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## Article

# The Historic Urban Landscape Approach and the Governance of World Heritage in Urban Contexts: Reflections from Three European Cities

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**Abstract:** Governance, and specifically local management and institutional systems, is among the key factors affecting the management of World Heritage (WH) properties in urban contexts. The adoption of the 2011 UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL approach) promotes a governance reform towards more inclusive and integrated management. The purpose of this paper is to discuss how the HUL approach may help to solve the key governance challenges affecting WH in urban contexts. The governance of WH in three European cities is compared. Edinburgh, Porto, and Florence were chosen for their familiarity with the HUL approach and willingness to provide guidance and review policies and review their policies as management plans. The methodology includes a policy analysis of the management plans followed by a comparative analysis based on the six key governance challenges addressed in the recent literature. The results show that the HUL approach is supporting the governance of WH in urban contexts, and that more inclusive and integrated management has helped address the challenges affecting heritage management.

**Keywords:** governance; historic urban landscape; World Heritage; cities; communities



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## 1. Introduction

Over the past several decades, several World Heritage (WH) properties in urban contexts have seen the conservation of their Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) affected by several factors, such as natural hazards (earthquakes, floods, tsunamis, etc.) and human threats such as wars, ethnic and religious conflicts, urban pressures derived from uncontrolled tourism, and real estate development, among others [1]. Governance, and specifically local management and institutional systems, is among the most challenging factors affecting the conservation of WH properties in urban contexts, as has been mentioned in 2465 Reports [2]. A total of 434 WH properties belong to 70% of UNESCO state parties [3].

Moreover, governance is coming under more intense scrutiny, and this includes the governing institutions themselves as well as their actions. Management structures and mechanisms are considered to be failing to function as expected, both due to internal and external issues. Various academics [4–9] have been theorizing how to better manage, adapt, and monitor the governance structures and management systems applied to WH, as well as the stakeholders involved. Recent research [10] has identified six key issues in governance: (1) institutional integration and policy articulation; (2) stakeholder and community engagement; (3) consensus building and conflict mediation; (4) knowledge

sharing, transparency, and institutional accountability; (5) monitoring, evaluation, and impact assessment; and (6) resilience and sustainable urban development models for rapid change (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Key governance issues. Those in blue are those key governance issues related to group (I), working (with) institutional complexity, and those in brown are related to group (II), safeguarding a turbulent future, each comprising different subgroups.

Placing urban heritage management at the center of the debate from an inclusive perspective and taking into account the communities and different stakeholders in the decision-making process was central to research and pilot projects before the international adoption of the Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (hereafter HUL), by UNESCO state parties in 2011 [11]. The HUL approach also assumes that by promoting a more integrated city management system, by including a broader range of stakeholders, from local residents to investors and experts, and, consequently, also heritage, is to broaden and interlink diverse categories and attributes, e.g., tangible–intangible, natural–cultural, movable–immovable. This international recommendation is presented as an integrated approach and guiding tool to be further adapted by the state parties to all cities, including those in part listed as World Heritage [12]. This new approach to urban heritage considers the problems facing urban areas today. It takes into account, on the one hand, the singularities of each context, and, on the other hand, all the stakeholders involved in the city. If the implementation of the Recommendation involves approaching urban conservation in a democratic way in relation to the consideration of all its attributes through the participation of all the stakeholders involved in decision making, it could be argued that such an approach is an example of how the HUL approach is the best way to manage urban heritage from a governance perspective [13]. However, the literature reviews carried out so far have shown that there are few cases in which the HUL approach has been implemented, due either to a misunderstanding of the concept or to the difficulty of involving communities and relevant stakeholders in decision-making processes [14,15].

It is theorized by some authors [16] that the adoption of the HUL approach is a step towards a co-creative future in which heritage conservation and spatial planning processes are integrated, which going beyond the vector of change, and in which heritage conservation leads spatial planning. There are three innovative points in the implementation of the HUL approach: (i) the consideration of urban heritage from a landscape approach, which means that cultural, natural, and human heritage resources are included; (ii) the identification of heritage values and attributes according to a multidisciplinary and community-led perspective; and (iii) the incorporation of different actors in the decision-making process. Hence, the implementation of the HUL approach implies a process of local governance

between all and for all [15,17]. In this context, municipal councils are major actors within local urban management as they have the legitimacy and resources to adapt and implement the HUL approach.

The management system is one of the key elements of the management plan: according to UNESCO, the "( . . . ) term 'management system' can be explained as a series of processes which together deliver a set of results, some of which feed back into the system to create an upward spiral of continuous improvement of the system, its actions and its achievements" [18]. The feedback process of the management system generates cycles of planning, implementation, and monitoring that allows the management plan to be updated and guarantees the consistency of its objectives with the policies instituted.

Inclusiveness has been stated to be a crucial factor that will make urban policies more welcome and resilient, given that they are known and endorsed by a larger group of stakeholders. This involves understanding heritage as a process made by people, for people [11]. The engagement of communities that have inherited and sometimes decide to conserve these values becomes imperative in order to build enduring, engaging, and resilient strategies. Moreover, the broader participation of multiple experts beyond the traditionally involved disciplines (architects, historians, archaeologists, etc.) remains fundamental and adds new perspectives to the tangible and intangible categories and attributes of urban contexts, and to the design of innovative strategies for better management [19].

