

Municipal strategies for protecting the sense of place through public space management in historic cities: A case study of Amsterdam

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ABSTRACT

Over the last decades, the exponential growth of city tourism has led to economic, spatial, social, and cultural changes in historic city centres. Residential areas are turning into monofunctional tourist destinations, and consequently, activities are changing to temporary practices. Although dynamism is an integral part of urban life, these changes can destroy the emotional connection between people and the place, hampering the creation of narratives of self-identity and the sense of place.

This research investigates which municipal strategies effectively manage the changes in historic city centres to protect the sense of place. It uses tourism and heritage management in the historic city centre of Amsterdam as a case study. Using a policy analysis, current strategies in Amsterdam city centre were compared with the principles in related international conventions applicable by the Netherlands. Coding and analysing the documents and comparing them with the results of expert interviews on actual measures taken showed that international conventions recommend soft instruments towards urban heritage management by taking participatory and multidisciplinary approaches, whereas tourism and heritage management in Amsterdam mainly uses hard instruments. A tendency towards taking participatory approaches to increase the commitment of the residents to the city was observed.

1. Introduction

Historic city centres suffer from growing tourism pressure (Capocchi et al., 2019; Milano et al., 2019). City tourism has increased fast over the last decades, which has led to economic, spatial, social and cultural changes in historic city centres (Ashworth & Page, 2011; Dodds & Butler, 2019; García-Hernández et al., 2017). Residential areas in historic city centres are being replaced with short-term rental accommodations for tourists. This affects the residential quality of the city centre and forces people to relocate to the surrounding areas (Hekwolter et al., 2017). As a result, activities in city centres are changing from permanent to temporary practices. One of the world heritage cities that suffers from tourism pressure is Amsterdam. Swart et al. (2012) evaluated the functional changes in Amsterdam canal district houses from 1958 to 2011, which highlighted a shift from mixed-functional to mono-functional places. Alteration of city centres into mono-functional tourist destinations affects the interaction and perception of inhabitants of the city centre and surrounding areas with the historic public spaces.

Historic public spaces are places for social interactions. The

interaction of people with a place or social practices and activities happening in a specific context shape the lifestyle and the narrative of self-identity (Giddens, 1991; Halbwachs, 1992; Spaargaren, 2003). People create their identities based on their narratives about places in conformity with changes. In fact, narratives are the intangible heritage of the places. They create a unique sense of place (Graham et al., 2009); the lived experience related to everyday life and people's experience of the places (Stewart, 1996). In this interpretation, sense of place is closely related to "place identity" and "place attachment" as in social psychology (Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1974). Based on O'Donnell and Turner (2012), people, their culture and routines are intangible aspects of urban areas that create a unique spirit or sense of place. If changes in the physical environment are not managed in a way that protects social interactions and the sense of place, memories will fade, and a sense of alienation may arise (Wang, 2016). This indicates the importance of historic public space management as a key factor in protecting tangible and intangible aspects of historic public spaces and in creating a city that people feel connected to.

This notion is reflected in the historic urban landscape (HUL)

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approach. HUL considers cities as living heritage by broadening the definition of heritage to include the entire built environment and its tangible and intangible dimensions. (UNESCO, 2011). Therefore, the concept of heritage in this study refers to the places and the narratives of residents from those places which have a specific meaning and value for people. Several international and European conventions, treaties and charters - formal and informal agreements on duties, strategies, and principles for dealing with heritage - aim to protect and manage tangible and intangible urban heritage (Council of Europe, 2005; ICOMOS, 2011; UNESCO, 2003; UNESCO, 2011; UNESCO, 2019). Ideally, these conventions, treaties and charters, from here on referred to as conventions, are translated into national, regional, and local public policy, legislation, regulations, actions and instruments to preserve the continuity of values in cities which are intrinsically dynamic.

However, previous studies on historic public space management have not addressed the relation between the recommended strategies in international heritage conventions and strategies of cultural governance at the local level (Duxbury & Jeannotte, 2013). In heritage governance, the horizontal and multilevel interaction among public and private actors is needed to pursue effective actions in a holistic manner, instead of merely focusing on the conservation and protection of cultural heritage (Barile & Saviano, 2015; Ripp & Rodwell, 2018). Jreisat (2004) argued that both the internal learning process and adapting to international standards are important for a governance system. Governance theories emphasise on “people-oriented, integrated, and decentralized local governance system as well as global-level managing of networks” (Asaduzzaman & Virtanen, 2016, p:10). To develop governance arrangements that effectively contribute to change management in historic city centres, this study aims to identify which municipal strategies effectively manage the changes in historic city centres in a way that protects the sense of place and narratives as addressed in international agreements.

We used the historic city centre of Amsterdam as a case study. Not only does Amsterdam suffer from tourism pressure in its historic city centre, but the municipality plays an important role in heritage management as well. The Netherlands is in the process of introducing a new Environment and Planning Act (Omgevingswet). In this act, municipalities are responsible to a long-term strategic vision for the entire physical living environment including cultural heritage. In anticipation of the Environment and Planning Act, heritage policy has already developed towards a broader and more integrated heritage approach. Although municipalities are not the only players in urban heritage preservation, they are the most important stakeholder. Therefore, Amsterdam has been chosen to examine if municipal strategies are effective to preserve the sense of place in its historic city centre.

