

Built heritage and Agenda 2030. Embedding heritage values in the spatial planning local agenda.

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Abstract: The UN Agenda 2030 is abundantly clear on the intertwined nature of sustainable development, as a combination of socio-economic and environmental aspects. Less explicit emphasis is posited on the role played by culture, identity and history and their contribution to pursue sustainable development. Indeed, the Sustainable Development Goal 11 encompasses strengthening efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage. This is measured by the total expenditure per capital on the preservation, protection and conservation of all cultural and natural heritage. However, successful heritage preservation and conservation strategies rest not only on capital investments, but most importantly on how they are embedded in the spatial planning procedures and instruments and on the level of protection they ensure to the existence of the built heritage as such. Failures in recognizing the existence value of heritage assets may cause significant flaws in the governance of preservation, particularly in growing urban areas under the pressure of the real estate market. This paper engages with the complex issue of embedding heritage values in spatial planning local agendas, by instrumentally discussing a purposely selected case study. It is suggested that although heritage values are socially constructed, still the intergenerational justice principle of sustainable development should urge for applying the precautionary principle while dealing with heritage assets, because of their non-replaceable nature. This paper concludes that the existence value of tangible heritage should be more explicitly recognized in Agenda 2030, by incorporating a target indicator allowing to track permanent loss of built heritage. Shifting from the international to the local scale, this paper also concludes that overreliance on the notion of spatial planning as political discourse may pave the way to slippery paths in heritage conservation policies, leading to the permanent loss of non-replaceable assets. It is anticipated that the paper concludes that local planning decisions on heritage conservation should be subjected to the precautionary principle and not being left into the political negotiation domain.

Keywords: built heritage, SDG11, Agenda 2030, spatial planning.

Introduction

Agenda 2030 recognized the notion of culture as ontological root of human identity and as driver for human-centred, inclusive and equitable development, by incorporating it in the newly reformulated paradigm for sustainable development and its articulation in the Sustainable Development Goals. UNESCO lauded as an unparalleled recognition the inclusion of culture within the international development agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals adopted in September 2015 by the United Nations. “The safeguarding and promotion of culture is an end in itself, and at the same time it contributes directly to many of the SDGs. Culture is who we are, and what shapes our identity. Placing culture at the heart of development policies is the only way to ensure a human-centred, inclusive and equitable development.” Heritage is mentioned in the Sustainable Development Goal 11, which encompasses strengthening efforts to protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural heritage. This is measured by the total expenditure per capita on the preservation, protection and conservation of all cultural and natural heritage (target 11.4.1: Total expenditure (public and private) per capita spent on the preservation, protection and conservation of all cultural and natural heritage, by type of heritage (cultural, natural, mixed and World Heritage Centre designation), level of government (national, regional and local/municipal), type of expenditure (operating expenditure/investment) and type of private funding (donations in kind, private non-profit sector and sponsorship)). This indicator is instrumental to measure the target 11.4 (Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural heritage) and focuses on the capital investments on heritage, though it does not allow tracking the status of the heritage as such, meaning that the implementation of the Agenda 2030 in the local strategies would not necessary endorse the conservation of built heritage as such. The first part of this paper discusses how current perspectives on heritage values evaluation and the way it is conceptually incorporated within spatial planning practices, may undermine the principles of intergenerational justice and sustainable development. The paper concludes that the existence value of tangible heritage should be more explicitly recognized in Agenda 2030, by incorporating a target indicator allowing to track permanent loss of built heritage. This conclusion is achieved by discussing concepts such as heritage as social construct and participatory evaluation of heritage values. The second part of this paper shows how incorporating the heritage conservation and preservation policies within the conceptual framework of negotiable spatial planning policies and in the political local agenda may undermine the existence value of built heritage. The paper concludes that planning decision on heritage conservation should be subjected to the precautionary principle, because of the irreversibility of actions of destroying built heritage: indeed, whilst intangible heritage can be re-created, once lost tangible heritage is non-retrievable. This conclusion is achieved by discussing a purposely chosen case study, whose lessons can be extended to the larger international community of policy and decision makers, planners, conservationist architects and evaluators.