As mentioned above, key governance issues and the HUL approach have been explored in the literature separately, but not together. In this framework, the research question of this article is *how does the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) approach help to solve the governance challenges of World Heritage Cities?* The purpose of this paper is thus to discuss how the HUL approach helps to solve the key governance challenges affecting World Heritage Cities by comparing and discussing three European cities in which municipal councils play an essential role in the management of urban heritage, which may be listed as WH, and adopt a prominently top-down and sectorial approach. Thus, this paper intends to reveal and discuss the key challenges facing WH in urban contexts beyond a more traditional perspective on local governance [18].

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1. Management System: Key Governance Issues

This section further discusses the Atlas. WH 2020 report, "Methodology for the elaboration of Management Plans for Urban World Heritage Sites" [10], which compiles a list of key considerations regarding the institutional context, monitoring, and evaluation of WH properties in the context of their management system. This work proposes a revised analytical structure for studying the management system of WH in urban contexts which is divided into two major groups: (I) working (with) institutional complexity; and (II) safeguarding a turbulent future. Each of these include different subgroups (Figure 1 and Table 1).

This research applied a mixed method approach, triangulating a literature review, a policy analysis (primarily of policies such as management and sustainability plans (Table 1)), and an online survey specifically targeting WH property managers, i.e., local officers in charge of WH processes in the local government. The online survey was used to enhance and narrow down the information gathered from the policy analysis, but also to reflect on the practical implementation of the developed policies.

**Table 1.** Explanation of key governance issues.

KGI 1 Institutional integration and policy articulation	<p>WH properties are generally managed according to a complex system in which several institutions, goals, and working practices shape the nature and influence the outcomes of the management and maintenance processes [18,20]. The articulation between different governance levels (vertical) and multiple fields (horizontal) depends on the level of comprehensiveness, consistency, and aggregation of the roles and actions assumed by each group of stakeholders. These management systems include institutional frameworks consisting of multiple organizations and promote multi-level and multi-actor interaction in order to guarantee that participation contributes to sustainable development. Flexibility in institutions responsible for wider management is important in order to create close relationships with a range of institutions linked to a particular site, and to accommodate new and emerging concepts. There must also be enough resources (human, financial and intellectual).</p>
KGI 2 Stakeholder and community engagement	<p>Stakeholder and community engagement lie at the foundation of good governance, the dynamization of communities, the sustainability of WH, and the adaptability and flexibility of management plans, as well as their implementation [21]. By experiencing the physical space itself, embodying the sense of place that sets it apart, and perpetuating the values and culture associated with it, local communities (local residents, workers, and daily users) and stakeholders (owners, developers, and other rights-holders) are positioned at the core of efforts for protecting, promoting, and ensuring the future of World Heritage—they are both stewards and first responders [20,22]. Furthermore, participatory governance is essential to the identity of local communities and their sense of place, and thus has increasingly become a matter of justice and equity.</p>
KGI 3 Knowledge sharing, transparency, and institutional accountability	<p>Since the institutions responsible for WH management are diverse in their nature, overlaps in their duties often lead to situations of conflict and misunderstanding regarding the management of heritage sites, or even their value. The types of conflicts that can appear in the management of WH are as complex as the many institutions and actors involved, but special attention should be paid to interactions between different levels of governance, the differing interests of stakeholders and steering entities, and the recognition of local communities and stakeholders. Thus, consensus-building and conflict-solving mechanisms must be devised in advance and included in management plans. Mediation and preventive action is achieved by establishing communication, making use of knowledge, and employing participatory action, incentives, or compensatory measures [23].</p>
KGI 4 Consensus building and conflict mediation	<p>Establishing bridges and connections is essential when there are multiple voices, diverse interests, distinct opinions, and the need for a higher level of compromise between different institutions. Only with open and fluid communication between institutions can a management system be optimized [20]. This includes encouragement to share platforms and networks [18] (p. 103). Furthermore, it is also important to improve transparency and accountability between institutions, both in terms of their internal functioning as well as their interactions with one another.</p>
KGI 5 Monitoring, evaluation, and impact assessments	<p>The diversified and overlapping policies and planning instruments implemented in WH properties depend on processes of monitoring and evaluation to properly guarantee that the management process is functioning as intended, conforming to established rules, and meeting external reporting requirements. Monitoring and evaluation must articulate with both pre-existent impact assessment studies and those undertaken after a WH listing as these are an important part of heritage management systems, especially insofar as they concern the evaluation of impact on OUV [24] (para. 110). As such, policies, plans, and interventions in WH must demonstrate a priori their impact on OUV by identifying, evaluating, and mitigating potential environmental and social impacts [25] (p. 16).</p>
KGI 6 Resilience and sustainable urban development models	<p>Heritage management systems must be aware of WH agendas and incorporate new strategic challenges and rapid changes into their management and sustainability plans. Strategies to conserve the value of WH must also develop mechanisms, tools, instruments, and detailed guidelines that integrate sustainability goals and programs as well as multi-level goals, especially insofar as they concern climate change and other rapid transformations. Periodic reports should be presented in order to foster appropriate management actions at national and site levels.</p>

## 2.2. Historic Urban Landscape

To achieve the implementation of the HUL approach, a six-step action plan was drafted with the intention of ensuring a comprehensive, holistic, inclusive, and sustainable urban heritage management system with a landscape-based approach [15]. The steps are as follows: (1) mapping of natural, cultural, and human resources; (2) reaching a consensus among stakeholders on what to protect and how to protect it, using participatory planning and stakeholder consultation; (3) the consideration of vulnerabilities that affect the heritage, e.g., socio-economic pressures and the effects of climate change; (4) the integration of

information generated in an urban development framework (heritage attributes and values and vulnerability status); (5) the prioritizing of actions for conservation and development; and (6) the establishing of local partnerships [11,26].

