and known as Geo-governance (Dubus et. al. 2010). From a practical perspective, the process was based on a three-step approach: 1) the acquisition of spatial information via cartographic questionnaire on a 3D model or a simplified map of the study area; 2) the construction of a GIS database; and 3) the realization of maps reflecting spatial memory perception through a spatial analysis.



General mechanism of spatial methodology showing the process flow

At the theoretical level, the acquisition of information is reproducible whatever the ground studied. This aspect was in the framework of our research as it allows comparison of the relation between the collective memory of a social group and its appropriation of built environment through perception of the urban space. This approach, intended to produce maps of spatial perceptions, was not used uniformly in the three case studies, but was deployed in Mexico City. Indeed, in Mexico City around 50 interviews with local stakeholders (inhabitants, traders, street vendors, religious members, academics, governmental institutions, etc.) were conducted. In 20 of these, the methodology using GIS mapping, as well as mental maps (Lynch 1960), was applied. These interviews consisted of free word association, questions related to geographical maps, generating present and past narratives about personal experience, social dynamics, and practices. The research interest was to study the effects of rehabilitation policies on different levels and scales. Participative observations were undertaken during 2016 observing spatial practices, as well as urban spatial structure, connections and articulations of space (see annex 3).

Public memory narratives and material traces for remembering

Plural memories and urban heritage

We began our research using Halbwach's original assumption postulating the crucial dimension of collective memory for urban heritage as related to diversity and identity. But since his writing, urban dynamics have led to new uses of this theory and its implementation is now in urban studies' research, which has revisited Halbwach's ideas on collective memories—along with the history of nationalism—insisting that his dynamic processes refer to the past to better describe the present. How people construct a sense of the past is a major issue within social and cultural history (Huysen 2003), shedding light on urban memory that reflects various strata in society and the local communities who construct the city landscape.

Social representations of collective memories produced by both inhabitants and the local agencies involved in urban planning management and preservation are diverse, contested, and conflicting. Local resistance to rapid transformation can be tracked either through its narratives or practices (Scott 1990). It is mostly expressed in, or defined by, ordinary, everyday practices (de Certeau 1990) applied in spaces of various dimensions, from physical to emotional, political to economic, or social to cultural. They involve a diverse population of different social classes, genders, ages, and ethnicities, and are defined according to their feelings of belonging to the area. Our three case studies strengthen the asymmetric relations between dominant and contested memories involved in urban change and, simultaneously seek traces of embodied thickness of memory significant for local residents.

The restoration of a Chinese historic preservation district and local contestations in Gulou

“Beijing: an unparalleled masterpiece of city planning’, referred to the city as ‘a planned whole’ [yi geju you jihuaxing de zhengti] and ‘a work of art’ [yishu jiezuo] and included an exquisite sketch that from high in the air emphasized the city’s integrity as a planned entity.” (Abramson 2007: 132-133).

The public memory narratives of Gulou are closely related to the high value of city structural grid, as described by the first modern Chinese architectural historian Liang Sicheng in the 1950s. The city structure dates back to the Ming Dynasty when Beijing (i.e. the “Northern Capital”) became the capital city with the construction of the new imperial residence—the Forbidden City—in the early 15th Century, and other major monumental buildings such as the Temple of Heaven and the city walls. Located in the northeast of the Forbidden City, Gulou (namely the Bell and Drum towers) was an important part of the city containing two functional towers—the Bell for opening and the Drum for closing the doors of the old city—and a major commercial area with a population mostly composed by the Eight banners and elites (official ranks, royal families, etc.) (Graezer Bideau and Yan 2017). For a long time, the memory of this neighborhood was associated with China's Imperial past, expressed in multilayered representations as a spatial icon, a temporal marker, and social and commercial livelihoods. In 2002, Gulou was designated as one of Beijing's “historical and cultural protection zones” that borders the Central North-South axis, another important marker of the old city grid reflecting the harmony between man and nature in the urban structure. Commonly used as an argument for transforming the city for the Olympic Games 2008 (the Herzog & De Meuron Bird Nest is located at its extreme north), the Central North-South axis was submitted to the World Heritage List in 2013 and

remains in the tentative list as “a world history of urban planning and development”¹¹. Today this structural marker of the historic urban landscape has become an argument used by authorities and experts for protecting the entire area from disfiguration, in view of the impending Winter Olympics BJ 2022 (Graezer Bideau 2017).

During the People’s Republic of China (1949-1976), the area used to be a lively and clean neighborhood (Gaubatz 1995, Abramson 2001). Local residents shared common sociological and professional backgrounds (they worked in *danwei*—spatial units combining social housing and work-place—and possessed an urban *hukou*—a residential permit to live and benefit social welfare in Beijing); they felt privileged and had a sense of belonging to the local community (Bray 2005). Local memory embraces the official narrative of a homogeneous community. During the reform era (1978-present), progressive the dismantling of the “Iron rice bowl” (occupation with job security, steady income and benefits) has transformed the initial social fabric. Incomers arrived to settle in the neighborhood and former residents who could move to upgrade their living standards left Gulou for apartments between the second and third ring-roads of the city. Today, Gulou is composed of a mix of native old inhabitants (*bendiren*), who want neither to change residential area because of its centrality nor to break their habits and the social network to which they belong, and non-Beijing people (*waidiren*), who cannot afford to live in better housing because of their un-conformed or absent *hukou*.

To summarize, the public memory narratives of Gulou are carried by legitimated inhabitants, for whom generations of history can be traced before the PRC, and whose homogeneity as a social group (workers, natives of Beijing, officials and civil servants) played an important role in the official narrative of the PRC, which directly references and unpacks civilizing discourse that seeks to create ‘civilized’ urban citizens (Tomba 2009). This dominant memory sharply contrasts with the scattered or disruptive memories of a heterogeneous population mostly composed of immigrants, who do not necessarily have the right to city (Harvey 2008)—illegal urban citizens with rural *hukou*—working in various fields of the manufacturing or construction sectors and facing family, social, education and health segregations (Tomba 2008, Wu 2012). This considerable diversity constitutes a major difficulty for the unification of a common social memory in the area understood as a divergent memory referring to other aspects of the official narrative, as the scattered mobilization against the two projects to transform the historic urban landscape of Gulou has demonstrated (Graezer Bideau and Yan 2017).