Heritage as social construct. Challenges to its evaluation in an intergenerational justice perspective

Being considered a pre-condition to successful globalization processes, heritage should be in itself an investment in the world’s future particularly in the local agendas. However, particularly in urban areas interested by rapid growth (United Nations, 2018) the combination of real estate marked pressures and shrinking public resources (Lobao et al., 2018) may induce local governments to prioritise short term local economic goals and immediate financial benefits, to catch up with the needs of a fast pace growing urban population. Because of its non-replaceable nature, heritage holds a specific existence value, benefitting future generations, which also makes its appraisal particularly challenging. Currently, there is a growing body of scholarship and international policies, which tend to emphasize the role of participatory approach on the evaluation of heritage. A review of the literature on evaluating citizen participation processes is conducted by Koorosha et al (2015), including criteria and measures used for such a purpose (Beierle, 1999; Beierle & Cayford, 2002; Bradbury, 1998; Charnley & Engelbert, 2005; Chess & Purcell, 1999; Edwards, Hindmarsh, Mercer, Bond, & Rowland, 2008; Rowe & Frewer, 2000, 2004). The appreciation of heritage values as socially constructed values implies a participatory and dynamic approach to the assessment, which requires methods and tools aimed at capturing them, including a robust and evidence-based stakeholders’ identification process. The Namur Declaration (EC 2015), for example, endorses the promotion of a shared and unifying approach to cultural heritage management, involving all the interested players and stakeholders. However, the adjustment of current evaluative methods and tools to

encapsulate in a systematic manner different viewpoint, is still to be achieved (Trillo & Petti, 2016). This gap is further exacerbated by the difficulties of encapsulating in the sustainability- oriented discourse the intergenerational justice principles.

Indeed, this trend on emphasizing the socially constructed nature of heritage is further sharpened by the shift from the materiality of the built heritage nature towards a more complex appreciation of its constitutional features. The concept of heritage as a product of intertwined tangible and intangible assets has gained international recognition and has been explicitly accepted in the global arena of stakeholders and experts. This shift from the original focus on the materiality of the heritage to a more holistic dimension challenges the traditional evaluation methods and approaches. The concept of tangible heritage is very well consolidated and spans from the individual building to its context. Since 1964, the Charter of Venice clarifies that conservation should encompass not only isolated buildings but also the whole setting: “historic monument is not only the single architectural work but also the urban or rural setting”. International organisations such as UNESCO and ICOMOS further reinforced this concept. In 1965 the Constitutive Assembly of ICOMOS defined as heritage both monuments and sites (art. 3.1): “The term monument shall include all real property, ... whether they contain buildings or not, having archaeological, architectural, historic or ethnographical interest and may include besides the furnishing preserved within them” instead “The term site shall be defined as a group of elements, either natural or man-made, or combinations of the two, which it is in the public interest to conserve”. The definition of monuments and sites was integrated in 1972 by the art 1.1 of the UNESCO’s World Heritage Convention with the third category of “groups of buildings”. In 1975 (Declaration of Amsterdam) the concept of heritage was expanded to embrace historic gardens, landscapes and environment. The 1987 ICOMOS Charter declared the importance of Conservation of Historic Towns and Urban Areas, while Urban Landscapes were incorporated in the possible heritage assets in 2005 (Vienna Memorandum).

Intangible heritage is a more recent concept, brought to the international attention of policy makers and decision makers only in 1994 with the Nara World Heritage Convention, which stated that “All cultures and societies are rooted in the particular forms and means of tangible and intangible expression which constitute their heritage, and these should be respected.” In 2001 the UNESCO adopted the Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, establishing a list of such heritage. The inscription was based on the outstanding value acknowledged “from a historical, artistic, ethnological, sociological, anthropological, linguistic or literary point of view” (Vecco, 2010). Examples of tangible and intangible heritage are shown in Fig. 1 and 2.



Fig. 1-2. Examples of tangible and intangible heritage. Stonehenge. Guy Fakes night bonfire (Author’s photos)

The complex nature of heritage as underpinned in the current scholarship and international understanding, is also reflected in the growing importance that community and participation are gaining in the process for the definition of its significance. The revised Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter (ICOMOS 1999; original document: 1979) introduced the concept of “values-based conservation” and emphasized “significance” as community-based and contingent. The Burra Charter defines cultural significance as aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations.