### 3. Methods

Following a previous research report for the UNESCO World Heritage Center [27] and using the HUL perspective, this article aims to explore key governance issues in WH cities concerning (i) policies (through the analysis of World Heritage management plans) and (ii) practice (through semi-structured interviews).

#### 3.1. Case Study Selection

The Atlas-WH Interreg project (“ATLAS World Heritage—Heritage in the Atlantic Area Sustainability of the urban World Heritage Sites”) focused on working towards the sustainable management of WH in urban contexts and was framed within the HUL approach. The main results were the management and sustainability plans for each WH property, which were to be implemented using an inclusive and integrated management and monitoring model and were co-created and tested by the partner cities [28].

For the purpose of parallel research, reported in this paper, three of the Atlas-HW project case studies were selected for comparative analysis: Edinburgh, Florence, and Porto. Even though diverse geographically, these three cities are medium-scale cities with relevance at the regional level (Table 2), and each faces similar challenges in terms of tourism and real estate pressure, mobility problems, and demographic shrinking, among others.

**Table 2.** City profiles.

	FLORENCE	EDINBURGH	PORTO
WH property names	Historic Center of Florence	Old and New Towns of Edinburgh	Historic Center of Porto, Luiz I Bridge, and Monastery of Serra do Pilar
Inscription date	1982	1995	1996
Classification criteria	criteria I, II, III, IV, and VI	criterion II and criterion IV	criterion IV
Municipal population	382,300 (2017)	480,000 (2017)	214,300 (2017)
Core zone population	45,000 (2017)	23,500 (2017)	5095 (2017)
Core zone area	532 ha	450 ha	50 ha
Buffer zone area	10,453 ha	450 ha	266 ha
Main threats (mix SoC and SwoT ATLAS-WH)	Development pressures Terrorist attacks Natural disasters (floods)	Development pressures Tourism pressures Transportation infrastructure	Water infrastructure Loss of population Degradation of built heritage Safety problems

Sources: <http://www.atlaswh.eu/> (accessed on 15 May 2022); <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/> (accessed on 24 February 2023).

#### 3.2. Online Surveys

The three WH property managers of Florence, Edinburgh, and Porto were approached by e-mail between October 2021 and November 2021 and were introduced to the scope, goals, and purpose of the interview. The protocol of the online survey comprised 16 questions, structured according to the 6 key governance issues (Table 3). Each governance issue had questions concerning the clarification of its implementation, specific methods, actions, and actors (how, which/what, who, when), and the respondents were provided with a tutorial to support and guide them through the discussed issues and determine the variables for data analysis.

**Table 3.** Online survey/interview protocol: themes and questions.

KG	Question
KGI 1 Institutional integration and policy articulation	1. How do you evaluate the implementation of the MP within the management system ?
	2. How do you evaluate the implementation of the MP within the overall city plan?
	3. How are built heritage (architectonical, archaeological, etc.), intangible heritage, and natural heritage being integrated into city plans?
	4. Please provide one example of how intangible heritage is being integrated into multiple planning instruments.
	5. What is the project and infrastructure permission mechanism?
KGI 2 Stakeholder and community engagement	6. Could you please give some examples of how site residents, workers, and daily users (local community) are involved in the management system?
	7. Could you please give some examples of how owners and developers (economy) are involved in the management system?
	8. Could you please give some examples of how experts (formal knowledge) are involved in the management system?
	9. Could you please give some examples of how local officers and politicians (government) are involved in the management system?
KGI 3 Knowledge sharing, transparency, and institutional accountability	10. Please describe one mechanism that collects regular and long-term feedback in response to existing information flows concerning the heritage management process and decisions aimed at other institutional actors and/or local stakeholders and community members.
KGI 4 Consensus building and conflict mediation	11. Which are the most common conflicts within the management system, and how do you address them?
	12. Please provide one example of a conflict within the management system being identified, and the steps taken to address it. Alternatively, provide an example of a conflict which was only identified a posteriori.
KGI 5 Monitoring, evaluation, and impact assessments	13. What is the approach for assessing the impact of factors affecting heritage assets?
	14. Which methods can be used for the evaluation of long-term heritage monitoring instruments?
KGI 6 Resilience and sustainable urban development models	15. How is the management system prepared to promote and respond to unpredictable scenarios and to rapid changes?
	16. Please describe one instance in which a heritage-related action was taken, or not taken, in response to unpredictable scenarios and rapid changes.

Each interview started with a brief introduction to the research project, and, as an opening question, the respondents were asked to discuss their role and experience as site managers of a WH in an urban context. All questions were open-ended questions and were answered in written form by the respondents.

