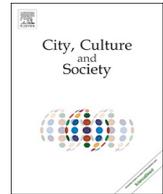




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Historic urban landscapes on social media: The contributions of online narrative practices to urban heritage conservation

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ABSTRACT

In this study, I address the call in UNESCO's Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape to explore how communication technologies can be used to conserve urban heritage. To date, the relevance of social media for the implementation of this recommendation has received little attention. This is surprising, because city oriented social media platforms contain a wide range of memories, historic audiovisual material and stories related to the urban past. This article presents a qualitative content analysis of the social media activities and policy documents of 19 Dutch heritage projects and organisations. On the basis of this analysis and a literature review, I discuss how social media contribute to the conservation of historic urban landscapes through the online narrative practices of storytelling and mapping. The narratives shared on social media reveal the diverse layers of heritage values attributed to these urban landscapes. Furthermore, storytelling and mapping can be used to actively involve people in urban conservation, providing insight into the attachments that citizens have to their urban environment. Moreover, the very accessible forms of social media enhance public knowledge of historic urban landscapes.

1. Introduction

This article studies how social media can contribute to the implementation of UNESCO's Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape ('the HUL recommendation'). This recommendation marks a new approach to urban heritage, seeking to integrate historic urban area conservation with urban planning strategies (Bandarin & Van Oers, 2012, 2015; Sykes & Ludwig, 2015; Veldpaus, 2015). Interestingly, the HUL recommendation not only focuses on the built environment, but also the diverse social values that people attach to urban areas. Historic urban landscapes are understood as being shaped by different generations, resulting in a complex layering of tangible and intangible heritage attributes. This heritage fosters belonging and ensures that people feel connected to the past of their local environment (Graham & Howard, 2008; Mydland & Grahn, 2012).

Although various studies show that media are vital to the ways in which cities are experienced and managed (De Lange & De Waal, 2013; Hardey, 2007; Humphreys, 2010), research on the relationship between new media technologies and UNESCO's historic urban landscape approach is scarce. The HUL recommendation, however, explicitly encourages the use of information and communication technology to address its aims (UNESCO, 2011, paragraph 27).

The focus in this article is on social media, because it offers new ways of engaging with historic urban landscapes (Paganoni, 2015). Heritage organisations such as museums and archives use social media to share objects from digitised heritage collections and to enter into a dialogue with their audiences (Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt & Runnel, 2011). Meanwhile, audiences draw upon these same digital technologies to represent their heritage independently of museums and archives. Social media like blogs and Facebook groups enable citizens and local publics to narrate the urban past on their own terms (Gregory, 2015; Roued-Cunliffe & Copeland, 2017). I therefore pose the following research question: How can heritage practices on social media contribute to the conservation of historic urban landscapes? These heritage practices are herein understood as activities taking place on social media to involve people in the conservation of urban landscapes. In the participatory culture of the internet, such practices can be initiated by heritage institutions or by urban communities themselves.

The main argument of this article is that social media can function as platforms where the values attached to historic urban landscapes are represented through the narrative practices of storytelling and mapping. The narratives shared on social media (e.g. heritage-oriented Facebook groups and local memory websites) reveal how people experience heritage in their everyday lives. This article demonstrates that

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such narratives are vital in expressing the stories and histories associated with urban heritage. The online narrative practices that will be discussed thus contribute to what is understood of the complex layering of historic urban landscapes. Indeed, the past of a city cannot be reduced to a single narrative, because urban communities (e.g. subcultures, migrants and different generations) may have varying understandings of urban heritage (Graham & Howard, 2008; Massey, 1995). The HUL recommendation therefore encourages approaches to conservation that respect the diversity of these values. According to Smith (2015: 222), this implies that “one must move beyond the outward morphology of the city to understand how it is experienced from within.” However, a challenge faced by researchers and policymakers using the HUL recommendation is how to assess these intangible dimensions (Sykes & Ludwig, 2015). In contrast to tangible heritage such as monuments, intangible heritage is more difficult to capture. For this reason, it is vital to study how social media can enhance urban conservation, as this form of media provides access to what Cauchi-Santoro (2016) describes as the “layers of lived experience.” The different types of social media have emerged as lively places for expressing and discussing the social values associated with historic urban landscapes (Garduño Freeman, 2018; Van der Hoeven, 2018).