Defining value: origin of quality and kind of utility

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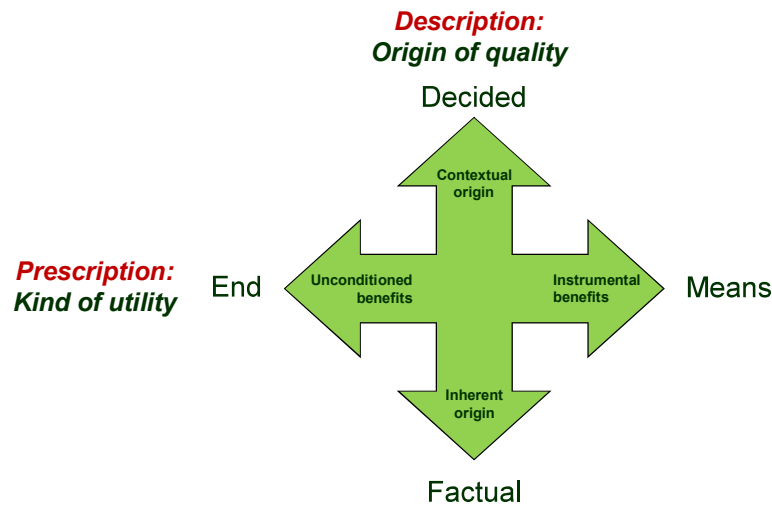


Figure 3. Conceptual framework for the appreciation of the heritage values (Source: Bengs, 2016)

In so doing, assessing the value of heritage is not a merely technical or operational issue (and as such, a problem of methods or tools), but requires a preliminary clarification of the philosophical stance underpinned in the evaluative object. Behind any assessment methodology or evaluative operational tool, the measurement of the value stems from an interpretivist paradigm, that is, who is / are the value givers and what does value mean to them. Traditionally, the evaluative methods for the appreciation of the value of the heritage can be grouped as follows: a) willingness to pay -including for example hedonic prices and travel costs- and b) Contingent Valuation; both can be successfully complemented with referenda, suitable to capture the political implications of the evaluation (Frey 1997). Traditional methodologies for the assessment of the value of heritage support the appraisal through the monetarization of the heritage as an asset for the economic system. This value can be either being captured within the real estate market as a reflection of the added value due to the presence of amenities, or calculated as the costs paid to reach a certain destination, or deducted from systematic surveys administered with a group of individuals (Throsby 1999 and 2001). Not quantifiable values such as the existence value are also a serious matter of concern (Throsby and Hutter 2008). In merely socio- economic terms, both tangible and intangible cultural heritage are considered a significant driving force in the European economy, society and culture, drawing from the rationale suggested by the EC (2015) and considering “Cultural Heritage ... as a special, but integral, component in the production of European GDP and innovation, its growth process, competitiveness and in the welfare of European society. Like environmental protection, it should be mainstreamed into policy and regarded as a production factor in economic and wider policy development”.

Re-casting the concept of heritage protection within the new international framework

More recently, the international debate around the value of cultural value has intensified. The concept of heritage has broadened into notions of local identity, belonging, nationalism, liveability of urban areas and social cohesion (Morais, & Chick, 2008; Jimura, 2015; YuPark, 2010, UNESCO, 2011). On 27th September 2016, the Mahdi's conviction (9 years) by the international criminal court because he helped to destroy shrines in Timbuktu (The New York Times, 2016). The trial was the first at the international criminal court to focus solely on cultural destruction as a war crime (The Guardian, 2016). The deliberate destruction of heritage has become a weapon of war, part of a broader strategy of cultural cleansing that includes murder and persecution of people in the short term, and the annihilation of identities and destruction of social fabric in the longer term. A sadly good example is represented by the deliberate destruction of the Buddas of Bamyán (Fig. 4).

As stated by the former UNESCO's Director-General Irina Bokova in The Hague during the Europe Lecture 2016, "The destruction of heritage is inseparable from the persecution of people. This is why we consider the protection of cultural heritage today as far more than a cultural issue. This has become a humanitarian imperative, and a security issue".



Fig. 4. Buddas of Bamiyan before and after the Taliban deliberate destruction as idols. (Source: Wikipedia)

The shift in the concept of built heritage from the ontological sphere of cultural expression to the international law domain of human rights re-casts the notion of its existence value. This latter, originally defined by Krutilla (1967) as *sentimental* value attributed to the *option* value of natural resources, encapsulates a much stronger and wider significance. As a result, the evaluation of the value of built heritage, whose conservation may indeed (and usually does) represent a relevant constrain in the planning practice, should be approached with a more cautious approach, such as the precautionary principle approach. This latter has been adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1982 and subsequently incorporated into various international conventions aimed at protecting the environment (EC, 2000). The principle was launched by the 1992 Rio Declaration, which states: "in order to protect the environment, the precautionary approach shall be widely applied by States according to their capability. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation". In consideration of the irretrievability of the decisions concerning the destruction of the built heritage assets as non-replaceable, taking in account the sustainability principle of intergenerational justice, it seems plausible that such a principle applies to the conservation of built heritage threatened by growing and rapid urbanization, by constraining the negotiability of decisions concerning its preservation.