2. Methodology

In this study, we used the policy analysis framework (Dunn, 2016; Weimer & Vining, 2017) to determine which public policies and their elaboration in legislation, regulations, actions and instruments will protect sense of place in historic public spaces. We compared public policies at a municipal level, as the main player in public space management, with the objectives of relevant international and European conventions, treaties, and charters. First, we selected documents to assess the policy objectives of the relevant international agreements in terms of problem definition, aims, and target populations. The most recent international and European agreements on living heritage, intangible heritage and urban conservation were selected from three main organisations related to the preservation of historic cities, i.e. UNESCO, Council of Europe and ICOMOS. The selected documents are as follows:

- Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO, 2003);

- Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society/Faro Convention (Council of Europe, 2005);
- Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (UNESCO, 2011);
- Valletta Principles for the Safeguarding and Management of Historic Cities, Towns and Urban Areas (ICOMOS, 2011);
- Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (UNESCO, 2019).

These documents were analysed through the “Von Savigny” analysis method to recognise the intention and the aim. “Von Savigny” method is a juridical analysis of codified law and is used to understand the policy aim and the intention of the legislator. In this study, the “Von Savigny” analysis method was used similar to Hartmann et al. (2018). Briefly, each document was analysed in four areas: literal content, institutional positioning, historical context and teleological meaning. After that, the documents were coded by ATLAS.ti 8 to recognise the highlighted principles.

In the second step of policy analysis, we studied the expected outcome and implication of municipal policies for the historic city centre of Amsterdam. We selected Amsterdam as a case study because the historic city centre of Amsterdam is on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

As explained above, each municipality in the Netherlands is responsible to set up a long-term strategic vision for the entire physical living environment including cultural heritage. It makes the municipality one of the most important players concerning cultural heritage, and thus a relevant stakeholder to study.

To investigate the expected outcome and implication of the policies, we focused on municipal strategies in Amsterdam regarding living heritage and urban conservation. For this reason, nine interviews with experts were conducted. Interviewees were selected through purposive sampling. The interviewees are experts in diverse relevant disciplines such as tourism, urban and regional planning, and cultural heritage. They represent different public and private organisations and academia (Table 1). The questions aimed at the objectives and outcomes of current strategies regarding the management of Amsterdam city centre as a living heritage and the limitations that affect the effectiveness of the current strategies. The interviews were coded and analysed by ATLAS.ti 8.

We compared the policy aims and principles from the analysed international documents with the current strategies and instruments in Amsterdam to manage changes in historic public spaces while preserving the sense of place (Fig. 1). The results of this comparative analysis provide insight to what extent municipal strategies in tourism and heritage management in Amsterdam correspond with the aims and principles of international conventions.

Table 1
The affiliation of interviewees in this study.

Interviewee	Expertise	Organisation
1	Senior policy advisor	Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (RCE)
2	Spatial planning expert and Land use planner	Municipality of Amsterdam (spatial planning department)
3	Architectural historian	Municipality of Amsterdam (spatial planning department)
4	Cultural heritage expert	Municipality of Amsterdam (world heritage department)
5	Historian and intangible heritage expert	Dutch Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage
6	Cultural heritage expert	Heritage organisation (neighbourhood scale)
7	Tourism expert	Private consultancy
8	Urban and regional planning expert	University of Amsterdam
9	Expert in cultural heritage participatory approach	Reinwardt Academy

Adapted from Pourbahador (2020).