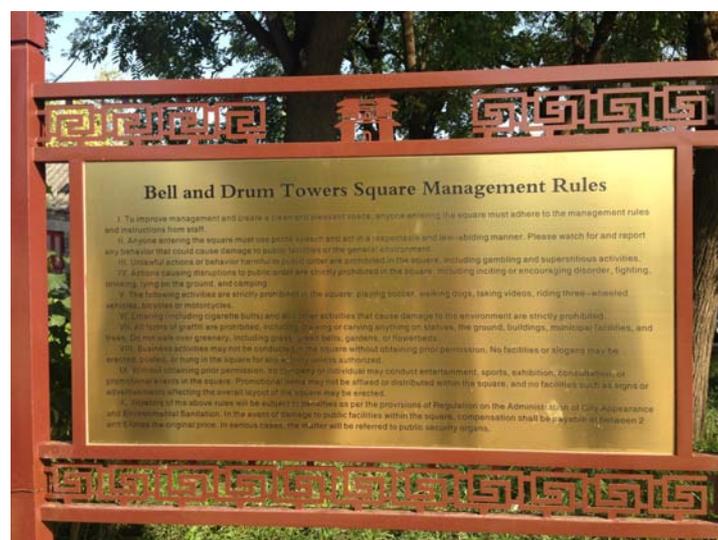
Beijing’s traditional district is considered a typical microcosm to preserve, showcase and promote, for ideological and economic reasons (Broudehoux 2004). Since the 1990s, experiments around the Central North-South Axis neighborhoods reflect the Chinese authorities’ selective processes that define and brand historic periods of Chinese civilization understandable both by the local population and international visitors (see for instance the Qianmen “fake” or “disneyfied” hutong that was a traumatic experience for local residents (Evans 2014, Meyer 2008). These projects aim to re-connect the past and present by playing with mythical references of collective memory to physically inscribe historical traces, or prints, into ordinary residents’—and tourists’—everyday lives. As already mentioned, Gulou is part of the Shichahai “Historic preservation district” that comprises temples, historic royal mansions and a grid of ordinary, relatively well-maintained courtyards around the large natural lake Beihai, as well as the Bell and Drum Towers. Although these big courtyards were transformed into mixed houses (*dazayuan*) inhabited by several families who shares amenities (kitchen, bathroom, etc.) and the

¹¹ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/5802/>.

central garden, or were demolished to implement *danwei* and the building of factories and plants in the 1950s, the area is still considered as an organic living tradition for generations, because residents lived in a closed area containing all of the resources and services they needed for everyday life. Today, some of its residential areas, which were uncomfortable, usually rented or poorly maintained, have been transformed by property-led developers and local authorities to create areas of bars and restaurants for tourism and strolling (*flânerie*), with easy access to food and souvenirs, like Nanluoguxiang (Shin 2010, Gu and Ryan 2008).

In Gulou, there are plural traces the memory thickness, both remembered and embodied. The grid of the neighborhood remains as alleys and hutongs, even if most important became “historical Streets”, “commercial streets” or “entertainment streets,” as mentioned previously. Few courtyards persist (mostly gentrified and transformed into boutique hotels or residences for the new rich, with parking lot). Mixed houses have become even more encroached upon due to over population and sublets of illegal housing. Little of the fabric remains (transformed into small creative clusters), and community services have been slightly revamped. Basically, the area has progressively become a tourist place where visitors can see and observe the “traditional” way of life for urbanites (“Old Beijing life”). Superficial renovations (external alleys walls, toilets) have been made for the Olympic Games in 2008 but there are still many zones in very bad condition, resulting in the gradual deterioration of the buildings.

In the early 2010s, municipal authorities targeted Gulou twice, which will be expanded upon presently: first, for its reference, through the two towers, to the historic imperial urban landscape; and second, to showcase a civilized area of PRC/current Beijing. In 2010, municipal authorities proposed the “Beijing Time Cultural City,” a project to transform the residential area, changing the historic urban landscape by building a museum of time keeping, an underground shopping mall and parking lot. In 2012, they implemented a less ambitious renovation project of a narrower residential zone around the Bell and the Drum Towers. This project included the central public place between the towers that aimed—in the eyes of local authorities—to represent a shrine; a showcase of Beijing traditional life in contemporary era. The focus on the public square and its close surroundings should embody an idea of what this area might have been architecturally in the Qing Dynasty, alongside current constraints and regulations of inhabitants’ use of the public place (Graezer Bideau and Yan 2017).



Bell and Drum management board for visitors and users © F. Graezer Bideau

Selections of public memory can enter into conflicts with the appropriations of territories by local residents for their own needs. The thickness of memory refers, for inhabitants, to references of the past linked to tangible and intangible heritage. They became places where local communities carried on a particular way of life, shared collective memory and lived in proximity; an important factor in how a social organization perpetuates itself. They can be reflected in practical representations such as maps or plans, but also in more immaterial practices such as rituals of meeting in alleys for street gaming or such everyday routines as buying vegetables in the local market. The perception of these traces that nurtures the collective memory of a neighborhood includes items borrowed from various social groups and are activated according to specific intention within the current context. In the case of Gulou, highlighting local group strategies for preserving links and practices of memory revealed both the gap and tensions between local inhabitants' needs—mainly popular classes, illegal migrants, and elderly natives—in their everyday lives and the new, government-defined, functions of the area (a tourist and commercial zone).

Juxtaposed and Contrasted Visions of the Historic Center of Mexico City

The image of the Historic Center of Mexico City was created by decree in the 1980s and was inscribed in the World Heritage List in 1987. This historic center is characterized by the superposition of different types of laws and regulations applied to the city considering a large range of urban fabrics, from pre-Colombian settlements to the various forms of modernization during the 20th and 21st centuries.

The Spanish founded Mexico City in the 16th century on the ruins of Tenochtitlan, the ancient Aztec capital, which was located on the island of the Lake of Mexico (Lombardo 1973). In 1821, after independence, Mexico City became the political and administrative center of the Mexican republic. During the restoration of the Republic, the properties of the clergy—43% of urban land—were nationalized (Cervantes Sanchez 1988). The church lands allowed the segmentation of buildings and the opening of new streets, which was one of the major urban transformations of the city. At the end of the 19th century, during General Porfirio Diaz's government, industrial development grew, which allowed for public works, and urban services (Suarez 2004). After the Mexican Revolution in the 1940s, the enactment of frozen revenues and forced and indefinite extension was made¹². This contributed to the deterioration of a large number of old buildings, because their owners didn't maintain them (Peniche 2004). During the 1950s, skyscrapers and expressways emerged as signs of modernity and superiority, fragmenting the historical fabric.

In 1980, two perimeters of protection were established; A and B. A is the late 18th Century City boundary, which was recognized as a world heritage site in 1987. B represents the 19th century widening of the city. The whole area is 9.1 km². Delgadillo (2014) argues that the demarcation was drawn to include the new Legislative Palace and so become the largest historic center in America (2011: 421). Before then, this territory was simply recognized as the original city or as the center.

Currently, a dominant vision of the space is related to those national-official memory symbols; i.e. places of memory erected by federal and local powers (Nora 1984-1992). Almost all predominant memories are related to Spanish colonization and the monuments found in the World Heritage Site. According to interviews conducted in 2016, the most significant places were those concentrated at the core of the city: The Zocalo; National

¹² Decree abolished in 1993.

Palace; and Cathedral. This means that the Spanish establishment of power in the core the city is still present. An exception from this category is the Templo Mayor, even though it is as well represented as a form of power in pre-Columbian times, and it has connections to the mythological city of “Tenochtitlan”. This is because shortly after independence there was growing interest in Mexican culture and in the ancient city of Tenochtitlan (Monet 1995), which were under the colonial urban structure. This form of memory reactivation, through the Mexican origin and the search for the “true” roots allowed, on the one hand, the construction of Mexican nationalism and, on the other, the notion of heritage (Monet 1995). This way of perceiving the city is also supported by monuments, commemorations, official history, museums and tourism.