Built heritage and spatial planning. Insights from a UK case study

Though some authors (Pendlebury, 2013; While, 2006) reposition heritage from being perceived as an obstruction to development to being understood as an agent of change, still the reality is far from this abstract concept. Rapid urbanization remains a major challenge for heritage conservation worldwide, and even in most advanced countries, with regard to the issue of heritage conservation and preservation. The second part of this paper elaborates on the principles presented in the previous conceptual framework, by instrumentally discussing an extant case study in the UK. The reasons for which this case has been chosen is that it is a paradigmatic case, representative of an average situation very common in urban context challenged by rapid growth. Moreover, the UK is a country with a very long tradition on conservation and with a solid policy and regulation framework for endorsing heritage preservation, thus flaws in achieving this goal cannot be ascribed to the lack of consolidated procedures. On the contrary, the case study demonstrates that the concept of heritage as negotiable matter within the spatial planning decision making process can irretrievably endanger local identity, cultural diversity and fulfillment of the principle of precaution with respect to the right of future generations to benefit from non-replaceable built heritage. The policy and regulatory framework for the case study is one of the most advanced legislation in terms of built heritage conservation, contextualized in a country with a long spatial planning and

community engagement tradition. The chosen case study is located in a growing urban area located in the North Western part of England, the Greater Manchester Area. This is a post-industrial context, which was severely challenged by the decline of the manufacturer industrial sector and experienced years of struggle and urban decay. However, a combination of economic policies, socio-economic interventions, urban regeneration strategies, allowed this area to regain its leading role in the region and to become attractive, up to the point that it is now challenged by the necessity to provide enough housing stock to a fast-pace growing population. In the Manchester area, a contradictory approach towards the heritage-led urban regeneration emerged during the initial stages of the recent urban regeneration process, well embedded in the debate surrounding the famous landmark Beetham Tower. This was the first high-rise building built in the formerly industrial area of Deansgate-Castelfield, today regenerated with the highest quality construction standards and revitalized thanks to the creation of new cultural and social hubs, such as the Home Theatre and Cinema Center. The architectural debate around the tower was lively, with one author suggesting that the building “torpedoed” the opportunity that Manchester was inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage Cities list, at a time in which the city was shortlisted in the UK based on its industrial past (Punter, 2010). Today the Beetham Tower is surrounded by tens of high-rise towers, popping up at rapid pace into a skyline of cranes. Heritage conservation and preservation played indeed a relevant role in ensuring an excellent level of quality in the majority of the urban regeneration initiatives of the last 20 years both in the City of Manchester and in other cities of the recently established Greater Manchester Combined Authorities, including examples such as Ancoats, a recently regenerated area rich in stunning industrial architectures, the Northern Quarter, dotted by reused red-bricks historic buildings, and the numerous heritage mills rebirth to a new life as offices and apartment buildings along the extraordinary network of waterways and canals, and related engineering infrastructures. However, still in some case conservation of built heritage is not prioritized. A paradigmatic case is the Chapel Conservation area in Salford, where in the last few years two Victorian buildings have been demolished to leave room for the development of apartment buildings, indeed very high-quality design schemes, but ignoring the presence of two pieces of built heritage that would have increased identity and sense of belonging in the area. This case study is first contextualized within the UK policies on conservation, then discussed through archival data, planning documents and fieldwork conducted over a 4-years timeframe (2015-2019).