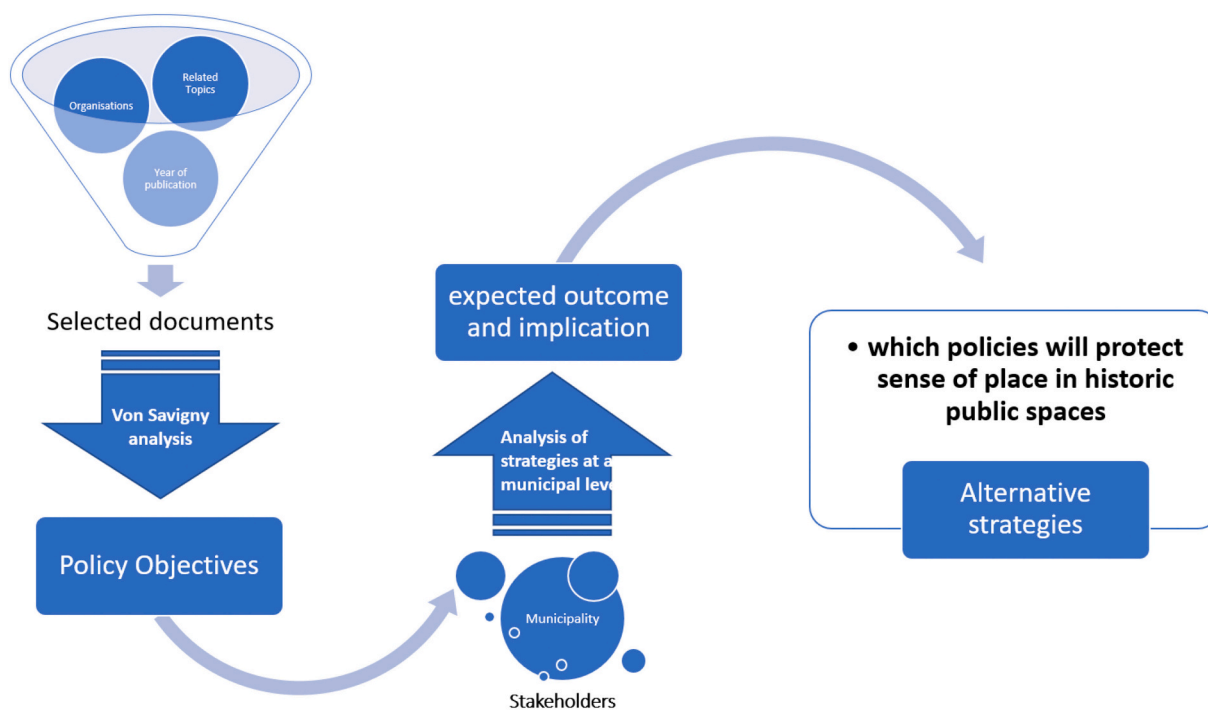


Fig. 1. Policy analysis framework in this research.

3. Results

3.1. International and European conventions: aims and principles

Five main principles emerged from the analysis of the selected documents (Table 2). These principles consider heritage management and the continuity of cultural heritage values in international and European contexts.

3.1.1. Raising awareness

The first principle considers *raising awareness* of society regarding cultural heritage and its values. This includes capacity building, especially among the younger generations and disadvantaged people. Raising awareness is through education, training, information programmes and enhancing public access to cultural heritage.

3.1.2. Encouraging participation

A second principle which has been mentioned in the documents, strongly related to awareness-raising, is participation. According to ICOMOS (2011), residents' participation should be facilitated by giving information and training programmes to raise awareness and encourage conversations. These programmes should target different ages including children of school age. The Council of Europe (2005) considers common heritage as a human right that should be safeguarded through the active involvement of society. It emphasises the importance of the meanings and values that people attach to heritage and their participation in the whole process of cultural heritage management, from identification to conservation, as a shared responsibility. ICOMOS (2011) regards a participatory process for developing an effective management plan for historic areas. In accordance with participatory management, UNESCO (2011, art. IV) introduces "civic engagement tools" which consider facilitating the dialogue between stakeholders with conflicting interests, including the public and private actors. In this way, the stakeholders contribute to the identification of the "key values in their urban areas" and develop action plans.

3.1.3. Sustainable development

The UNESCO (2003) convention considers intangible cultural heritage as a tool to bring people closer to each other by exchanging culture and enhancing their understanding of cultural diversity. The Council of Europe (2005) in addition to promoting cultural, biological and landscape diversity, emphasises the potential that cultural heritage provides to enhance social and economic development. *Cultural diversity, social vitality, economic viability and environmental sustainability* are the elements of sustainable development which have been implied in the documents as the components enhancing the quality of life of residents. Based on ICOMOS (2011), respecting cultural diversity and considering the social and economic integration of historic areas are vital for their safeguarding. It also mentions that "every intervention in historic towns and urban areas must aim to improve the quality of life of the residents and the quality of the environment" (art. 3b).

The taking into consideration of *sustainable development* in heritage management and the mutual consideration of cultural heritage as a resource for sustainable development have been mentioned in all the documents. The HUL recommendation (UNESCO, 2011) considers heritage in the broader urban context including social, cultural, economic and environmental layers, and provides a mechanism for creating a balance between urban growth and quality of life through effective planning and the management of resources. To reach that, it suggests the application of a range of tools such as knowledge and planning tools, regulatory systems, and financial tools. In line with that, ICOMOS (2011, art. 4 h) suggests promoting environmental management and the principles of sustainability in conservation plans.

The UNESCO (2019) guidelines emphasise the provision of economic opportunities for local communities through public and private investment or innovative local entrepreneurship that fosters sustainable development, for example, using local resources, or creative industries that protect associated intangible heritage as well (art. 214bis). The guidelines mention the essential role of national and local regulatory measures in addition to monitoring and impact assessment of economic, social, and environmental changes to make sure the changes do not affect the authenticity and integrity of the world heritage site and to ensure the long-term safeguarding of the outstanding universal values of

Table 2
Policy aims and principles of international and European conventions relevant to the case study.