This dominant vision of the historic center as “Museum” contrasts with the Center as “Historic City,” and the Historic City is related to the spaces of socio-cultural (popular) memories. Memories of groups anchored in the area create social and cultural spaces in everyday life (Halbwachs 1980). These are connected with the traditional activities and local actors—residents, traders, street vendors, etc.—who participate in the dynamics of the place—religious activities (including the profane: La Santa Muerte, San Judas, etc.), handcrafted work (shoemakers, tailors, etc.), and the interactions in the “art” of buying and selling (including a big network of actions). Most of these activities take place in the public space, therefore the common memory references are in the streets, the metro station, intersections, specific architectural elements (even in the public buildings facades), etc.

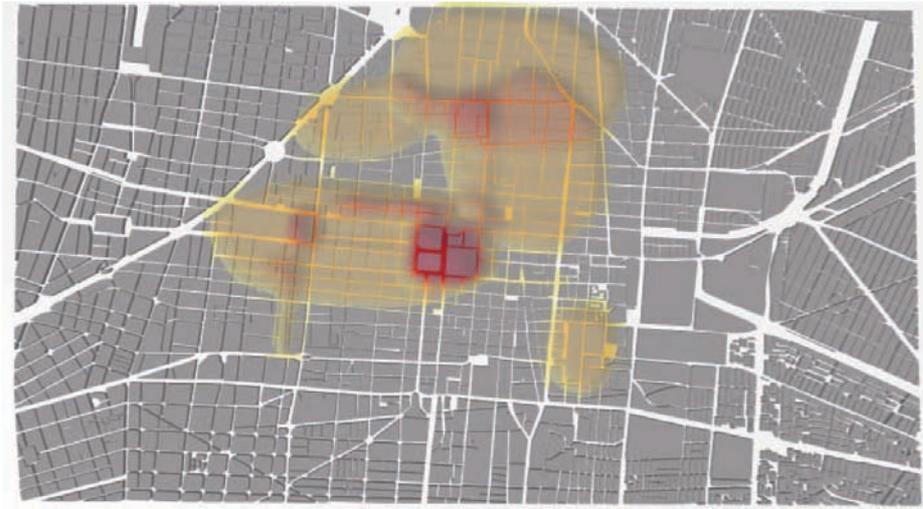


Street occupied by the Street Vendors (Perimeter B) © L.Herrera

These two different visions of the same spaces have created contradictions at various levels. In general, this area is recognized by the citizen as the symbolic place of remarkable historic architecture (from different epochs) and as a place you can buy anything you need, ranging from a wedding dress to a water pump. It is also marked by the “informal economy”—street vendors—from whom you can buy many items at affordable (low) prices.

However, during the interviews it seemed that locals did not understand this territory as integrated, instead understanding the area as a complex and sectioned structure. Where certain groups were associated with specific ideas and areas, even the inhabitants living within the historic center did not recognize that their residence place was within the

perimeters, referring to the Southwest of Perimeter A as the “real historic center.” This is due to the dominant vision, which generally associated the historic center with a certain form of aestheticization and monumentalism of space, stressing the features of material objects and omitting other cultural processes (Smiths 2006). Hence commemorative forms of memory, such as traditions, are not always associated with the national-official memory symbols. In fact, street vendors argued that traditions are found where they inhabit. According to them, they have the responsibility to maintain the pre-Hispanic market tradition (Tiangis). This has been one of the main arguments used to justify their appropriation practices, as well as to resist displacement policies.¹³



Geo-referenced Map concerning the Traditions and Customs of the Historic Center of Mexico City

In the case of Mexico we could speak of a memorial thickness where multiple layers of memories are juxtaposed; the layer and the traces related are understood by each actor differently. For example, “Templo Mayor” was frequently associated with the idea of the city’s origin, as well as tourism and a heritage site. Yet it is not the only evidence or traces of that layer, some other visible features are related to the myth of the city. The inclination of the buildings within the center—especially the cathedral—is often mentioned in connection with the fact that the Lake of Mexico surrounded the City of Tenochtitlan. This memory was implanted in different social groups as a way of describing its territory. Institutions and professionals made specific reference to the technical problems of the maintenance of the historic buildings, as well as the issues related to structural conservation of different buildings. As mentioned above, for the street vendors the “templo mayor” is connected to their ancestors and practices. It is worth mentioning that in uncovering that archeological site, some colonial buildings were destroyed. This is revealing because of the selection and prioritization of value for one memory repository against another.

Other memories are related to specific urban modifications, whose traces are still detectable. As a result of the Reform Laws in the 19th century, for example, a large number of religious buildings were demolished or sold for different activities. The Catholic priests remembered this fact several times, and mentioned some of the buildings that the church used to own. The inhabitants also share this memory, but from a different perspective. For them there were names of streets or specific architectural traces that were

¹³ Since the 1980s, different trade readjustment programs in public spaces have been implemented; these programs have attempted to “cleanse” the area of the stalls (Olivo 2010).

remembered from that time; the façade arcades of the Market Abelardo Rodriguez, for example.

Other specific references that appeared during the interviews were related with modernization. The “Torre Latinoamericana” and the construction of the “Ejes Viales” (roads), which destroyed parts of popular neighborhoods, are two examples. In this layering of memories we found other important traces that related to specific events that can be reflected in the urban environment. The start of the abandonment of the area from the middle of the last century, or the earthquake in 1985, which are both memories frequently associated with the deterioration of certain sectors of the Historic Center of Mexico City.

Rome: tracking the industrial memory of a non-industrial city

Rome is commonly conceived, from a Western point of view, as the mother of all cities and as the most accomplished materialization of the notion of palimpsest. The crushing weight of the classical imagery of the “eternal city” led the Roman team to look for an atypical case—the post-industrial area of Ostiense—to rediscovering the relationship of Rome to its past from a new perspective. Ostiense, which is situated just outside of Rome’s historic walls, is a strategic, recognizable piece of the city. Its proximity to the center and its positioning at the crossroad of several mobility networks (the Tiber river, the railway and the main road to the sea) has given it a specific importance for the development of the city, first in the Antiquity, and then from the late 19th Century onwards (Travaglini 2007). Selected as the main zone for industrial development after the Italian unification, it was characterized by an intense period of activity that was interrupted for a short period, when, in the 1930s, the city’s function was reoriented to the tertiary sector and real estate growth become a major instrument of economic development (Isolera 2011). After a long period of deindustrialization and abandonment, the 1990s were characterized by a new period of intense, though irregular, physical transformation (requalification, designing and abandonment of big infrastructure and commercial projects), which is the result of both private and public initiatives.



A view of Ostiense’s skyline. The crane, symbol of the landscape transformation, stands beside the skeleton of the iconic Gasometer © X. Ding

In the perspective developed by the project, this case study was interesting because Ostiense is a peripheral, non-UNESCO-branded sector. In contrast to the historic center of Rome—which has been museumified to a large extent—Ostiense’s heritage is disseminated within a lively, dynamic zone. Here, traces of the Antique city (the White Pyramid¹⁴) exist side-by-side with those of paleo-Christian Rome (Saint Paul’s Basilica¹⁵) and contemporary traces, as well as those of the productive, industrial city (Centrale Montemartini¹⁶).