Contextualizing the case study: heritage conservation in the UK

Conservation of built heritage in the UK has a long tradition, dating back to the first Ancient Monuments Protection Act 1882, which granted conservation to selected archaeological monuments (Mynors 1999). Interest in monuments conservation stemmed from the Romanticism movement and in particular from the influence of William Morris, who in 1877 created the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) to advocate for the conservation of built heritage (Yu, 2008). The current UK regulatory framework on conservation of built heritage rests on three different levels of conservation: Scheduled Monuments; Listed Buildings; Conservation Areas. The definition of monument is stated by the Ancient Monuments & Archaeological areas Act 1979 as: “any building, structure or work, whether above or below the surface of the land, and any cave or excavation; any site comprising the remains of any such building, structure or work or of any cave or excavation; any site comprising, or comprising the remains of, any vehicle, vessel, aircraft or other movable structure or part thereof which neither constitutes nor forms part of any work which is a monument within paragraph (a) above”. The significance of monuments stems from their interest, which can be either archaeological (archaeological interest forms a primary source of evidence relating to the substance and evolution of places, plus the people and cultures that made them) or historic (interest in how the present can be connected through a place to past people, events and aspects of life. Monuments with historic interest provide a material record of the nation’s prehistory and history, whether by association or through illustration). The criteria for scheduling monuments refer to different features: period (monuments that characterise a category or period should be considered for preservation); rarity (monuments that are so scarce that all surviving examples that still retain some significance should be preserved); documentation/finds (existence of records of previous investigations); group value (association of the monument with related contemporary monuments and / or those of different periods); survival/condition; fragility/vulnerability; diversity; potential. Owners of a scheduled monuments need to apply for prior written permission from the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, under the procedure known as Scheduled Monument Consent or SMC (historicengland.org.uk).

Besides scheduled monuments, listed buildings are those, holding special architectural and historic interest. Listing brings a building under the consideration of the planning system, so that it can be protected for future generations (historicengland.org.uk). The Town and Country (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas)

Planning Act 1990 includes among its roles being of “guidance of local planning authorities in the performance of their functions under this Act and the principal Act in relation to buildings of special architectural or historic interest”. The institution of the English Heritage (Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission) was owed to compile the list of the most historic interesting buildings, which following their inclusion within the list are defined as “listed” (Campbell, 2001). Listing is guided by the two main criteria: 1) value of the building, 2) period of construction. According to the Planning Policy Statement 15, the principles of inclusion in the List are: (1) Architectural interest: the lists are meant to include all buildings which are of importance to the nation for the interest of their architectural design, decoration and craftsmanship; important examples of particular building types and techniques (eg. buildings displaying technological innovation or virtuosity) and significant plan forms; (2) historic interest: this includes buildings which illustrate important aspects of the nation's social, economic, cultural or military history; (3) close historical associations with nationally important people or events; (4) group value, especially where buildings comprise an important architectural or historic unity; (5) fine example of planning (eg. squares, terraces or model villages). The Planning Policy Statement 15 also states principles to determine the historic interest of the buildings belonging to the categories presented above, considering worthy of listening “all buildings built before 1700 which survive in anything like their original condition are listed; and most buildings of about 1700 to 1840 are listed, though some selection is necessary. After about 1840, because of the greatly increased number of buildings erected and the much larger numbers that have survived, greater selection is necessary to identify the best examples of particular building types, and only buildings of definite quality and character are listed. For the same reasons, only selected buildings from the period after 1914 are normally listed. Buildings which are less than 30 years old are normally listed only if they are of outstanding quality and under threat. Buildings which are less than ten years old are not listed.” Listed buildings benefit from three different level of protection: Grade I (buildings of exceptional importance), Grade II* (particularly important buildings of more than special interest) and Grade II (buildings of special interest). Section 69 of the Town and Country (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Planning Act 1990 defines Conservation areas as “areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”. The definition of a Conservation area is instrumental to preserve a particular area or neighbourhood, while the listing procedure focuses only on individual buildings. Although some of the buildings in these selected areas may be listed, the importance of the area is stated by its special interest as a whole, which may include factors non related to the buildings themselves like the pattern of the streets and the skyline (Ross 1996). It is a duty of the local planning authority to identify which portions of its bailiwick are worth of protection due to their architectural and historical value (Campbell 2001). It should also establish the local standard to grant during the determination process as they are not prescribed. As the Planning Policy Statement 15 states the local authority in 4.4 paragraph “In deciding whether it is desirable to designate, an authority may take into account the resources likely to be required, not only for the administration of conservation area controls, but also for consultation with local residents and formulation of policies for a new area: without follow-up, designation is unlikely to be effective in itself.” The Planning Policy Statement 15 identifies also some other aspects to take into account for the designation of the areas such as: (1) the historic layout of property boundaries and thoroughfares; on a particular 'mix' of uses; on characteristic materials; (2) appropriate scaling and detailing of contemporary buildings; (3) the quality of advertisements, shop fronts, street furniture and hard and soft surfaces; on vistas along streets and between buildings; (4) the extent to which traffic intrudes and limits pedestrian use of spaces between buildings. The first conservation areas were designated in 1967 and there are now over 8,000 conservation areas in England (<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/what-is-designation/local/conservation-areas/>). The United Kingdom Government set out its planning policies concerning the historic environment and designated sites for protection and conservation, termed as “heritage assets” in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF was published in 2012 and a new version of the NPPF was published in 2018. It defines a heritage asset as “A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing)” (Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, 2018, p. 69). Conservation area designation introduces controls over the way owners can alter or develop their properties. These controls include control over demolition of unlisted buildings which requires a planning permission, control over works to trees and restriction on the types of development which can be carried out without the need for planning permission.