To address the first key governance issue ("institutional and policy articulation (KGI 1)"), the WH property managers were asked to identify the potential gaps within the implementation of the WH management plan within the WH management system and the overall city plan. In order to assess the integration of the heritage concept according to the HUL

approach, this set of questions also included topics related to the heritage categories covered by the WH management system, namely built, intangible, and natural heritage.

The second group of questions addressed the “engagement of the actors involved in the WH management system (KGI 2)”, and these were organized into four categories: (1) local community (site residents, workers, and other daily users); (2) economy (owners and developers); (3) formal knowledge (experts); and (4) government (local officers and political decision makers).

To understand how each site ensures “knowledge sharing, transparency, and institutional accountability (KGI 3)”, the site managers were asked to describe one mechanism that collects regular and long-term feedback in response to existing information flows in the WH management system aimed at actors other than governmental ones.

The fourth (“consensus building and conflict mediation (KGI 4)”) and fifth (“monitoring, evaluation, and impact assessments (KGI 5)”) KGIs were both approached by asking the WH site managers to indicate the most common conflicts and factors affecting the property, and how they are addressed, e.g., through which processes and tools.

Finally, the level of “resilience and sustainability of the management system” (KGI 5) was addressed by asking about the tools, strategies, and indicators capable of responding to unpredictable scenarios and rapid changes.

#### 4. WH Governance in Three European Cities

The “Management Plan for the Historic Center of Florence” was designed by the WH department of the Municipality of Florence, despite the existence of a Steering Committee (mostly comprising Italian official entities) and support from the University of Florence through the Here-Lab laboratory. This management plan includes an action plan, characterized by strategic projects and actions, which contemplates the participation of residents and other actors involved in the management of the Historic Center since the very beginning of the plan design through surveys and webinars. Its design process included three phases: a first phase of analysis; a second phase of involvement of main actors in the presentation and selection of strategic projects to be included in the action plan, as well as involvement of communities through participatory processes aimed at increasing awareness of the importance of the WHS; and a third phase pertaining to the elaboration of the management plan and its approval by the Planning Committee. In total, 6 macro-areas were identified, each with their own objectives and related projects, generating a total of 26 projects in the Management Plan. The impact of community participation on decision-making is not so clear, however, as it is mentioned solely at an informative level and lacks a presence in the Steering Committee (Figure 2).

“The Management Plan of the Old and New Towns of Edinburgh World Heritage Site” included a central participatory component throughout its design process. Its action plan comprises 6 key objectives; to meet these objectives, a total of 39 actions, along with their respective monitoring systems, are proposed, engaging communities, experts, technicians, and politicians, among others. Most importantly, these key objectives are the product of a public process involving residents, businesses, institutions, users, visitors, and broader stakeholders—all of whom are actors involved in the WHS. It is also of note that the management plan was designed by three very different partners, each with a very clear role: the City of Edinburgh Council, which has the capacity to implement projects in the city; Historic Environment Scotland, which provides technical expertise, supports the care of the WHS, and, above all, funds the necessary actions; and Edinburgh World Heritage, an independent intervention and research organisation set up in 1999 by the City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) and Historic Environment Scotland to support the WHS, and whose main activities include the conservation and repair of the urban and built fabric, research into the understanding of Outstanding Universal Value, and strengthening the participation of communities in the management of the World Heritage Site. These three partners ensure that the WHS incorporates all stakeholders and approaches relevant to a heritage site of



this nature, without forgetting that the structure of the management plan is designed based on the results of a public consultation (Figure 3).