What relationship do inhabitants have with this peculiar landscape? Even though the deindustrialization process began decades ago, many of our interviewees had personal memories linked to Ostiense’s space and places: The noise of the Gasometer which kept filling and emptying itself throughout the night; the fried fish that was sold at the *Mercati Generali* the night before Christmas; the dark banks of the Tiber where groups of young people went in secret to smoke their first cigarettes; the time when Ostiense had a much better reputation than the now fancy neighborhood of Garbatella; and the time of social hardship, when became considered a dangerous area. It is still possible, with some perseverance and great availability, to find people who are keen to tell stories they have lived or have heard from their parents or grandparents.

What seems to be absent, however, is a place where these narratives are shared, transmitted and re-created collectively, what Candau (2005) calls a meta-memory; a shared discourse on the existence of a collective memory. If this absence *per se* is not surprising in a post-industrial area within a modern metropolis, it seems to be perceived as such in a city where local identities have maintained their importance, neighborhoods are considered villages (*paesi*) and the whole city is often described as an archipelago.

Moreover, our research showed a certain discrepancy between the narratives attached to Ostiense at the city level, and those at the more local level. Indeed, the area first appears to the outside observer to be a place marked by two kinds of memorial references that have had a deep impact on Italian historiography and political discourse. The first is the one of the *Resistance*, and the second is of the *Labor movement*.

The Resistance and the Labor movement represent what John Foot (2009) defines as “Italian divided memories.” Both have given rise to very violent internal conflicts between the 1940s and 1980s, conflicts that are regarded by the author as “civil wars”.

Ostiense being an area of former industrial development and a territory marked by the Second World War in several ways¹⁷, we expected these two themes to be prevalent in our interviewees’ discourses. However, if they are still relevant at the level of the city¹⁸, they were almost never mentioned at the “local level” (inhabitants and merchants, mainly).

References to the Second World War remained anecdotal in the collected narratives. To the question “Apart for the numerous and imposing industrial buildings, what remains, in

14 The Pyramid has just been awarded the European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage.

15 The Basilica is part of the UNESCO World Heritage List since 1980.

16 A former thermic central, now a museum displaying antique marble statues amid its old industrial machines, recalling, by this unexpected juxtaposition, the provocative and culture-centered approach to urban planning promoted by the center-left municipal government of the late 1990s.

17 The area was bombed and the *Mercati Generali* during WW2.

18 The commemoration of the Liberation Day (25 April) starts at Saint Paul’s Gate in Ostiense, in memory of a fight opposing the remains of the defeated Italians troops and some civilians with the German army entering the city.

your view, from the industrial memory in Ostiense?”¹⁹, the most common answer was “little or nothing” (*poco o niente*). The main reasons cited for explaining this erasure were:

- The extent of the changes that have taken place since the end of the (relatively short) period of the industrialization: industrial site closure, arrival of the Rome 3 University in the 90’ and progressive evolution of the area toward functions of services, with a quasi-exclusive focus on restoration.
- The configuration of the area, its very nature as a place of crossing-point rather than as a “real neighborhood”. This aspect was often illustrated with reference to emblematic surrounding popular *neighborhoods* (Testaccio and Garbatella) which were supposed to have important attributes attached to this status: mainly a square (*una piazza*) where people could meet, and a community, both aspects which seemed closely linked to one another in the discourses.

How should we interpret these unexpected results? “It is important to understand that Ostiense has always been a *sui generis* industrial area” (Michele Furnari, Prof. of Architecture, Rome 3 University). Because it was only fully active for twenty years, because Rome never became an industrial power (Vidotto 2006, Pagnotta 2009), because it was mainly oriented towards infrastructures and services rather than production, Ostiense is twice marginal: once with regard to more representative European or American ex-industrial areas; and once with regard to the dominant image of the city of Rome.

We progressively discovered, amid the numerous ex-industrial buildings and the few residential streets of the area that the traces were left not by a well-structured working-class movement, but by what one could define as a mix of “sub-proletarian” workers and small employees. While it was possible to interview some descendants of the employees (whose discourses have been reported above), people we could associate with the sub-proletarian category seem to have disappeared, or, more precisely, to have been replaced by others (Roma people living by the river or in the abandoned parts of the old fabrics for example). Films, both documentaries and fiction,²⁰ seem to have been more able to carry something of these stories out of invisibility than the buildings and the streets.

Potential and limit of the RHUL

Our three examples—Gulou in Beijing, the Historic centre of Mexico-City and Ostiense in Rome— were selected in relation to their proximity to World Heritage inscriptions and constitute interesting case studies to better understand to what extent UNESCO rhetoric and instruments are understood and implemented at local scale. The research analyzes the complex contexts of each case study in order to better map the entanglements of recent development of national policies toward urbanization, heritage issues and local regulation. It also examines the key-players that took part in the implementation of the heritage

¹⁹ This very direct question was never asked at the beginning of the interview (which would have imposed the researcher’s perspective in a too directive way) but towards the end, in the case this aspect had not been previously addressed.

²⁰ Here we refer especially to the images of a never-produced film by Pier Paolo Pasolini entitled “Appunti per un romanzo sull’immondizia” (Notes for a novel on waste). These images tell the story of the “netturbini” employed to clean the streets of Rome, captured while working at the Mercati Generali. In fiction, we can mention *Storia d’amore*, by Cito Maselli, shot in Ostiense in 1986.

policies and follows power relations within the expertise developed in case studies in order to locally explore the heritage dynamics.

Heritage conservation practices with Chinese characteristics in Gulou

After China ratified the 1972 convention in 1985 and the 2003 Convention in 2004, it became very active in the heritage international arena. China participated as a member of UNESCO committees²¹, it successfully submitted propositions to heritage lists²² and hosted WITHR-AP centers²³ in Beijing, Shanghai and Suzhou, which aimed to strengthen the World Heritage Convention by building the capacity of all professionals involved (Shepherd and Yu 2013). ICOMOS China and ICCROM are also dynamic in field, with publications and the dissemination of heritage policies (ICOMOS 2004, revised 2015). At the national scale, the State Administration of Heritage (SACH *Guojia wenwu ju*), dedicated to the development of museums and the protection of cultural relics at national, provincial or municipal scale, is the main institutional body. It enacts national law and policies, such as the first law for protecting historic buildings in 1957 or the Law for protecting cultural heritage in 1982 from which Principles for the Conservation of Heritage Sites in China (ICOMOS 2004) and practical measures²⁴ have been issued to protect historic urban heritage. On the ground, research on cultural heritage, protection, preservation and training is operated by the China Academy of Cultural Heritage (CACH) or specialized university institutes. At the local level, one finds a certain plasticity of the measures taken by authorities in relation to the economic and political context and land market (Felli 2005, Hsing 2010). During the 1990s, the Historic Cultural Protection Department (HCPD, *Lishi wenhua baohu qu*) of the Beijing Municipality designated 25 “historic and cultural preservation districts,” in order to preserve a fifth of the old Beijing, and formulated new labels²⁵ both to preserve the visual of the urban landscape and promote tourism (Abramson 2001, 2014).

²¹ WH in 1991-1997, 1999-2005 and 2007-2011 and ICH in 2006-2009 and 2010-2014.

²² For the World Heritage List, see <http://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/cn>. For the Representative List for Intangible Cultural Heritage, see <https://ich.unesco.org/en/state/china-CN>.