International conventions on cultural heritage	Institution	Year	Aims	Relevancy to the case study	Common principles of the conventions				
					Raising awareness	Participation	Change management	Sustainable development:	Monitoring
Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage	UNESCO	2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protecting intangible cultural heritage - Respecting cultural diversity - Raising awareness about the importance of intangible cultural heritage 	It is an international treaty on intangible cultural heritage. The Netherlands ratified this convention in 2012.	Raising awareness	Participation	Change management	Sustainable development: cultural diversity, social vitality, economic viability, environmental sustainability	Monitoring
Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Faro Convention)	Council of Europe	2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creating a framework for European countries to cooperate towards a sustainable and peaceful society - Recognising the right of participation in cultural life and having responsibility towards cultural heritage, by encouraging people to participate in heritage governance 	It is a treaty for European countries. It emphasises the social values of cultural heritage. Ratification by the Netherlands is in preparation.					
Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL recommendation)	UNESCO	2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integration of historic urban area conservation and management strategies with local development plans, in a way that urban identity will be maintained - Preserving shared values and enhancing the quality of the human environment and urban life by creating a comprehensive and integrated approach 	Although it is not a formal treaty, this recommendation is an internationally well-known and widely accepted comprehensive and integrated approach towards heritage management, which makes this recommendation significant for this case study.					
Valletta Principles for the Safeguarding and Management of Historic Cities, Towns and Urban Areas	ICOMOS	2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing principles and strategies for protecting the intangible and tangible values of historic towns and their setting - Integrating the values into the social, cultural and economic life of the current time to increase the quality of life of inhabitants 	European Agreement, and thus relevant for the Netherlands and this case study. They are the strategies and principles that the International Council on Monuments and Sites recommended regarding the management of historic cities and urban areas.					
Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention	UNESCO	2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facilitating the implementation of the World Heritage Convention - Facilitating the protection of cultural and natural world heritage sites 	They are the latest Operational Guidelines of the World Heritage Convention and should be considered in the management plan of the world heritage sites such as Amsterdam city centre.					

Adapted from Pourbahador (2020).

the area.

3.1.4. Managing changes

The importance of managing the changes in a sustainable way has been emphasised in almost all documents. The Council of Europe (2005, art.9) recognises “an understanding of the cultural values involved” as a prerequisite for decision-making on changes to ensure sustainable use of cultural heritage. This raises the importance of *monitoring* as another principle.

3.1.5. Monitoring

UNESCO considers monitoring the changes through “heritage, social and environmental impact assessment” (2011, art. IVb). The multidisciplinary approach towards monitoring has also been emphasised by UNESCO (2019) when highlighting the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluating systems for the implemented activities in the world heritage sites. ICOMOS (2011) emphasises the need for a management plan to monitor the changes in urban areas based on a multidisciplinary study. This document (art. 2) considers changes in the social environment of the historic areas, for example, functional changes, in addition to the changes in the natural and built environment (ICOMOS, 2011, art. 2c). In fact, striking a balance in spatial, environmental, social, cultural and economic aspects is one of the criteria by ICOMOS (2011, art. 3e) for intervention in historic areas.

Overall, these five principles, i.e. raising awareness, encouraging participation, sustainable development, managing changes and monitoring, are mentioned unanimously in all the analysed documents and play a critical role in the continuity of cultural heritage values. Therefore, they should be considered in the management of historic public spaces in international and European contexts.

3.2. Current instruments being used in Amsterdam

The analysis of the interviews shed light on the main strategies and instruments regarding the historic city centre of Amsterdam (see Table 3). They can be categorised as preserving cultural heritage, increasing the citizens' commitment to the city and striking a balance between liveability and being a tourist attraction.

3.2.1. Preserving cultural heritage

To protect cultural heritage in the city centre, the municipality of Amsterdam uses regulatory and financial instruments.

3.2.1.1. Regulatory instruments: heritage listings and their implementation in land use plans. The bottom line of the national Heritage Act in the Netherlands is the conventions of Granada on architecture, Valletta on archaeology, and Florence on landscape. The definition of heritage has broadened over recent years into heritage as living and fluid with multidisciplinary aspects (ICOMOS, 2011; UNESCO, 2011). The conventions mentioned, which are the bottom line of the Heritage Act in the Netherlands, give a solid definition of heritage, mostly related to the physical aspects of heritage. Although the Heritage Act and municipal policies do not explicitly and in detail refer to the selected conventions in this study, it is the case in other documents such as “HUL in Holland” (Albers et al., 2018). This document discusses the implementation of the Historic Urban Landscape approach in Dutch World Heritage sites.

Based on the Heritage Act, the Netherlands has a list of national monuments to ensure the preservation of the built heritage and historic townscapes. Furthermore, provinces and municipalities have jurisdiction to list provincial and municipal monuments. In addition to national policies and regulations, the 17th-century canal ring area of Amsterdam was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2010. World Heritage listing is a specific instrument that protects the structure of historic areas

Table 3

Current strategies, instruments and their restrictions regarding Amsterdam city centre tourism and heritage management, based on interviews.