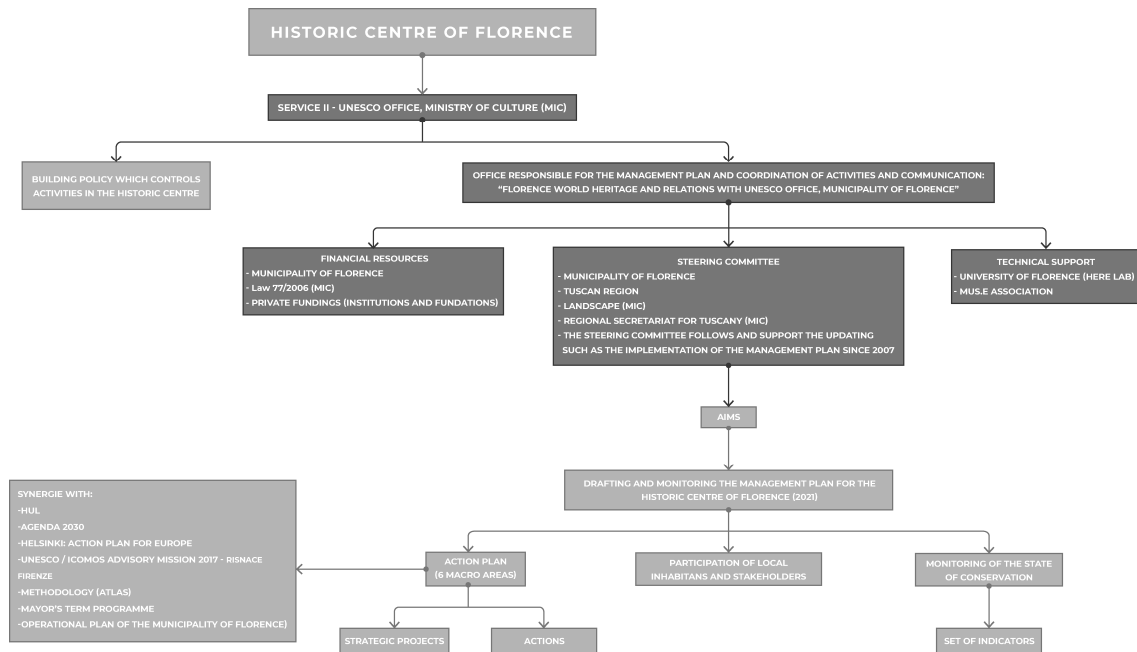


Figure 2. WH management system in Florence. Text in dark gray corresponds to management bodies, and text in light gray to management actions carried out.

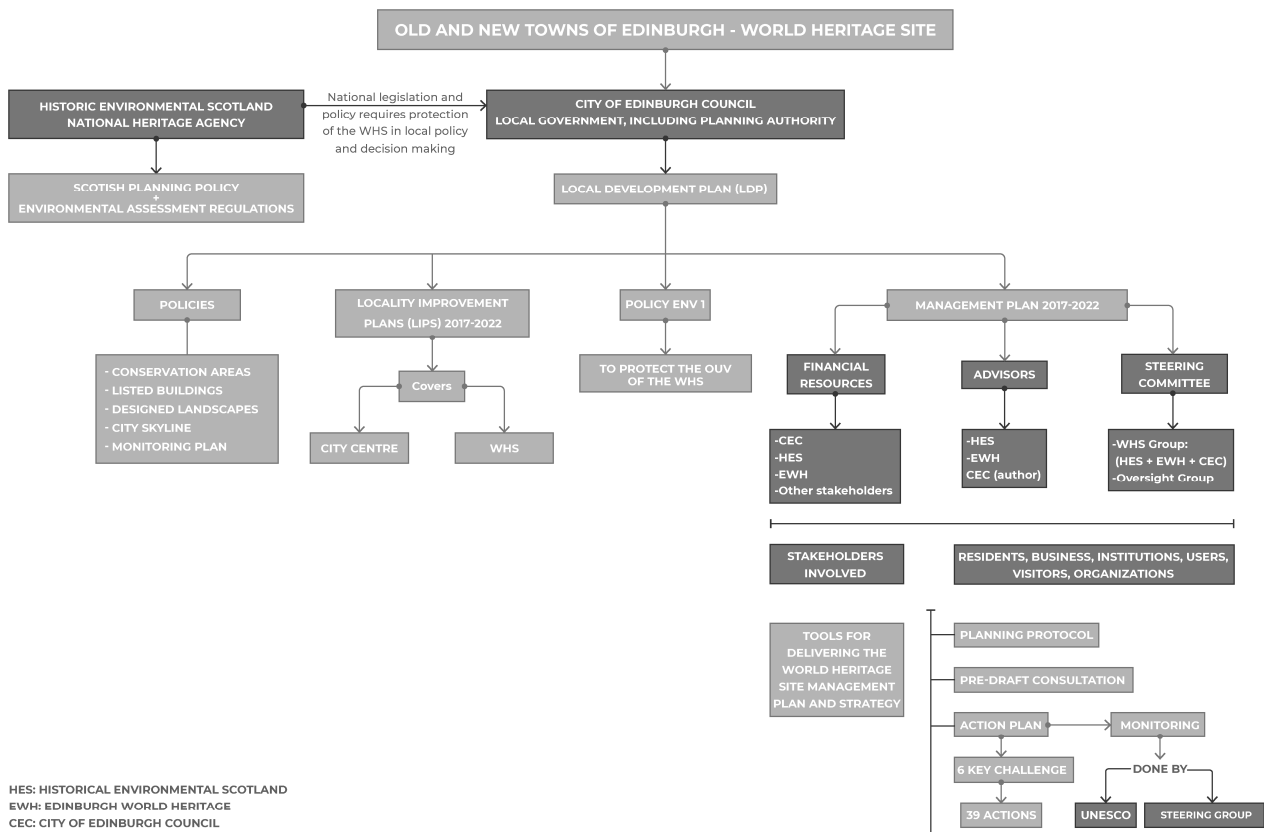
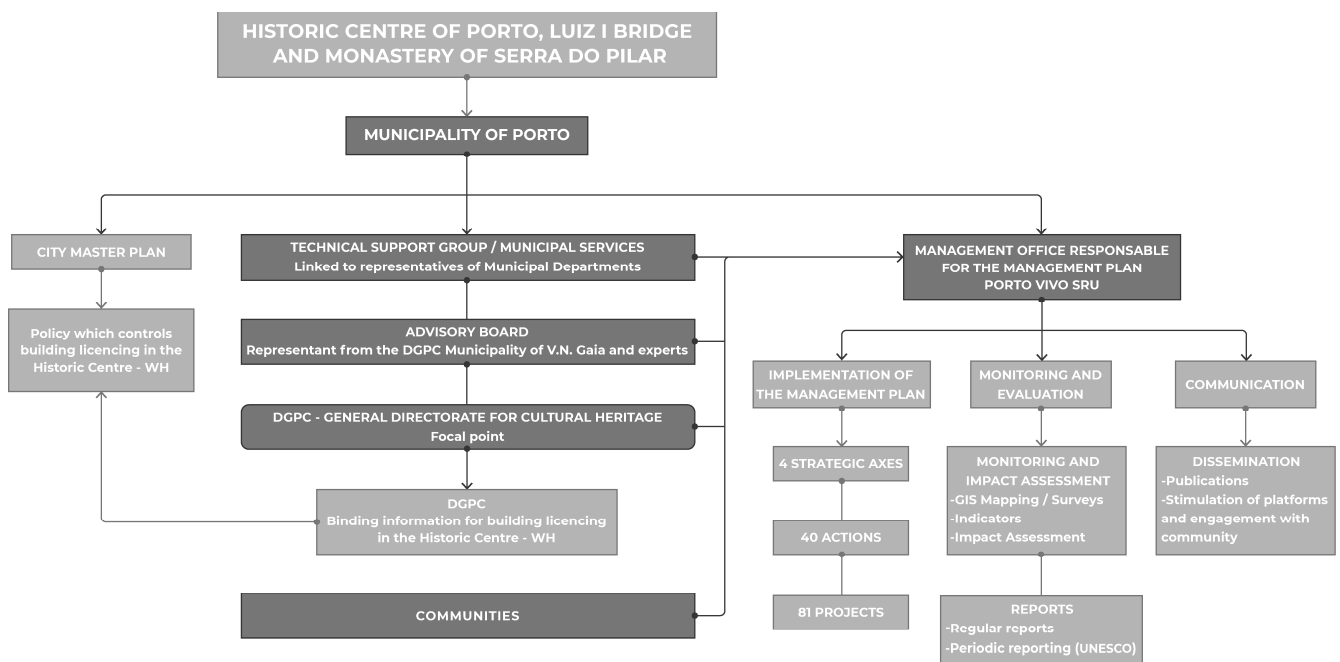