²³ <http://www.whitr-ap.org/index.php?classid=1471>.

²⁴ Such as the notion of visual characteristic (*fengmao*) to avoid the destruction of historic heritage due to frenetic urban development or successive categories—“neighborhood”, historic cultural city”—to be preserved as ensemble (see Graezer Bideau 2017).

²⁵ Such as the “construction control zone” or the “historic street” to protect the ensemble and avoid the building of skyscrapers around historic buildings.



The Square after restoration; a public space for locals @F. Graezer Bideau

Expertise plays an essential role in such urban heritage transformation. In the case of Gulou, municipal authorities desired their district to be as attractive as a neighboring one. To this end a big commercial project was initiated, first hiring an international architect (Prof. Claudio Greco from Roma 2) who used to work in China, and then a Chinese consultant (the Boston International Design Group), with critical experience in historic neighborhood commodification (see annex 2 for details). Their propositions to transform Gulou faced strong reactions “from below” and a progressively organized cultural heritage resistance within the neighborhood, which received important media coverage. Initially, led by a local NGO, the Beijing Cultural Heritage Protection Center (CHP), composed of both Chinese and expats, became active in increasing the awareness of heritage rights among citizens that faced potential eviction. There was also the Gulou Preservation Team (GPT), formed by younger practitioners of architecture and heritage that communicated through a Chinese micro-blog (Weibo), launching an interactive website to preserve endangered courtyards. Reactions from local inhabitants were scattered, they did not really form a collective structure in order to oppose to demolition and eviction from Gulou (Graezer Bideau and Yan 2017). Due to their social heterogeneity and economic income, they acted individually in order to gain better compensation.

The fieldwork undertaken in Beijing showed a diversity of narratives, even in the three studied stakeholders (municipal authorities, preservationist experts and local residents) that sometimes unfolded in opposing practices amongst themselves.

Municipal authorities decided to create a historic-centered place of time-telling celebration based on an excavated Qing Dynasty map to better fit the general plan related to the branding of “old Beijing”. To this end, their narratives relied on the public memory of the “historic and cultural district” category and referred to a specific period of the past—the Qianlong reign, 1735-1796—presented as a homogenously whole. To re-enact, or rather re-invent, this past in the present, local government tried to reactivate the morning bell and evening drum tradition, which drew local reactions (See annex 2). It engaged with arguments based on generic, but blurred, terms such as restoration of the historic area, including its landscape, sustainable and safe city for its inhabitants (upgrading living conditions, but destroying illegal constructions), authenticity of livelihood that will increase cultural tourism and generate new incomes for all. In their asserted narratives, the

term of RHUL were never mentioned as such. Rather they used the indigenous official term of “historic and cultural district” that conveys the ideas of the RHUL, but with Chinese characteristics.

The preservationist experts weakened authorities’ arguments that referenced the past thanks to their professional and academic competences. To this end, they launched research—including historic data collection and interviews with residents—mobilized international and local expertise on heritage process (from preservation to monitoring), carefully scrutinized official projects. They proposed alternative plans and practical solutions for a better-integrated renovation of the local urban landscape, avoiding gentrification and mass tourism. Their narratives stressed the inextricable links between historic buildings and living culture and the vital importance of keeping residents *in situ*, and not altering the heritage dynamics and obliterating traces, landmarks and local memories. Although updated on international heritage issues, the HUL is not mentioned in their arguments. They stressed the physical environment, conserved with intangible elements and acknowledged respect for, and the realization of, the community’s rights to its own past. In this sense, the preservationists fully adopted the *spirit* of HUL in their practices.

Since the first transformation project, Gulou residents’ narratives complained about poor living conditions and housing, but manifested emotional attachments to their neighborhood, mobilized local memories and looked back with nostalgia to the past in which they felt protected in living in the urban fabric and the social structure was clear. Nonetheless, they took two sides: for and against. Those who chose voluntary acquisition and relocation based their arguments on uncomfortable living conditions and collateral effects (garbage collection and traffic congestion in small alleys) to justify “early relocation” compensation from authorities for moving out. Those who did not volunteer to move out stressed the identification rhetoric that attached them as a “community” to this historic and cultural area and decided to stay as long as they could. In reality, due to the mutability of local urban regulations and on-going projects, they were waiting for the best opportunity; they were individually approached about relocation by municipal authorities who feared a collective action of residents involved in the transforming area around the Bell and Drum towers. The governmental approach aimed to avoid a repetition of the Qianmen experience, which was traumatic for Beijing natives, while local strategies focused on an improved financial issue (Fang 2006). Inhabitants are conscious that they live in a precious part of Beijing’s inner city that provides unparalleled opportunities. After the transformation of the capital city for the Olympic Game in 2008, they were able to carefully discern to what extent they could claim their rights to stay in Gulou and when State supremacy would prevail over their local collective, or individual, empowerment.

Heritage conservation practices and Narratives in the Historic Center of Mexico City

In the context of heritage, Mexico has participated internationally in the implementation and ratification of letters, conventions and other documents. These include the Treaty on the Protection of Artistic and Scientific Institutions and Historic Monuments (1935), the Venice Charter (1964) and the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972)²⁶, Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003), Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005).

²⁶ The Senate ratified it in 1984, i.e. 12 years after its adoption by the General Conference of UNESCO.

Until 2017 (Before the July Committee), Mexico had 34 inscribed sites on the World Heritage List, of which approximately a third are considered urban heritage²⁷. Within the ties maintained by World Heritage List with Mexico City, workshops, forums and round tables have been promoted for the protection of urban heritage, including the international forum “La Periferia como Patrimonio Cultural Urbano”²⁸ and the workshops carried out for the “Plan de Manejo del Centro Histórico de la Ciudad de México 2017–2022”²⁹. UNESCO has indicated that the forum is in the context of “safeguard of the Historic Urban Landscape”³⁰ and the workshops “are part of a joint journey in which both the Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage and the UNESCO Historic Urban Landscape Recommendation”³¹. However, so far there are no tangible results from the implementation of this recommendation. The Management Plan will probably include the most explicit Historic Urban Landscape Recommendation. Mexico also maintains relations with other international institutions, has been a member of ICCROM since 1961 and has been a member of ICOMOS since 1965.

At the national level, the idea of Mexican heritage emerged at the end of the 18th century, with a particular interest in “Mexican antiques” (Monet 1995). The first legal measures concerning colonial buildings began in 1914 with the “Ley de conservación de monumentos”. Currently, the 1972 “Ley Federal sobre Monumentos y Zonas Arqueológicas, Artísticas e Históricas” regulates the protection of heritage. It is worth mentioning that the classification of monuments in Mexico distinguishes between the following categories: the archeological monuments which are prior to the conquest; the historical ones, which come from the 16th to 19th centuries; and the artistic ones, which were produced from 1900 onwards. This division shows the different valuations and heritage discourses that have taken place in Mexican history (Monet 1995). Likewise, there are different institutions in charge of the relative protection each type of heritage, “Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia”(INAH) and “Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes”(INBA). This last institution has among its conservation interests the environmental value, whose objective is the protection of a context that adds value as a group of buildings in congruence with a more relevant one, even though these values concern the material characteristics.