Strategies with influence on the sense of place	Instruments currently used to implement the strategies	Restrictions in the implementation of strategies
- Preserving cultural heritage	- Listing as national and world heritage - Subsidies for restoration and renovation	- Fragmented view regarding heritage - Not giving priority to heritage, especially intangible heritage, as a part of the living city
- Increase citizens' commitment towards the city	- Establishing Cultural organisations to strengthen local identity - Communication and participation	- Not representing all the diverse voices in the neighbourhood - Still is in initial phase/ symbolic efforts - Unclear definition and purposes - High level of uncertainties
- Controlling the number of tourists	- Legislation	- Over-regulation
- Striking a balance between liveability and being a tourist attraction	- Land use plan - Tax - Avoiding tourism promotion	- Lack of enforcement - Lack of flexibility - Over-regulation - Lack of communication - Dissatisfaction - Lack of collaboration/ Fragmented view - Sense of denial

Adapted from Pourbahador (2020).

by defining the boundaries of the buffer zone and core zone. A new Environment and Planning Act (Omgevingswet) is to be implemented in the Netherlands and the Heritage Act will be integrated into that. The heritage conventions, which have been mentioned as the bottom line of the heritage regulations in the Environment and Planning Act, regarded the physical aspects of heritage. However, in the explanation of one of the executive orders of the Environment and Planning Act, there is a hint to the possibility of integrating intangible heritage into the local policy at a municipal level. Based on the new Environment and Planning Act, each municipality in the Netherlands is responsible for considering and protecting cultural heritage and outstanding universal values in their territories and makes an Environmental Plan (Omgevingsplan), replacing the current land use plan. Both are important instruments to protect the structure of the inner city and include measures to protect and preserve valuable buildings for instance. The senior policy advisor at RCE indicated that municipalities must list the cultural heritage, analyse and value them (interviewee 1, personal communication, December 12, 2019).

3.2.1.2. Financial instruments: subsidies. Financial instruments such as subsidies are used in the Netherlands to encourage the preservation of historic buildings. The senior policy advisor at RCE mentioned that the “owners of the state list monuments can receive a subsidy from the national restoration fund for instance as a mortgage to renovate and maintain their houses as monuments” (interviewee 1, personal communication, December 12, 2019). Protection of the physical aspects of the city is a prerequisite to maintaining the intangible heritage and the sense of place. As mentioned in UNESCO (2003), intangible heritage is deeply connected to and interdependent on the context and its tangible aspects. However, preserving the tangible elements does not guarantee the protection of related intangible aspects. For example,

buildings are preserved in historic city centres while their functions change from residential areas to tourism-related services. While buildings as tangible heritage are preserved, the social practices of local citizens in public spaces as intangible heritage vanish.

3.2.2. Increase the citizens' commitment towards the city

The cultural heritage agency of the Netherlands in cooperation with heritage organisations has formed working groups to investigate the implementation of the Faro convention to use the social benefits of cultural heritage and facilitate heritage participatory management. Amsterdam is making some initial attempts to use heritage as a tool to bring people together and create an opportunity to start a conversation. This increases the attachment of people to the place and encourages people to protect the heritage values.

3.2.2.1. Cultural organisations to strengthen local identities. One of the initial attempts is establishing museums or cultural organisations in the heart of neighbourhoods, as a tool to promote participatory collecting methods and provide an archive for the neighbourhood by the local people. This kind of organisation will have an effective role in the commitment of the residents to the neighbourhood and strengthening the local identity if the organisation encourages and includes various voices from the neighbourhood to participate in decision making and shaping the heritage of their city.

According to a heritage expert “heritage can be a practice, an object or even a sound”. She highlighted that “heritage is dynamic and reproduced constantly. People do this process together by continuously evaluating the heritage. So, people make heritage based on their connection to it”. She pointed out that the way heritage has been defined and illustrated in museums does not work properly and “it should turn around and ask the audience what the significance is for them” (interviewee 6, personal communication, February 11, 2020). UNESCO (2011) and Bandarin and Van Oers (2012) also emphasised the dynamic character of cultural heritage. According to Van Zanten (2004), a culture continues when people enjoy recreating it. Therefore, a participatory approach is critical in heritage management.

3.2.2.2. Communication and participation. Participating in the decision-making process will increase the attachment and sense of belonging of the residents to the place. It commits people to their neighbourhood and the city they live in. In Amsterdam, there is a growing intention to use participatory tools at the municipal level. However, it is in its initial steps and is limited to giving a voice to the people. For example, Amsterdam municipality has recently changed its approach in the project 1012. Project 1012 is related to the interventions in the Red-Light District as the most historic area of Amsterdam, to fight criminal activities and upgrade the area socio-economically. According to a representative of Amsterdam municipality, the approach of the municipality in this project has recently shifted from using regulatory instruments towards organising discussion groups with residents and business owners and workers in this area, to hear different perspectives. The reason is that the regulatory instruments have not been effective enough to reach the desired outcome (interviewee 4, personal communication, January 22, 2020).

According to an expert in participatory heritage approach, people's reserve to change is an obstacle for implementing a participatory approach. “People have tendencies toward the old and familiar arrangements. So, it is hard for people to accept new concepts and new social arrangements, which is also the case for heritage professionals” (interviewee 9, personal communication, February 12, 2020). The interviewed tourism expert also recognised the problem of resistance to change among people as the main restriction to implementing the participatory approach (interviewee 7, personal communication, January 13, 2020). It shows the need for more communication about the participatory approach.

Despite the lack of communication and participation among experts, there is a high political interest in participatory processes to engage citizens. However, the feasibility of participation in the city and provincial levels was questioned by the interviewed heritage expert. He doubts the willingness of the administration and bureaucracy system. Moreover, legislations have a top-down character, causing a paradox in promoting the participation approach which is inherently bottom-up (interviewee 9, personal communication, February 12, 2020). What is more, participatory practices cannot be forced.

