Knowledge is Power: Monitoring the World Heritage site of Amsterdam, a policy analysis

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Abstract

World Heritage Cities, like other cities, need to be able to evolve to meet the needs of their current and future citizens. This requires both socio-economic and urban development. The challenge lies in finding a balance between this need for development and the need to safeguard the cultural significance of urban heritage.

The recently adopted UNESCO recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) aims to assist in finding this balance between development and conservation by providing guidance in the implementation of a so-called landscape-based approach. This comprehensive approach consists of six steps (A-F), this paper reflects on an investigation into the workings of the first step, ‘mapping the cities natural, cultural and human resources’, by looking at the World Heritage City of Amsterdam as a case study.

Making use of, and as such testing, a recently developed framework based on the HUL and the evolution of global heritage policies leading to HUL, the current state of spatial and heritage policy in Amsterdam will be assessed, uncovering the possible gaps in resource mapping as recommended by HUL. This will add to the discussion whether or not the current policies in Amsterdam are accurate and detailed enough to manage their World Heritage Site, by the standards of the HUL. It will show to what degree Amsterdam’s heritage policies comply with the HUL. It is revealed that Amsterdam maps both tangible and intangible resources, without distinguishing resources of cultural significance and factors that affect the property. Resources are mapped reactively on a need-base. The tangible resources are predominantly mapped on the level of the object, while the intangible resources are exclusively oriented towards functionality and society.

1. Introduction

Current theories about cultural heritage management define heritage management as ‘managing thoughtful change’ and recommend a landscape-based approach towards heritage management [Fairclough et al., 2008; Bloemers et al., 2011; Bandarin and Van Oers, 2012]. Over the past decades the definition of heritage management has been evolving from an object-based approach towards a more holistic approach that includes notions such as the intangible, setting and context, and urban- and sustainable development. These notions are accompanied by a greater consideration for the social and economic function of (historic) cities; this approach is known as a landscape-based approach. The recent UNESCO (2011) recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) provides guidance on such a landscape-based approach at international level [Figure 1, right]. Yet, it is up to the national and local governments to adapt, disseminate, facilitate and monitor its implementation [Figure 1, left]. Implementing a landscape-based approach, such as HUL, is not an easy task [Getty, 2010, Veldpaus et al., 2013]. The research presented, intends to assist in such an implementation, taking the HUL as a starting point. To
understand how to adapt the general guidelines of the HUL for local use and vice versa, an assessment framework for current policy has been developed [Veldpaus and Pereira Roders, 2013]. The aim of this paper is bi-fold. First, it aims to test the first part, called ‘mapping resources’, of the HUL Assessment Framework. Second, this research aims to uncover to what degree the World Heritage City of Amsterdam, inscribed onto the World Heritage List in 2010, complies with the guidelines of the HUL in terms of mapping resources.

Recent research [Van den Berg and Bruin, 2013] identifying Amsterdam’s attributes of cultural significance, has shown that these attributes populate all parameters of the HUL Assessment Framework [Table 1 and Table 2], thus corroborating the relevance of these parameters and strengthening the hypothesis that in order to protect Amsterdam’s cultural significance, all parameters should be represented in the local policy documents.

2. Methodology
This research focuses both on the analysis of heritage policy and urban development policy. The heritage policy document the “Memorandum on the Beauty of Amsterdam” (City of Amsterdam, 2013b), includes a comprehensive overview of Amsterdam’s urban policy framework. This overview formed the base for the decision to focus on the Memorandum itself and on urban development policy applicable to the UNESCO site as formulated in the Zoning Plans (City of Amsterdam 2012 and 2013a). Further, a document called “Factsheet 2012” (Central Borough of Amsterdam, 2013), which is used as a setup for the Periodic Reporting to UNESCO (Knol, 2013; de Boer, 2013) is assessed, as it shows which resources the local authorities find of relevance. The documents are assessed by applying the first step of the “WHAT” part of the HUL Assessment Framework by Veldpaus and Pereira Roders (2013), which assesses the definition of heritage for both tangible and intangible attributes as used in local policy. The HUL Assessment Framework builds upon the Leopold-matrix method [Leopold et al., 1971], a proven method to relate (project) activities to (environmental) parameters [Thompson, 1990; Zhiganget al., 2012]. The activities are the six steps of the HUL approach, A through
F (UNESCO, 2011). The parameters are defined by research on the evolution of the definition of heritage in international standard-setting documents and are assessed per step using the provided assessment scale [Table 3]. This research assessed both the intangible [Table 1] and tangible [Table 2] components of step A: ‘mapping resources’, of the Framework. The documents are subject to text analysis, any reference to the mapping of resources is singled out and grouped according to the parameters of the HUL Assessment Framework. The term activity is used to refer to the action ‘mapping of resources’. Each parameter is evaluated using a scale, showing the ‘range of application’ of the HUL, varying from the lowest ‘0: no never’ to the highest ‘5: yes, always for everything’ [Table 3]. In an ideal situation, according to the HUL approach, all parameters should receive the highest rating. The range is based on the number of times (once or multiple times) a certain activity within a specific parameter, is mapped, as well as, the amount of activities (one or multiple activities) that are mapped, as shown in Table 3. As such the framework will reveal if a certain activity is done as a pilot (rating 1 or 2) or in a more struc-
tural manner (rating 3 or higher). In this case, “yes, always for everything”, is almost impossible to reach, as there is almost always more that can be mapped. Mapping an ‘activity’ is seen as the locating of a resource inside the property. The parameters receive a rating per assessed document as well as a cumulative rating, in which the activities of all documents are compiled and assessed again.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>no never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>yes once for one project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>yes once for multiple projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>yes multiple times for one project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>yes multiple times for multiple projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>yes always for everything</td>
</tr>
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Table 3 Range of HUL incorporation - assessment scale (Veldpaus and Pereira Roders, 2013)