One of the dispositions of the INHA related to the Historic Urban Landscape was the realization of the Digital Map of the Cultural Heritage of Mexico. However, at the end of 2016 this was not finalized, and so far it has not been possible to analyze its involvement in the context of the Recommendation.

The Historic Center was established by decree in 1980 and divided the area into two perimeters; A and B. The reasons for this double delimitation are not specified, however. It

²⁷ Please see the World Heritage List: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/mx>

²⁸ This forum was held between UNESCO and the Secretariat for Social Development in 2016. The results of the work of the International Forum were presented within the framework of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development Habitat III (Oct. 19, 2016).

²⁹ These workshops were held jointly with the Historic Center Authority, as well as other governmental institutions. Discussions were held with both citizen participants and academic experts.

³⁰ This has been translated to English from its original version in Spanish. For more information: http://www.unesco.org/new/es/media-services/single-view/news/miguel_angel_mancera_y_la_unesco_en_mexico_presentan_en_qu/

³¹ This has been translated to English from its original version in Spanish. For more information: http://www.unesco.org/new/es/mexico/press/news-and-articles/content/news/la_unesco_en_mexico_y_la_cdmx_inician_ciclo_de_talleres_de/

is located in between the delegations of Cuauhtémoc (75%) and Venustiano Carranza (25%). The delegation of Cuauhtémoc also has sub-delegations: the Historic Center that covers a large part of perimeter A; and sub-delegation Tepito-Guerrero. There are complexities in managing an area divided into different territorial administrations.

This area is the subject of local laws, some of which comprise heritage and urban development. The “Ley de Salvaguarda del Patrimonio Urbanístico Arquitectónico del Distrito Federal (2000)” aims to safeguard properties that are declared Urban Architectural Heritage of the Federal District. This also includes the term urban image, understood as “The sensory impression produced by the physical characteristics, architectural urban planning, the natural environment and the inhabitants of a human settlement or a part of it”. Nevertheless, it brings the focus back to intangible aspects. Likewise, the regulation for the “Ordenamiento del Paisaje Urbano del Distrito Federal (2005)” focuses on protection of images through the regulation of advertisements and posters, as well as the implementation and maintenance of urban furniture.

At the level of urban planning, the Historic Center is ruled by “Ley de Desarrollo Urbano del Distrito Federal (2010)”. In this framework the “Plan de Desarrollo Urbano” (coordinated by “Secretaría de Desarrollo Urbano y Vivienda”) proposed three partial programs: Centro Histórico (2010); Merced (2000); and La Alameda (2000).

In 2016, based on the “Ley de Fomento Cultural del Distrito Federal” (2003), the Public Markets of Mexico City were recognized as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Mexico City. These include the traditional cultural manifestations that are found in the markets of the historic center, such as the Mercado de la Merced, Mercado Abelardo Rodríguez, Lagunilla and Sonora. By the end of 2016, however, there were no perceptible changes regarding the environment of the market and the HUL was not mentioned.

In addition to the laws there are institutions for the coordination, management and execution of works in the territory of the Historical Center: the “Fideicomiso del Centro Histórico”³²; and the “Autoridad del Centro Histórico”³³. These two institutions created the “Plan Integral de Manejo del Centro Histórico de la Ciudad de México 2011–2016” in 2011. This plan did not include the HUL Recommendation of 2011. Although it associates some notions of landscape protection through the maintenance and remodeling of streets, squares and facades, as well as the ordering of advertisements and awnings, these measures left out the intangible dimension of the site. Currently, “Autoridad del Centro Histórico” is creating the new “Plan de Manejo,” to be concluded by mid-2017, which will likely explicitly reference the HUL.

Between 2007–2014, the “Autoridad del Centro Histórico and ‘Fideicomiso del Centro Histórico’ has carried out some revitalization projects of cloisters and public space³⁴. The revitalization actions, as well as the restoration of properties, were carried out mainly in the South-West area of perimeter A, focusing on the pedestrianization of streets (such as Madero, 16 de Sept., Regina, etc.), which has changed the interaction of its inhabitants, shops and visitors (Ortega 2015; Zamorano 2015). These ways of acting in space have also

³² Created in 1990 as a private entity but became a public institution in 2002. The purpose of this Historic Center Trust was to promote, manage and coordinate the execution of works, actions and services whose aims are the recovery, protection and conservation of MCHC.

³³ After 2007, the government of Mexico City created the “Autoridad del Centro Histórico” who replaced some of the activities of the “Fideicomiso del Centro Histórico”.

³⁴ These were carried out through the six themes of the management plan: Urban and economic Revitalization, Habitability, Heritage, Mobility, Risk Prevention and Citizen Life.

attenuated the differences of this sector in contrast to other parts of the center. It should be noted that each of the interventions integrated forms of social representation of memories that have justified their visions and actions on space; the square ‘La Conchita,’ for example, that works like an open gallery dedicated to the caricature. In addition, it is possible to observe a double positioning regarding recovered spaces. In ‘Alameda Central,’ for example, which was revitalized in order to improve the environment of the square for users, but at the same time they wanted to impose prohibitions on practice in the public space (roller skates, to walk the dog, Bicycles, etc.) (Giglia 2013).

This contrasts with the vision of academics and experts, who hold the idea that Mexico City is a city with multiple centralities (Coulomb 2012). In this perspective, it is possible to talk about the historical city of Mexico and not the center, especially when the functions of the historic center have changed since the last century. The substitution of boundaries will probably allow territory to become more integrated. Experts also drew attention to other traditional neighborhoods for revitalization plans (Ávila *et al.* 2017; Delgadillo 2011, 2014, 2016; Giglia 2016, Ziccardi 2016), which so far have been focused in the Southwest. Such plans in other parts of the Historic Center will allow for a socially mixed repopulation, which is considered a fundamental objective. The opinions on the Historic Urban Landscape Recommendation were limited due to the fact that its content was known, but its use was questioned.

Regarding the visions of locals and inhabitants, the street vendors frequently raised the problems of the area. But that at the same time, they also highlight their importance for the national economy; inhabitants do not want the eviction of street vendors, instead they demand a better management strategy from the government.

The locals and inhabitants have a divided image of the Historic Center as the place that they live, an ‘alternative historic center’ and a revitalized space as a ‘real historic center’. In this context, they consider themselves as protectors of local cultural life and memories, which have to be maintained and transmitted to future generations. It is worth mentioning that they were did not know the term Historic Urban Landscape.

A policy of urban transformation of the Historic Center began in the 1980s, including the eviction of the street vendors. From then on, the local government initiated a legal strategy to remove street vendors from the Historic Center. The Reorganization Program for the Commerce in Public Space (2007) appears to have achieved that, to date perimeter A is maintained, more or less, free of fixed and semi-fixed stalls, although, it is still possible to observe ‘toreros’ in these streets. In perimeter B, especially in the Northeast sector, there are still street vendors’ stalls, which continue to occupy streets and entire squares. Their legitimacy in the space is usually based on the memory that their ancestors practiced the traditional market (Tianguis). In this connection of traditions, they usually mentioned that they learned this job from their parents; somehow they understand this practice as form of intangible heritage. In this context, the remembering factor is persistent in their discourse. Their social identity within the Historic Center is based in these ideas; they argued that their heritage and traditions are where they are. The street vendors knew some of the political structure in place to protect and manage the Historic Center of Mexico City, but they did not include HUL Recommendation.