3.2.3. Strike a balance between liveability and being a tourist attraction

As mentioned before, over-tourism is one of the main issues with which historic areas are dealing. In the recent decade, the municipality of Amsterdam has altered its strategy, from increasing to controlling the number of tourists in the city centre. The reason is to increase the liveability and quality of life of citizens in the city centre and to find a balance between being liveable and being a tourist attraction. To steer and develop this strategy, specific instruments such as legislation, land use plan, tax and avoiding tourism promotion are being used.

3.2.3.1. Regulatory instruments. Amsterdam municipality has imposed regulations to control the growing number of tourists. One of them is the hotel ban in the city centre which caused an increase in the number of Airbnb facilities. According to Voytenko Palgan et al. (2021), Amsterdam was the first European city that negotiated with Airbnb to limit the maximum days of rental to control tourism growth and the housing crisis. In 2019, a new regulation has been established that prevents people from establishing bed and breakfast accommodations unless they have an official permit from the municipality. Therefore, the house owner must pay tourist taxes and accept regulations such as ensuring the residence of the owner in the same property and limiting the number of guests to four with a maximum stay of 30 days. However, the municipality does not have full control over the rules of Airbnb, as it is an information platform.

The interviewee indicated that “basically, Airbnb is an interesting idea, however its deviation from the original idea and the growing number of tourists has had destructive effects on the area”. He emphasised the ownership of rental houses by key companies as the main problem causing deviation from the original idea: “Airbnb initially aimed at spending time with locals and getting to know their culture. However, now it is mainly a business with economic benefits instead of experiences” (interviewee 2, personal communication, February 6, 2020).

At the municipal level, instruments such as land use plans (Bestemmingsplan) can be used to prevent companies from buying houses in the city centre and exploiting them commercially. However, promoting mixed-use functions, increasing the diversity of stores and preventing their transformation into souvenir shops, require rules and regulations in addition to the land use plan. To prevent monofunctional uses, the municipality of Amsterdam no longer allows certain functions to start a business in the city centre anymore. Nevertheless, the representative of the municipality of Amsterdam mentioned neighbourhood needs motivation in addition to land use plans and regulations to promote functional diversity (interviewee 2, personal communication, February 6, 2020). Moreover, the municipality has developed programmes such as “City in Balance” to regulate tourism and crowds in the city centre of Amsterdam by imposing fines aiming to increase the quality of life and to decrease nuisance behaviour.

3.2.3.2. Financial instruments: tax. The municipality of Amsterdam uses financial instruments to discourage tourists from travelling to specific areas, such as a tourist tax to increase travelling costs and reduce the number of tourists. In addition to tourist tax based on the hotel beds, there is a tourist tax per passenger per day for cruise ships. Therefore, cruise companies prefer to anchor in Rotterdam harbour instead of

Amsterdam. However, it has minimally affected the number of tourists visiting Amsterdam. The close travelling distances within the Netherlands could explain this limited effect. As mentioned in the interview with the representative of the municipality of Amsterdam, tourists take daily tours to visit Amsterdam from Rotterdam while spending the night on cruise ships (interviewee 4, personal communication, January 22, 2020).

3.2.3.3. *Not promoting the city as a tourist destination.* To control the number of tourists, the Amsterdam tourism board has stopped promoting Amsterdam as a tourist destination and handing out flyers. However, the interviewee involved in the tourism industry mentioned a lack of collaboration and consensus on recognising the necessity to decrease tourists in Amsterdam (interviewee 7, personal communication, January 13, 2020).

A comparative analysis of the aims and principles of the conventions and the actual strategies and instruments in the historic city centre of Amsterdam showed some clear differences. In the next part we discuss three themes that emerged from the comparison.

4. Discussion

The review of international conventions and heritage literature showed that raising awareness, encouraging participation, comprehensive sustainable development, managing changes and monitoring are important, shared principles to effectively manage the changes in historic city centres in a way that protects the sense of place and narratives. Some differences emerged from the comparative analyse of these principles and the actual practices in Amsterdam: a soft versus a hard approach, bottom-up versus top-down management, and a comprehensive versus a fragmented view. In Table 4, the current approach of Amsterdam regarding the historic city centre is compared with the recommended approach of international and European conventions.

4.1. Soft versus hard approach

In spatial planning literature two approaches, soft and hard, are discussed (Kaczmarek, 2018). According to Kaczmarek (2018) the hard approach is characterised as formal, statutory, normative and regulatory, while the soft approach has informal, non-statutory, conceptual and non-hierarchical features. The research showed that the municipality of Amsterdam primarily manages the historic city centre by hard instruments such as regulations, land use plans and taxes. Therefore, the focus is on formal interventions. The interviews showed that the municipality mainly uses rules and fines as instruments to reduce nuisance and control the crowds in the historic centre of Amsterdam. An urban and regional planning expert mentioned that “all the campaigns in the city centre are about forbidding. Regulations will not solve the real problems because over-regulation makes people trickier and more inventive, especially entrepreneurs, but also tourists” (interviewee 8,

Table 4
Comparison between recommended principles and current municipal strategies regarding the city centre of Amsterdam (Pourbahador, 2020).