Figure 3. WH management system in Edinburgh. Text in dark gray corresponds to management bodies, and text in light gray to management actions carried out.

HES: HISTORICAL ENVIRONMENTAL SCOTLAND  
 EWH: EDINBURGH WORLD HERITAGE  
 CEC: CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

“The Management Plan of the Historic Center of Oporto, the Luis I Bridge, and the Monastery of Serra do Pilar” was designed by the Management Office (“Porto Vivo Sociedade de Reabilitação Urbana”, Porto Vivo SRU), and thus integrated in the Municipal Council of Porto. For this reason, the management plan could be designed in close collaboration with different Municipal Council services/departments, and in articulation with the city master plan. Besides the Municipal Council departments, there are other important advisory bodies involved in the elaboration of the WH management plan, namely the Municipal Council of Vila Nova de Gaia (where part of the WH property and buffer zone are located), the General Directorate for Cultural Heritage (DGPC) through its Focal Point, experts such as academics, and the different representatives of the communities. The Management Office (Porto Vivo SRU) is responsible for the Implementation, Monitoring, Assessment, and Communication of the WH Property Management Plan. This document, in its more recent version (2022), proposes 4 strategic axes, 40 actions, and 81 projects, engaging different actors (residents, technicians, experts, etc.). The actions range from conservation to knowledge acquisition, capacity building, and dissemination to risk assessment, among other things. It is also of note that building licensing in the WH property and buffer zone must be approved by the General Directorate for Cultural Heritage (DGPC). There is still work to do regarding the articulation between the WH property management plan and the municipal master plan, although it has been improved recently with the full integration of the WH Management Office into the Municipal Council (Figure 4).



**Figure 4.** WH management system in Porto. Text in dark gray corresponds to management bodies, and text in light gray to management actions carried out.

## 5. Key Governance Issues throughout the Analysis of Management Plans and Site Managers’ Perceptions

### 5.1. Institutional Integration and Policy Articulation

The interview results reveal institutional integration weaknesses, such the lack of a multidisciplinary approach in Edinburgh and the absence of relations with adjacent municipalities in Porto, contrasting with the extension of the arm of management to the Florence metropolitan area and the successful integration of both public and private actors declared by the Porto site managers.

Regarding policy articulation, the respondents indicated three roles of WH management plans within general urban planning: (1) as a consultation document, exclusively

expressing the intentions of the heritage conservation side (Florence, Porto, Edinburgh); (2) as a communication tool (Edinburgh); or (3) as an assessment tool, critical to the assessment and monitoring of the strategy commonly defined during the design process. It generally remains a non-binding strategic tool mainly used to inform existing operative tools (e.g., Florence Operational Plan, Edinburgh Local Development Plan, Porto Urban Rehabilitation Areas), in which it “acts in a symbiotic and synergistic way with the main tools for governing the territory”, as stated by the Florence site managers.