Due to their extensive size, the zoning plans were analyzed by means of an interview with a local management stakeholder, instead of using the text analysis; the method used for analyzing the other documents.

3. Results
3.1. Relevant policy documents
The urban development policy analyzed is the Zoning Plan. There are two complementary Zoning Plans applicable to the UNESCO property ‘Seventeenth-century canal ring area of Amsterdam inside the Singelgracht’, namely the ‘Zoning Plan of the Western Inner City’ [City of Amsterdam, 2013a] and ‘The Zoning Plan of the Southern Inner City’ [City of Amsterdam, 2012]. The zoning plans include a textual description of the area in terms of its existing value and an explanation of its historic development. The urban planners are responsible for the correct implementation and the decennial renewal of the zoning plans.

The heritage policy document subject to this research is the “Memorandum on the Beauty of Amsterdam”. It includes regulations about the appearance of buildings [City of Amsterdam, 2013b, p14]. The Memorandum describes the aesthetic requirements for all building plans and renovation plans in Amsterdam, including those for the World Heritage property. It contains a specific section on the protection of the ‘Inner City’ conservation area, which consists of the entire central borough and includes the UNESCO property and buffer-zone.

A third document analyzed is the “Factsheet 2012” [Central Borough of Amsterdam, 2013], which is a document used as a setup for the 6-year Periodic Reporting to UNESCO. The document contains a specific selection of data from the Inner City Trend Report, a report that is published every few years and that presents statistical data grouped per theme [Knol, 2013; de Boer Kommers, 2013].
3.2. HUL Assessment Framework

Figure 2 shows that the selected documents mention the mapping of resources in 7 out of the 21 parameters of the HUL Assessment Framework; 4 tangible and 2 intangible parameters are represented. The intangible parameters both have a rating of ‘4’. From the tangible parameters, two have a rating ‘3’ and three have a rating of ‘1’. The other 15 parameters of the HUL Assessment Framework are not represented in the assessed policy documents. The “Factsheet 2012” [Central Borough of Amsterdam, 2013] documents information about 49 resources, the majority (88%) of which are intangible resources. Looking at the intangible resources, the “Factsheet 2012” documents information in the component of ‘use, functions’ (56% of the intangible resources) and ‘people or community’ (44%). The other 8 parameters within intangible resources are not represented. The Memorandum [City of Amsterdam, 2013b] describes the practice of data collection on two levels, namely that of the building and that of the urban element, both of which are tangible resources (100%). The zoning plans (Klarenbeek, 2013) document information about 3 resources, namely 2 tangible (67%) and 1 intangible resource (33%).

Within the range of intangible resources, both ‘use, function’ and ‘people or community’, have a cumulative score of ‘4’. The “Factsheet 2012”, for example, lists the number of houses in the core zone, the buffer zone and the central borough and compares data of 2011 and 2012. The document mentions several other function related data in a similar way; it therefore receives a ‘4’ rating on the ‘use, function’ parameter. The zoning plans map the ground floor function other than housing of each building, a map that is renewed each year.
time the zoning plans are updated. It also maps low-grade functions such as massage parlours and mini supermarkets, in order to monitor its development over time. It therefore receives a ‘4’ rating (multiple activities, multiple times). The cumulative rating of the ‘use, functions’ parameter is therefore ‘4’, as in total, multiple activities are mapped multiple times. The “Factsheet 2012” further gives information about housing (density, number of houses and house boats, average size, ownership), workforce (types of establishments, main function workforce, number of shops per 1000 inhabitants), hotels (number of hotels, rooms and beds), schools (primary and secondary), cultural services and parking pressure. The ‘people or community’ parameter is only represented in the “Factsheet 2012”, which gives information about basic demographics (population density, number of inhabitants, population growth, gender, age, income per household, employment rate), tenant turnover rate, number of hotel guests, number of employees and various community opinions (e.g. inhabitant satisfaction with neighbourhood, maintenance, cleanliness, the ‘quality of life index’, UNESCO awareness among population, UNESCO popularity among tourists and opinion of inhabitants and entrepreneurs about UNESCO). This parameter too, is given a score of ‘4’, as it documents multiple activities, and compares data of several different time periods.