Case study discussion and findings

The Chapel Street corridor is a regeneration area in the city Salford, one of the cities included in the Greater Manchester Combined Authority area. It is located at walkable distance from the city center of Manchester and is partly included in the Salford Central Masterplan, a 20-years regeneration initiative, one of the UK's largest development projects. The Salford Central Masterplan was designed with the goal to achieve “capacity to deliver £650million investment, create around 11,000 new jobs, 197,000sqm of commercial space, 24,000sqm of retail and leisure space, 849 new homes, 390 hotel rooms, new car parking, improved pedestrian and cyclist routes and new public open spaces” (www.salford.gov.uk). The economic impact of this initiative in the City of Salford is of outstanding relevance. During the industrial revolution the area underwent rapid change, the urban fabric was characterized by a tight grid of street and crowded houses. In the 1970s it began to decline and in the mid-1990s population was falling, many buildings were empty and left to decay and social issues arose (SCC 2008a). Due to these initial conditions, it is evident that the successful implementation of the regeneration scheme is particularly welcomed by the local communities and decision makers. The area is indeed rich in built heritage (Fig. 5).

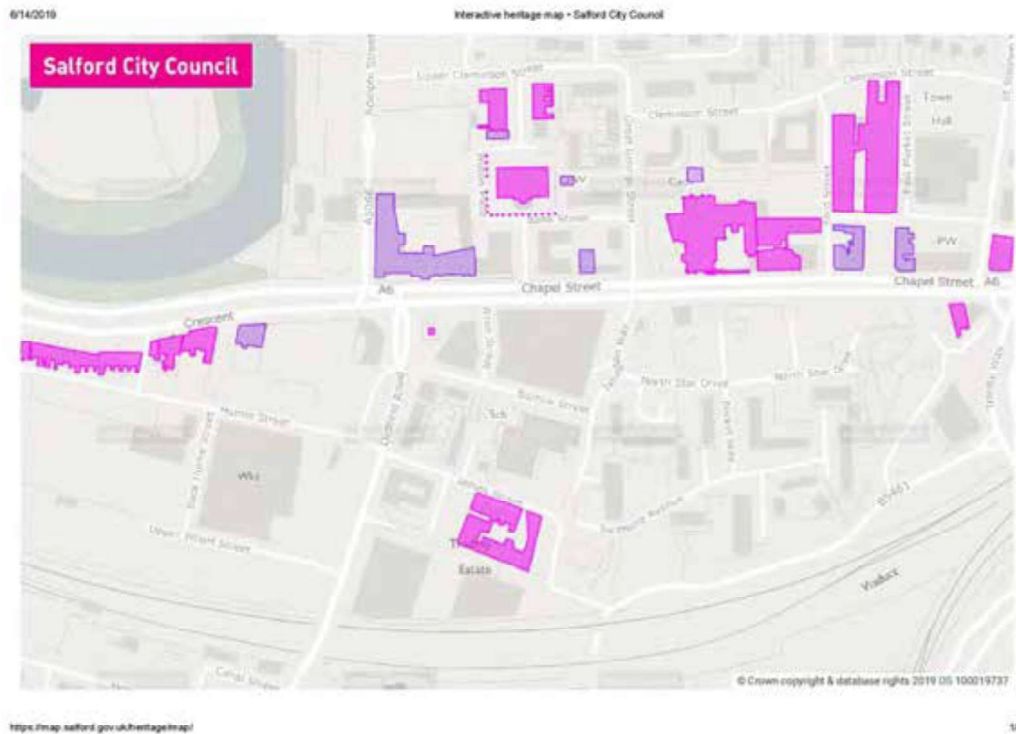


Fig. 5. Listed buildings in the Chapel Street study area (Source: map.salford.gov.uk)