Conservation practices in a Roman historical periphery: from rehabilitation to abandonment

Italy, and Rome in particular, have a long and peculiar history of heritage conservation: “Italy and heritage are virtually synonymous” (Zan, 2007). Italian expertise in the field of conservation is widely recognized at the international level. It has had a major influence on the design of many international norms and tools (Athene Charter of 1931; Venice Charter of 1964). Italy ratified the 1972 UNESCO convention in 1978 and the convention of 2003 in 2008. Currently, it is the most represented country in the World Heritage List, with fifty-one labeled items³⁵. The country hosts one ICOMOS national committee as well as the headquarters of ICCROM, which is situated in Rome.

The Italian heritage management system is very complex and anchored in an old tradition, with first sets of policies dating back to the 13th century (*ibid*). One of this system’s specificities is that the preservation of cultural heritage is inscribed in the State Constitution³⁶. Moreover, “cultural goods” (including historical, artistic and monumental goods) are defined in law (Article 148 of d.l. 112/1998) as a matter of public interest, whether they are public or private property (*ibid*). From the management perspective, the *Soprintendenze*, (administrative bodies that represent the Ministry of Heritage, Cultural Activities and Tourism in the regions) are in charge of implementing the legislation deriving mainly from the 1939 Law 1089 on “the protection of artistic and historical things”. Since the middle of the 1990s, however, the whole system has been subject to a process of privatization (Ponzini 2010).

Apart from the State, civil society³⁷ has also played an important role in the field of heritage conservation, especially in making it a matter of public interest in the 1950s and 60s. Important Italian Universities (Venice, Florence, Milan, Turin, Naples etc.) are also key actors in the field and have departments related to heritage conservation.

We note that, since the beginning of the 20th century, *landscape* has been an important element of the institutional framework dedicated to heritage management in Italy. The “Urbani Code” of 2004, in which landscape is defined as “a territory that expresses identity” (Degrassi 2012) is the latest example of a long tradition of thought that has been embodied in a series of laws (1909; 1922; 1939) and Charters (Charters on restoration, 1932 and 1972).

The symbolic importance of Rome and the extent of its heritage has led to the creation of several administrative bodies operating at different levels³⁸. Urban policies at the municipal level are defined through the Master Plan (2000, 2008), which proposes to fully

³⁵ It is interesting to note that this status of head of the UNESCO well-known list is about to be lost to China (which already has 50 items labeled, although for a much more extended territory), and that the rhythm of candidacy submission has been continuously slowing down over the past few years (*La Repubblica*, 2016). This can be interpreted as one of the many signs attesting a shift of power relationships between Western and non-Western countries within the international organization arena.

³⁶ Article 9 of the Constitution (22 December, 1947), states that “The Republic promotes the development of culture and scientific and technical research. It protects of the landscape and the historic and artistic heritage of the Nation.”

³⁷ In this respect, we can mention the importance of Antonio Cederna (journalist, urbanist and scholar) as a leading figure within the framework of the national association Italia Nostra, which still exists.

³⁸ Besides the Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio (national level), the Soprintendenza Speciale per il Colosseo e l’area archeologica di Roma (national level) is specifically in charge of the World Heritage area, while the Sovrintendenza Capitolina ai beni culturali (municipal level), is responsible, among other things, for the network of municipal museums (Musei capitolini).

integrate “the ethics and tools of conservation” within urban policies. To this end, the Plan makes differentiates between the *historic center* and the *historic city* (which itself is composed of various categories). This new categorization is supposed to overcome a traditional approach to conservation based on zoning and a definition of the historic center as defined by the Gubbio Charter (1960). The objective is to recognize the historical value of modern and contemporary architecture and of “memory places.” From this perspective, what we can observe is a strong convergence with the RHUL, even if the text itself is never referred to explicitly.

How does this extensive and innovative normative framework translate, not only in heritage-branded sites, but also in the rest of the urban landscape? What does it mean in terms of actors’ dynamics in the field? Ostiense is an interesting example with which to analyze heritage and urban governance in Rome, as the area has been deeply marked by successive periods of strong public commitment, followed by periods of inaction or even abandonment. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Nathan administration, through the Master Plan of 1909, was very active in transforming this rural and peripheral area into the main productive pole of the city³⁹. After a long period of deindustrialization and abandonment (the 1950s to the 1990s), the “Ostiense-Marconi Urban Project” (of which successive versions were adopted in 1995, 2000 and 2005) saw a strong commitment from the Roman administration and the Rome 3 University to a regeneration strategy. The Architecture Faculty especially has been very active in the rehabilitation of ancient industrial complexes in order to create a new university district.

The narrative of this urban project was oriented towards the rehabilitation of the zone for the setting up of public services, green areas and infrastructure. The strategic vision aimed at creating a “Città della scienza” (a City of the Science), marking a shift from a society of production to a society of knowledge. The documents of the project, as well as many interviews we conducted with architects and planners of Rome 3 who had been involved in the rehabilitation process, attest to an holistic vision of heritage conservation, based on the “organic” integration of the old in the design of the new⁴⁰.

This period seems, however, to have launched much more building sites than it has been able to successfully complete; many aspects of the project are still waiting for implementation. Some famous actors involved in the regeneration process—such as the “archistar” Rem Koolhaas, who designed the original rehabilitation project of the old markets (*Mercati Generali*)—have left while others—mainly private ones, such as *Eataly*, an Italian luxury supermarket—have imposed their vision of the city development without waiting for public blessing. Without entering into the details of the privatization process, what we will highlight is the gap between the level of expertise of several of the actors involved—the university and experts in charge of heritage policies both at national and municipal level—as well as the relevance and extension of the heritage legislative framework, and the implementation ability, which was quite reduced. The reasons for the

³⁹ Later on, Ostiense was part of a very strategic urban axis for the fascist regime, with regard to the objective of reconnecting the City to the sea, and to make Ostiense the showcase of Rome’s modernity.

⁴⁰ The two left-center administrations of Mayors Rutelli (1993-2001) and Veltroni (2001-2008), who were involved in the first versions of the urban project, aimed to stay in line with the pioneers who created the innovative and humanistic legislative apparatus mentioned above, while at the same time opening a period of great events which started with the Holy Year of 2000 and were supposed to make Rome a contemporary cultural capital city worthy of the name. Experiments and performances became new ways of enhancing urban heritage. The transformation of the formal gas central, the Centrale Montemartini, into a museum, and the ephemeral illumination of the Gasometer (the visual symbol of Ostiense) at night were part of this political program.

failure of the urban project Ostiense-Marconi are very complex and still not entirely clear to the research team. They range from references to the speculation strategies of the “old powers” of the city (namely the Church, the corrupted administration and the traditional landowners) to micro-management issues (difficulties to communicate and coordinate between a diversity of actors).