Within the range of tangible parameters, resources are mapped on the level of the ‘building’, the ‘urban element’, the ‘selection of cultural attributes’ and ‘layers’. On the level of the ‘building’, the Memorandum and the zoning plans refer to the monumental classification of all buildings built prior to 1970, which is recorded in a map. The map was first made in 1998 and has been updated regularly since. The “Factsheet 2012”, lists the number of governmental and municipal monuments for one moment in time, namely 2013. All documents refer to the quality assessment, which is mandatory for buildings of the highest monumental classification. The quality monitor assesses the structural condition and the appearance of individual buildings and is carried out each time a building undergoes change. However, the only data presented of the outcome of the quality monitor is in the “Factsheet 2012”, listing how many buildings are in good condition, in mediocre condition or in poor condition. The document compares the numbers of the core and the buffer zone for one moment in time (2012), but data of individual buildings is not presented in the assessed documents. The ‘building’ parameter therefore receives a cumulative score of ‘3’, because only one activity is mapped several moments in time, namely the monumental classification. In the parameter ‘urban elements’, the “Factsheet 2012” lists the total number of trees and monumental trees located in public and semi-public space for one moment in time, namely 2010. The Memorandum requires the assessment and categorization of all bridges into monumental orders, identical to the monumental orders of buildings. This parameter therefore received a cumulative score of ‘2’. For the parameter ‘selection of cultural attributes’, the “Factsheet 2012” shows a map of 2012 with the location of building blocks that include a ‘keurtuin’; a historic, ornamental garden located on the inside of building blocks. ‘Building block with garden’ is seen as one activity, and the map only represents one moment in time, namely 2012, thus resulting in a score of ‘1’. In the parameter of ‘layers’, the zoning
plans incorporate a map showing the archaeological layer of the city, indicating areas in which archaeological findings are likely to occur. Whenever construction of buildings requires groundwork, and the construction site is located in an area with a high probability of archaeological findings, the groundwork has to be overseen by an archaeologist from the municipality.

4. Discussion and Conclusions
After applying the HUL Assessment Framework, it can be concluded that Amsterdam maps both tangible and intangible resources, without distinguishing resources of cultural significance and factors that affect the property. Resources are mapped reactively on a need-base. The tangible resources are predominantly mapped on the level of the object, while the intangible resources are exclusively oriented towards functionality and society. During this research, it was recognized that there is a difference between the mentioning of resources (in a general text); the mapping of resources, which locates resources inside the property (in a map or a table); and the monitoring of resources, in which data is analyzed and compared over time. Only the last two were subject to the HUL Assessment Framework analysis. This research only looked at the data presented in the assessed documents. It therefore does not take into account the data gathered per building by the Quality Monitor. Also, this research only looked at step A of the HUL. An assessment of the further steps of the HUL Assessment Framework would likely reveal other types of protection and show a more inclusive image of Amsterdam’s heritage management. This is therefore recommended for future research.

During the interview with Klarenbeek (2013) it became clear that urban planning policies also protect certain attributes by preventing specific changes. For example, the renovation of building entrances in the conservation area may not change or impair the current type of building entrance, thus protecting the building entrance as an attribute of cultural significance. The interview also demonstrated that Amsterdam has a very liberal urban policy: in principle, all changes are allowed, unless stated otherwise. As the zoning plans were assessed by interview only, it is possible that the plans include more data than the data presented in this paper. Klarenbeek also confirmed that data of previous zoning plans is not compared to the current one; they do not have sufficient resources to look at trends and possible developments. It cannot be ruled out that this knowledge is not available in one form or another as the urban planners have suspicions and ideas about what is going on inside the property based on their professional experience. When it is suspected that problematic developments are occurring, an investigation is ordered if the financial resources can be made available; research is carried out on a need-base and generally does not take into account the development (in recent history), but assesses the current situation [de Boer-Kommers, 2013].

Most mapped resources found by applying the HUL Assessment Framework are listed in the document that is used as a setup for Periodic Reporting to UNESCO, namely the “Factsheet 2012”. The vast majority of the mapped resources in this document are intangible.

During this research it was recognized that the data collection in Amsterdam,
as mentioned in the assessed documents, takes on the level of the individual building (mapping of functions on the ground floor, Quality Monitor per building), and on the level of the larger urban district (statistics presented in the “Factsheet 2012”). What happens on the level of the street and building blocks or groups of building blocks, remains unclear. The data to carry out this type of research appears to be available; therefor there is reason to believe that there is a lack of analysis, rather than a lack of data in the monitoring of Amsterdam’s attributes of cultural significance. Future research could assess which data is collected during the Quality Monitor, and which data is collected for the Inner City Trend Reports. Also, future research could explore the possibilities for large-scale data analysis, perhaps by connecting to current research projects such as Open Source City [The Cloud Collective, 2013] and Amsterdam Open Data [Amsterdam Economic Board, 2013].

References
Klarenbeek, I., 2013, Urban planner at the Central Borough of Amsterdam, Interview on May 27, 2013.