International recommendations		Current municipality strategies	
Using soft instruments	Education Raising awareness Participation in the decision making and protection process	Using hard instruments	Regulations Land use plan Participation as having a voice
Multidisciplinary approach towards heritage	Fragmented approach towards heritage		
Monitoring system as a part of the change management plan	Insufficient people to monitor the implementation of regulations		
Integrating international conventions into law	Just a few conventions have been integrated		

personal communication, January 24, 2020). In contrast to the strategy of Amsterdam, international and European conventions (Council of Europe, 2005; ICOMOS, 2011; UNESCO, 2003; UNESCO, 2011; UNESCO, 2019) recommend soft instruments, in particular awareness-raising and capacity building. The conventions and recommendations focus on educational programmes and activities for the young generation. Furthermore, the documents highlight the importance of giving information and raising the awareness of the general public about tangible and intangible heritage values at the local level.

Enforcement of regulations is challenging in complex urban areas (Leshinsky & Schatz, 2018; Surjan et al., 2016). The representatives of the Amsterdam municipality stated in the interview that there is a lack of budget, capacity and practical knowledge for inspecting and enforcing the regulations (interviewees 2, 3 and 4, personal communication, February 6 and January 22, 2020). Moreover, over-regulation could threaten the effectiveness of public space management. Lange (2002) highlights the effect of regulations on emotions. In general, preventive policies and regulations such as paying taxes or prohibiting certain activities and functions are less effective than encouraging policies such as giving subsidies, decreasing taxes, or encouraging people to participate. According to Murphy (2008), the feeling of satisfaction motivates people to comply with the rules, while a feeling of resentment results in feeling disrespected. Regulations will be more effective if they are accompanied by raising awareness and participation. The regulations regarding Amsterdam city centre are preventive and mainly target tourists. Therefore, they do not have a long-term effect on the area.

4.2. Bottom-up versus top-down management

In Amsterdam, heritage management is more top-down through laws and regulations. However, the interviewees (interviewees 4 and 6, personal communication, January 22 and February 6, 2020) indicated that there is a tendency for participatory heritage management. As explained earlier, in the 1012 project, the municipality has recently changed their approach to listening to different voices. Another example is the establishment of participatory museums in the neighbourhoods.

Community-based conservation is the most successful approach to protect historic areas (Pereira Roders, 2013, p 40). Accordingly, participation has been emphasised in conventions and recommendations as an instrument for the successful protection of historic areas (ICOMOS, 2011) or, more importantly, as a societal right to participate in defining heritage values and in the heritage management process (Council of Europe, 2005). UNESCO (2019) as a guideline for world heritage sites, highlights the need for a participatory management system in world heritage sites to enhance local participation in heritage protection. Considering the historic city centre of Amsterdam as a world heritage site, the change in the approach of the municipality is in line with the recommendations. However, it is in the preliminary step towards effective participation. Moreover, the Faro convention (Council of Europe, 2005) is in the ratification process by the Netherlands. The Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (RCE) is now working on how projects about heritage can involve participatory processes. It contributes towards a bottom-up soft approach in historic public space management in the future.

While rapid transformation in cities creates a sense of loss and detachment in citizens, involving them individually and collectively in the redevelopment process of their neighbourhood results in their feeling of re-identification with the place and enhances the collective sense of place (Erfani, 2020). Participation is a strong effective instrument that municipalities can use in the change management of historic areas. However, participation can turn into a destructive instrument, unless the purpose of the participation is clearly defined, and the process becomes transparent and open to diverse voices. Hartmann et al. (2018) mention that unclear definitions and purposes of participation and consequently the unspecific role of citizens in the process, downgrade the participation to a symbolic effort. Vague and ambiguous

participation confuses the participants and causes distrust and a feeling of being manipulated. If people feel they are manipulated, it is difficult to regain their trust. Defining the purpose of participation and enabling people and stakeholders with different voices to participate in decision-making and management processes facilitate the effectiveness of participation as an instrument.

As mentioned in the conventions and recommendations, participation in the first step requires awareness-raising through education and training, giving information and communication. Communication efforts through informing and consulting citizens are symbolic efforts that can be initial steps towards legitimising full citizen participation. Based on [Edelenbos and Klijn \(2006\)](#) the highest depth of participation is *co-deciding*, in which authorities only facilitate the process and leave the decision-making to participants. [Edelenbos and Klijn \(2006\)](#) evaluated six cases of interactive processes in the Netherlands. Their results showed that a good outcome of participation is related to good process management. Accordingly, [White \(1996\)](#) highlights that full participation occurs when citizens have the power to negotiate, decide and become involved in managerial aspects, which is possible through empowering the citizens. To reach full participation in historic areas, citizens should define the values of their living space and values that create the sense of place. Citizens should also participate in the implementation process of protection and change management of public spaces. Effective participation requires the diversity of voices of citizens and stakeholders with different rationalities and ideas. Various factors such as economic benefits affect the decisions. Effective participation requires listening and mutual understanding to decide together in terms of plurality and diversity. Participation is not a debate and the aim is not to convince others. Instead, it is about creating something together. In this way, participation creates a sense of inclusion in society, along with motivation and satisfaction.