From a material point of view, this uncoordinated process (especially over the last few years) has led to an extreme diversity of reuse strategies with regard to the ancient industrial buildings, going from abandonment to squatting and from destruction to rehabilitation. Through this long and opaque urban transformation process—and while the University has clearly lost its leader role in the Ostiense-Marconi project—the local inhabitants and users of the area have developed a variety of discourses and attitudes. Most of the long-term residents are positive about the effect of what they perceive as an increase in the quality of life and urban environment compared to what it was in the 1970s, when the area was associated with social hardship. Many newcomers (residents and young entrepreneurs) have been attracted by this “dynamic” neighborhood, where the post-industrial imagery reminds them of Berlin or New York. Many also complain about the accelerated disappearance of services and shops that are associated with everyday life, which the function of the area function becoming increasingly oriented towards restaurants and nightlife facilities.



Near the Tiber River, the luxury residential complex PortoFluviale71 has replaced the ex-Consorsori Agricoli and its public-led rehabilitation project that was never implemented. In the bottom right of the picture, we can see a river bank dweller © X. Ding

An interesting phenomenon that can also be observed in other cases in Rome, is the role played by squatting in the handling and maintenance of some abandoned public buildings, such as the ex- military compound of Via del Porto Fluviale in Ostiense. This hosts migrant families and a few students, who wouldn't otherwise be able to afford to live in the center. While they have been intensively fought by the public authorities over the past few years, squats and self-organized “social centers” present themselves as a bottom-up response (with advantages and drawbacks) to the problems of both heritage abandonment

and the lack of affordable housing. Moreover, our observations led us to formulate a specific recommendation for the implementation of the RHUL in the Roman context. As stated in the local team report, Ostiense's case suggests that comprehensive planning projects are hard to achieve in the context of scarce public resources and political instability. Public administration, together with the other stakeholders, might therefore consider tactical urbanism and small interventions as a way to pursue a principle of incrementalism capable of offering accessibility, publicness and openness to the ex-industrial complexes, while maintaining a comprehensive and holistic vision and for the development of the area.

Concluding remarks

Within the international community, the preservation of urban heritage is now, officially if not in the practice, considered to be one of the main challenges of the 21st century (Global Goals for Sustainable Development, 2015⁴¹, CHCFE 2015). Interest in both tangible and intangible heritage is rapidly growing not only among public administrations, experts and collectivities, but also cultural and touristic industries, while new threats are emerging from conservation practices themselves—such as museumification and commoditization of heritage (Brumann 2014)—to larger economic, political and ecological crises (Labadi and Logan 2016). In order to meet these challenges, the thinking and practices about conservation have evolved dramatically over the last decade. They progressively developed holistic approaches specific to urban settings⁴² that valorize the intangible cultural heritage dimension for more balanced, and socially and spatially, equitable urban planning and management, in line with the contemporary development of economic activities (Bandarin & van Oers 2012, 2014, UNESCO 2016).

This process led to the 2011 UNESCO's Recommendation on Historic Urban Landscape (RHUL) that includes a dynamic and flexible approach to former international or intergovernmental heritage bodies' policies and challenges their orthodoxy. As addition of components, with little or no reference to the ethical or philosophical principles that would hierarchize them, shaped its outcome, the RHUL is therefore implicitly proposing a depoliticized approach to the already widely “under-politicized” notion of sustainable development and the linked actions supposed to promote it (Sokonly 2012, 2017).

Despite these restrictions, the idea of cultural landscape understood as “a repository of social history and community values” (Ken 2016) is predominant in the conceptualization of the HUL, since it enhances a cultural construction that reflects human values and includes a much greater diversity of both tangible and intangible elements, such as recent architecture, oral traditions, rituals, knowledge etc. (Ken, St Clair & Mitchell 2015). While the notion of HUL presents many challenges, and consistently triggers scholarly debate, it also might play a role in supporting the inhabitants' social and cultural practices and expressions, since the elements and features of landscapes work as mnemonic devices (Osborne 2001). Similarly, they reveal emerging tensions and contradictions between the international narratives based on internationally agreed concepts (e.g. sustainable development) and the implementation of policies and instruments at the local scale that often put aside social actors engaged in perpetuating values embedded in their living

⁴¹ See the Goal 11 on Sustainable Cities and Communities (2015).

⁴² See notes 2, 3, 4 and 5.

environment and of their identity (Labadi & Logan 2016, Smith 2006, Smith & Agakawa 2009).

Our research project has scrutinized three large “pieces” of territory at the frontier between materiality and values, and confronted them with the concept and approach based on “historic urban landscape”. Beijing, Mexico City and Rome have become grounds to test the extent to which this concept and its approach were supposed to be *explicitly* known, understood, interpreted and appropriated by local and national actors. In reality, neither, local or national actors formally referred the RHUL in their narratives [discourses??]. Our analyses are based on interviews and documents, but we hardly found any direct traces of it. Our research was therefore not able to analyze the implementation of the RHUL as such. However, our case studies did allow us to assess the implicit convergence between local discourses and practices and the main guidelines of the RHUL. Indeed, the lens of historic urban landscape permits access to heritage practices at the local scale to better understand what was at stake in each context. Our findings indicate that the general principles set out in the RHUL are integrated into the three cities’ legislations to varying degrees, but so far, the RHUL rhetoric does not play—perhaps does not yet play—a role of symbolic reference, which would be used by social actors in order to orient or legitimize their action.

However, many principles of the Recommendation are common to the national, municipal and local heritage and urban legislations we could have studied, with specific cultural interpretations.

In Beijing, findings highlighted the domestic interpretation of the RHUL by Chinese authorities with an array of local heritage categories, whose practices have been implemented at the local scale, prior to the dissemination of the RHUL approach and have resulted, in many cases, in evictions of inhabitants.

In Mexico, the relationship between the popular classes and the RHUL has gradually faded into the traditionally blurred relations that all the inhabitants of the Historical Center maintain with questions of heritage and gentrification: no real conflicts, a kind of reciprocal indifference dominates.

In Rome, what we observed was a gap between an extended, innovative and, at the same time, historically rooted normative system and the current public ability to implement it. This gap leads to a diversity of heritage reuse practices, the modalities of which have been analyzed in detail (see annex 4).

From this perspective, physical or living expressions of heritage are fundamental for developing an approach that enhances an integrated conservation of urban setting. The recent UNESCO Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (2015) integrated new paragraphs (108-118) that urge social, economic and environmental criteria for the current and future sustainable (and even socially just, if possible) management of nominated properties to be taken into account (Ripp and Rodwell 2016). This position on heritage management’s governance is strengthened by reports presented at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development—Habitat 3—held in Quito in December 2016, such as the UNESCO “Culture, Urban, Future: Global Report on Culture for Sustainable Urban Development” (UNESCO 2016) or the UN-Habitat Issue Papers “Urban Culture and Heritage” (UN-Habitat 2015), and other publications, such as the UN-Habitat “World Cities report: Urbanization and Development: Emerging Futures” (UN-Habitat 2016).

Our international and interdisciplinary project, beyond all the casual doubt it produces in our certainties as any research project must do, aimed to demonstrate the importance of understanding top-down and bottom-up heritage conservation practices at a moment of progressive inclusion of culture in United-Nations development agendas (Vlassis 2015), which is starting to be recognized as one of the pillars of cities' sustainable development⁴³.

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⁴³ See for instance the UNESCO 2013 Hangzhou Declaration "Placing Culture at the Heart of Sustainable Development Policies".

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