The analysis of the heritage categories and the comparison between WH management plans (WHMPs) and the data from the interviews confirm the dominance of tangible heritage categories which are “extensively recognized and protected” (Florence) by different urban management tools, and the focus of acknowledged/mentioned initiatives such as Porto’s “Bank of Materials”, a project that helps raise awareness about the preservation of the “most rare and antique items”, as well as construction and ornamentation materials, which used to end up as waste. This contrasts with the recognition by all site managers that intangible heritage categories are “not considered in a comprehensive way in city plans”, despite the growing acknowledgement and registration actions of those assets (e.g., Porto WHMP recognizes traditional building techniques as intangible heritage, and a Register for Intangible Heritage has been created in Florence). Overall, the site managers from the three cities revealed some difficulties in addressing the category of natural heritage (gardens, parks, trees, lakes, etc.). While Porto and Edinburgh do not provide any information regarding how this heritage category is addressed, Florence generally cites the National Code of the Cultural and Landscape Heritage, as well as related locally and regionally derived restrictions.

### *5.2. Stakeholder and Community Engagement*

Aside from the mandatory consultation for urban planning policies, the updating process of WH management plans emerges, among the consulted site managers, as an opportunity to improve and enlarge community participation, placing it as a central component throughout its diagnosis process. The Florence and Edinburgh site managers showcase the new WH management plan discussion as an example of their local communities’ involvement in their management systems. Residents, businesses, institutions, users, visitors, and other actors relevant to the WHS were invited to submit projects (Florence) and discuss the issues that should guide the action plan proposed by the new WH management plan. In particular, for the Edinburgh site managers, this was an opportunity to enhance traditional participation and introduce more comprehensive consultation forms in which the local community (including “voices less often heard” and “special interest groups”), through their elected representatives, could discuss the new strategy. The Porto site managers highlighted their roles as facilitators between public and private interests and the consistency of the panoply of initiatives to research, protect, and disseminate the relevance of the WHS, in which the local community is a permanent guest, excepting the design stage.

### *5.3. Knowledge Sharing, Transparency, and Institutional Accountability*

When asked to describe one mechanism that collects regular and long-term feedback about the heritage management process, the site managers confirmed the challenging nature of this governance issue. Besides regular meetings (Florence) and meetings by request (Porto) between the management-led organization and the public government (local, regional/national), monitoring actions are the commonly indicated mechanism by which knowledge is shared, at least in a long-term sense.

### *5.4. Consensus Building and Conflict Mediation*

The analysed WH management plans do not include conflict-mediation and/or consensus-building strategies, or related actions. Nevertheless, the WH property managers point out communication differences among the involved parties and the instability of financial resources as primary sources of conflict. Articulation conflicts are mentioned at

two levels: (1) among the complex tissue of institutions leading the WHS management; and (2) between the managers and the developers during planning applications. Regarding the first issue, site managers unanimously agree that promoting initiatives to discuss joint solutions is the primary mechanism for building consensus and mitigating conflicts among leading actors. The WH management plan updating process is indicated as an example of an initiative that promotes extended discussions based on co-produced diagnoses. Information, engagement, and accountability are also essential to mitigate conflicts during planning applications. Moreover, a lack of financial resources remains a complex and harmful challenge, “notably [influencing] the ability of city partners to have the best impact”, as stated by the Edinburgh site managers.

#### *5.5. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Impact Assessment*

For WH properties, periodic reporting every six years is a standard process required by the WH Committee, and this ensures a certain degree of monitoring. This process is based on indicators generalized for every WHS, and therefore specific city-related issues are sometimes not considered. Hence, cities have often already developed their own monitoring systems, typically structured using policy tools (e.g., the Porto WH Management Plan or the Edinburgh Climate Action Plan), with monitoring and indicators defined according to context. The consulted group of actors changes according to the theme, and this is an additional cause of variation. For instance, in Edinburgh, the assessment of physical degradation relies on experienced city professionals, while the local community is used to measure tourism pressure. The Florence site managers are the only ones who mention a Heritage Impact Assessment tool, developed in partnership with the University of Florence—HeRe\_Lab. The Porto site managers indicate using a georeferenced monitoring system that informs the periodic reports.

#### *5.6. Resilience and Sustainable Urban Development Models for Rapid Change*

The site managers of the three WH properties agree that institutional articulation and partnerships are the key factors in management system resilience. The aforementioned monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, such as heritage impact assessment models or risk assessment plans, as well as regular meetings and mandatory reports, are the mentioned communication tools between institutions.

### **6. Discussion**

This research aimed to discuss the HUL approach as a tool to address the six KGIs identified in the recent literature. This section discusses the results of the analysis of the three WHMPs and the interviews with each site manager (Florence, Edinburgh, and Porto), presented according to the HUL six-step approach (Table 4), and how they contribute to addressing the KGI.

Mapping resources, namely the assessment of intangible and tangible heritage attributes and associated values, is the first step of the HUL approach. The results indicate a lack of integration and policy articulation (KGI 1) regarding the intangible and natural heritage categories, decreasing their recognition between the new WHMPs and extended urban planning. The identified lack of institutional communication (KGI 4) must be considered critical to enhance this policy articulation and apply more resilient and sustainable strategies (KGI 6).