4.3. Comprehensive versus fragmented view

Although the Netherlands is progressive in the protection of cultural landscapes and creating a balance between conservation and development, like the Belvedere policy ([Feddes, 1999](#)), there is a fragmented view towards heritage. Inside the organisations, heritage is divided across several disciplines. Moreover, a lack of interdisciplinary projects is seen. Based on the interviews (interviewees 1 and 4, personal communication, December 12 and January 22, 2020), beyond the topic of heritage, there is a lack of collaboration among different departments of Amsterdam municipality, since, in most cases, projects are assigned to one single department. The lack of interdisciplinary communication and collaboration could deviate the outcome from the objectives in projects.

In policymaking, a lack of a holistic view towards heritage might produce unwanted results. For instance, the focus of policies on the physical aspects of heritage might result in unwanted changes in activities and the social and cultural life of the area. Restoration is a necessity to protect the sense of place, yet without considering the socio-economic effect of changes and the intangible aspects of the place, it does not provide the desired outcome. To protect the sense of place, both tangible and intangible aspects should be maintained. A comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach towards urban areas is also highlighted in the conventions and recommendations, especially when it concerns urban heritage protection. To make sustainable changes in urban areas multidisciplinary perspective is needed ([Campbell, 2013](#); [Gargiulo et al., 2017](#); [Jabareen, 2011](#)).

The Planner's Triangle ([Campbell, 2013](#)) proposes considering social justice, economic development and environmental protection as three corners of the sustainability triangle. Considering social, economic, environmental and cultural dimensions simultaneously, although it is not easy, it helps to achieve a better outcome. According to [UNESCO \(2011\)](#), settlements have been made through the interaction of humans with their environment. Urban heritage reflects the socio-economic and cultural landscapes, and the way settlements have adapted to

environmental changes throughout history. Therefore, urban heritage is a resource for sustainable development. [UNESCO \(2011\)](#) emphasises the adaptation of policies based on this multidisciplinary definition of heritage.

Creating balance in the historic centre of Amsterdam requires a multidisciplinary approach that considers different layers of the city. For example, it is necessary to consider the effects of over-tourism on the economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects of the city and vice versa. Assessing the impacts requires a monitoring system. An intervention in each of these layers affects the other layers as well. Monitoring is an effective instrument to manage the changes and balance the situation.

Although cultural heritage in the Dutch policies and inside the organisations is divided into different disciplines, the new Environment and Planning Act (*Omgevingswet*) considers a multidisciplinary approach and includes different areas in one policy act. The Environment and Planning Act obliges municipalities to consider other forms of heritage that might be valuable to the community. A comprehensive approach towards heritage that considers intangible aspects as an inseparable part of the city provides benefits in line with the municipalities' desire to make cities liveable and cohesive with a vital economy.

5. Conclusion

To answer which municipal strategies can effectively protect the sense of place in historic public spaces, the current strategies regarding the historic city centre of Amsterdam were compared to the guidelines of international and European conventions and recommendations. The results showed that international conventions and recommendations consider a soft, participatory, multidisciplinary approach towards urban heritage management, which is mainly based on instruments such as raising awareness, participation and impact assessment while the municipal strategies regarding the historic city centre of Amsterdam are not multidisciplinary, mostly hard instruments such as regulations and fines with a recent tendency towards a participatory approach which is in the initial steps.

To protect the sense of place, a holistic approach towards public space management is needed which considers the different layers of urban heritage such as social, economic, cultural and environmental simultaneously. In addition, a monitoring system is needed to assess the impact of interventions on different layers. Protecting the sense of place and urban memories is an important feature that keeps people connected to the city and creates a sense of belonging and commitment.

Raising awareness and enhancing citizens' participation are other soft instruments to protect the sense of place in historic public spaces. Raising awareness about heritage values among younger generations and involving them in heritage management will build more capacity in society and will create a future for intangible urban heritage. Therefore, programmes that encourage youngsters and teenagers to become involved in heritage management in historic city centres would be useful to protect the sense of place and restore the connection between people and places. Citizens' participation in the decision-making process and the implementation phase is another soft instrument that can increase commitment and a sense of belonging to the place. However, addressing the diversity of voices and maintaining aims and processes transparent are necessary to gain the trust of people. Raising awareness before participation and applying a monitoring system during the process to provide equal power for all stakeholders can make participation more effective.

The outcomes of this study are based on the historic city centre of Amsterdam. Although Dutch planning has shifted from a strong top-down approach towards a bottom-up approach, the sense of control still can be seen in policies and the way of thinking. Therefore, further research is suggested on other cases in countries with different planning systems. Furthermore, municipalities have been considered as the main stakeholder in this research since they are important players in public

space management in the Netherlands. Nevertheless, there are other important stakeholders for public space management in other historic cities that could be considered in future research.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Poupak Pourbahador: Conceptualization, Methodology, Validation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Marlies Brinkhuijsen:** Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Supervision.

Declaration of competing interest

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Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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