It incorporates Grade II* buildings and conservation areas, including the Crescent and the Adelphi Buxley Square conservation areas (SCC, 2008a and SCC, 2008b). Overall, it is a key- corridor in the urban structure and should play an important role in the definition of the future identity of the local community. However, the approach to the conservation and preservation of built heritage in this area is controversial. The new projects within the Adelphi Buxley Square conservation area (SCC, 2007) have been implemented so far with a high level of consideration for the historical pattern of the urban fabric. For example, Timekeepers Square is a development of 36 townhouses that forms part of the English Cities Fund's (ECF) Salford Central regeneration scheme, which has been awarded multiple prizes including the RIBA North West Awards 2018 (<https://buttress.net/project/timekeepers-square/>). It perfectly fits into the urban surrounding, exploiting the potential of the visual connections between the Grade II* listed churches. On the other side of the Chapel Street corridor, the Crescent Conservation area has been recently challenged by the demolition of a Victorian building,

the Black Horse Hotel, which was recorded in the Crescent Conservation Area Appraisal (SCC, 2008b). The building was deemed not consistent with the regeneration plan by the developer, Fred Done's company, Property (Done) Ltd, consisting in the construction of about 400 rental flats in apartments of up to 22 storeys. The planning permission for the demolition of the building was passed by the Council despite serious concerns were raised by Historic England, the Victorian Society and the residents. According to Salford Star (7th April 2016), a representative of Fred Done's declared that "It wasn't feasible to keep the pub...we didn't want the pub...that was out of our hands". SalfordOnLine (7th April 2016), reported that the Victorian Society said the plans were "a poor scheme... setting a dangerous precedent for inappropriate development in conservation areas everywhere". The pub, built in 1875, was closed since 2000 and was in need of repair, but still remained on the council's own Local List of buildings of historical note. According to InsiderMedia (8th April 2016), a spokesman for the Victorian Society told Insider that the decision was "a disappointing one. As we pointed out in our letter of objection, the great harm that the scheme would cause to the conservation area and to listed buildings has not been justified in planning terms and it fails to comply with local and national policy. The opportunities provided by a site of this size means the loss of the locally listed Black Horse Hotel is entirely unnecessary. In almost every way this is a poor scheme and it sets a dangerous precedent for inappropriate development in conservation areas everywhere." Interestingly enough, difficulties in keeping the built heritage alive in the Chapel street corridor are arising in more recent times, while the initial reluctance to private investments in the area should have been partly overcome by the success of the scheme. In 2013, while the Chapel Street regeneration initiative was still in its infancy, the Old Bell Tower pub had survived risk of demolition, with "developers (who) had hoped to turn the landmark Bell Tower pub on Chapel Street into a residential development but instead fell into a dispute with Salford council" (Manchester Evenings, 2013). In 2016, the demolition of the Black Horse 1875 Victorian pub has been coupled by the Olde Nelson pub, originally built in 1805 and re-built in 1899, closed in 2002 and bulldozed following a "delegated decision" of the Salford City Council. This has happened despite of the fact that when the scheme was launched, the Planning Lead Member and Councilor Antrobus had declared that it was "essential that we preserve as many historic buildings as possible in the Chapel Street area" (Star, 16th June 2016). Antrobus further added that "Good planning means mixing the old with the new. It is essential that we preserve as many historic buildings as possible in the Chapel Street area", echoed by Salford MP Hazel Blears, who was photographed by the pub Salford MP Hazel Blears was photographed by the pub stating "Alongside the vital demolition work necessary to make the area safe, historic buildings and public spaces such as Ye Olde Nelson and Bexley Square will be revitalized and brought back into active use." Regrettably, two Victorian landmarks, one in the Crescent conservation area, another facing the Adelphi Buxley Square, have been reduced into dust to make room for new developments, which still hold the potential for adding value to the area thanks to the high quality of the design, though the decision of demolishing the two pieces of heritage has been made despite the opposition of local stakeholders with specific expertise in the Victorian heritage.