The implementation of the second HUL approach step (“reach consensus”) is also affected by this lack of communication (KGI4), which, along with the lack of funds and strategies of conflict mediation and/or consensus-building, was indicated as one of the primary sources of institutional conflict, particularly during urban planning applications. Promoting initiatives to identify and discuss existing or potential conflicts is assumed as fundamental to defining future mediation strategies (KGI3). Nevertheless, the communication role attained by the new WHPM and the growing inclusion of other voices, namely those of local communities, into the diagnosis planning stages could be seen as a step

towards a more resilient approach (KGI6), although it remains important to demand a more proactive role in decision-making stages (KGI2).

The assessment of vulnerability (HUL step 4) is fundamental for monitoring and impact assessment actions, which were identified as a key governance issue in the literature. The results indicate that relevant positive initiatives such as the Florence-specific Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) model, the inclusive assessment process of climate change related-impacts in Edinburgh, the monitoring indicators placed in the WHPMs, and mandatory monitoring of the scope of UNESCO periodic reporting are common to all cities.

**Table 4.** Relationship between the six key governance issues and the six steps of the HUL approach.

HUL Action Plan Steps	KG1_ Institutional and Political Articulation	KG2_ Stakeholders and Community Engagement	KG3_ Consensus Building and Conflict Mediation	KG4_ Knowledge Sharing, Transparency, and Institutional Accountability	KG5_ Monitoring, Evaluating, and Impact Assessment	KG6_ Resilience and Sustainable Urban Development Models
1. Map resources	x			x		x
2. Reach consensus		x	x	x		x
3. Assess vulnerability	x					x
4. Integrate	x				x	x
5. Prioritize actions	x					x
6. Establish local partnerships		x		x		x

Therefore, HUL steps four (“integrating the information generated (heritage values and state of vulnerability) into an urban development framework”) and five (“prioritizing actions for conservation and development”) are directly connected with the challenges described for KGI 1. The online interviews with the WH property managers were crucial to understanding their perspective on effective policy integration in their cities, namely the role of the WHMP in the WH management system and extended urban planning. The results indicate that despite the good intentions embodied by the new WHMPs reviewed according to the HUL approach (Atlas-WH2020 project), namely the previously described articulation framework including national, regional, and local institutions, with clearly defined responsibilities and tasks defined by the WHMP, in practice this articulation often prevails sectorial, lacking multidisciplinary and articulation among all the relevant actors. The WHMP works as a consultation, assessment, strategy, and/or communication tool, with little influence on local planning tools. As stated before, the holistic perception of heritage, as it pertains in the WHMP and the HUL approach, remains only partially in extended urban planning. However, most monitoring mechanisms are informal (e.g., meetings), applied due to mandatory upscale requests (UNESCO, National Director), or stated by the management plan, but they are hard to operationalize due to the lack of resources.

The last step of the HUL approach (“establish local partnerships”), despite being indicated as a critical goal for the management of each city, revealed certain practices, namely the lack of institutional communication or the uncertainty of the role of local communities throughout the planning process (i.e., during the design stage), by deciding, prioritizing, and defining how their ideas will be implemented, as well as the actual implementation and further monitoring stages. Furthermore, it is unclear how active a level their participation was capable of reaching versus the more passive forms of engagement, such as consultation (KGI2).

In summary, the results demonstrate the comprehensiveness of the HUL approach and its capacity to answer thoroughly and holistically the main challenges which are currently affecting historic urban landscapes. However, the specific way in which each city should interpret and integrate the HUL approach into their practical management remains a challenging question.

## 7. Conclusions

The HUL approach is currently the best informed and most supportive roadmap for addressing contemporary challenges in urban governance. The growing complexity of urban management processes demands more holistic and efficient integrative approaches in which all relevant actors, from the government to local communities, share responsibilities and benefits. This paper thus delves into the complexity of local governance processes and their related threats and challenges, e.g., combining local governmental leadership with different stakeholders, disciplines, and interests while also having to reach a consensus.

The work carried out by the Municipal Councils of Florence, Edinburgh, and Porto involved different approaches and specificities, but in each case they were committed to the inclusion of communities in decision-making by incorporating different actors throughout the planning process, and to overcoming the concept of heritage traditionally linked to the object by extending it to the landscape. The implementation or enhancement of existent monitoring initiatives is of paramount importance in all cities. Nevertheless, the lack of policy articulation and institutional integration continues as the knowledge and strategy of the new WHMP remain parallel to the extended urban planning framework, with consequences, for instance, for the recognition, protection, and management of other heritage categories, such as intangible and natural.

On the other hand, it is important to point out the limitations of this study, since it only surveyed WH property managers and thus lacks a multidisciplinary perspective. As a result, this paper provides only the perspective of the heritage conservation side, and further research must extend the approach to include the perspectives of other urban actors. Nevertheless, the contribution of the property managers was crucial to unveiling some of the differences between the official aspirations described in planning documents and the practical results. However, this work may be built upon in future research by including different actors involved in the planning process, as well as local communities in a broad sense. The conceptual density of this article (relating key governance issues with the HUL approach), along with the specificity of WH in urban contexts, did not allow us to extend our reflections and discussion to other examples, namely cities not included on the WH list, and such cities could be explored in future research.

These issues are aligned with the HUL approach and open the path to questions concerning the priorities of urban governance (e.g., what they should be and how they should be balanced), how to encourage the participation of different actors in decision making, etc. Heritage can no longer be regarded as an object of interest solely for the elite or specialists, as today cultural heritage belongs to everyone.

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