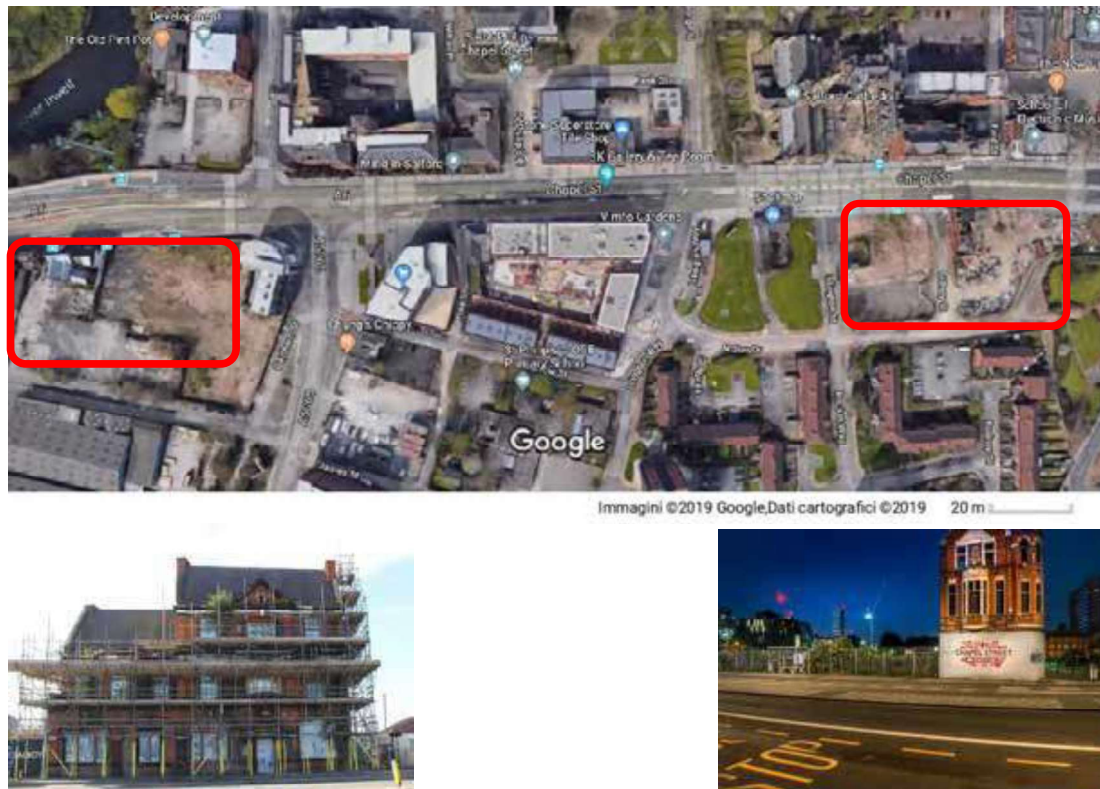


Fig. 6 – 7 - 8. The Black Horse pub (left, source: author’s photo) and the Olde Nelson pub (right, source: aboutmanchester.co.uk) before their demolition in 2016 and the building sites on their former location.

Conclusions

Despite of the growing importance that built heritage is gaining internationally, as essential and irreplaceable component of human-centred, inclusive and equitable development, still the implementation of such a strong paradigm is challenged by weak conservation policies at the local level. The implicit recognition of the significance of built environment within the human rights domain seems to be taken for granted in the formulation of the targets of Agenda 2030, which only focuses on the investments in the preservation of heritage but does not recognize the necessity of tracking the loss of built heritage, particularly under the pressure of real estate market and developers. There is an urgency for re-focusing the SDG11 Target 11.4, which should acknowledge both financial efforts on the conservation and preservation of heritage, but most importantly the willingness to retain such legacy for future generations. The first part of this paper widely discussed the contradictions created by the concept of heritage as social construct, whose significance should be assessed through a wide and participatory process, and the notion of heritage as legacy to be preserved for the benefit of future generations. It is suggested that the precaution principle should be applied in the decision-making process regarding built heritage, which is non-replaceable, thus decisions on it are irretrievable. Beside a recognition of the importance of the existence value of built heritage at international level, it would be extremely useful to avoid unnecessary destruction of built heritage under the pressure of real estate and developers, thus, there is an urgency for a reformulation of heritage values and related decision-making process within the local spatial planning agendas. The discussion of an extant case study demonstrated how even in one of the most advanced countries in terms of policies heritage conservation, in the practice this may not be the priority. It is suggested that heritage conservation should be re-casted within the spatial planning policies, by positioning it into a non-negotiable domain, thus allowing future generations to benefit from a non-replaceable asset.

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