This article is divided into four main sections. In the first part, I present the extant literature on the ways in which social media change the engagement with cultural heritage. I then move on to the study's methodology, discussing the various social media platforms that I have examined using a qualitative content analysis of the social media, annual reports and business plans of Dutch heritage projects and organisations. Next, I present the findings of this analysis, demonstrating how the online narrative practices of storytelling and mapping contribute to the conservation of urban heritage. Finally, I discuss the main conclusions and make recommendations for heritage practitioners and researchers.

2. Theory

To address the interdisciplinary question of this study, I will draw upon literature from the field of media studies, as well as insights from the fields of heritage and urban conservation. Before discussing the connections between social media and urban cultural heritage, I will first provide a general introduction to the HUL recommendation.

The HUL recommendation posits an integral approach to the conservation of historic urban areas, because it seeks to include both the tangible and intangible dimensions of urban heritage (Jigyasu, 2015; Taylor, 2016; Veldpaus, 2015). The status of a UNESCO recommendation means that, unlike a convention, it is not subject to ratification. Recommendations do, however, formulate principles and norms for international regulations that also entail obligations for Member States that neither voted for nor approved them.³ The HUL recommendation thus sets a new global standard for urban conservation. It defines the historic urban landscape as “the urban area understood as the result of a historic layering of cultural and natural values and attributes, extending beyond the notion of ‘historic centre’ or ‘ensemble’ to include the broader urban context and its geographical setting” (UNESCO, 2011, paragraph 8). This wider context encompasses, among other things, a site's topography, the historic and contemporary built environment, and social and cultural practices as related to diversity and identity (Taylor, 2016; UNESCO, 2011, paragraph 9).

The aim of the HUL recommendation is to protect historic urban landscapes from fragmentation and deterioration as a consequence of uncontrolled urban development (Bandarin & Van Oers, 2015). While the recommendation recognises the economic and sociocultural benefits of urbanisation, it also addresses how unmanaged change can

undermine the identity of a place. As Taylor (2016, 475) argues: “The rapid changes taking place throughout cities globally all too often amount to an attack on urban variety and vibrant streetscapes that reflect interesting and traditional social patterns.” In this context of urbanisation, the recommendation seeks to raise awareness of the social, cultural and economic value of urban heritage, while also acknowledging that cities are not static. It therefore defines urban change and development as no longer being in opposition to historic urban landscapes, but as something that is part of it and must be managed as such (Bandarin & Van Oers, 2012). Adaptive reuse, for example, enables the preservation of heritage by accommodating the new functions of a building.

As the HUL recommendation promotes the use of communication technology to understand the complex layering of urban areas (UNESCO, 2011, paragraph 27), I aim to analyse how urban social media platforms contribute to the conservation of historic urban landscapes. Although the connections between social media and the HUL recommendation have never been studied as such, other researchers have examined how social media change our engagement with cultural heritage. As a background to my own study, I will now turn to the main themes that emerge from this literature.

A widely discussed development in the history of the internet is the advent of social media (Van Dijck, 2013). Although interaction has always been part of virtual networks, social media facilitate new forms of communication to such an extent that it is perceived as a major shift in the way in which the World Wide Web is designed and used. Social media can be defined as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). The term Web 2.0 refers to new ways of using the World Wide Web, emphasising collaboration and participatory forms of content creation. These developments have made it much easier for users to present themselves on the internet and to participate in the sharing, curation and creation of online content (John, 2013; Van Dijck, 2013).

For cultural heritage specifically, this means that social media provide people with new ways of sharing and interacting about their understandings of the past (Giaccardi, 2012; Paganoni, 2015). According to Affleck and Kvan (2008, p.270), “the nature of digital environments invites the redefinition of the viewer as an active participant because it enables both interactions with content and other users”. As social media lower the barriers to the sharing of content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), many grassroots practices of cultural heritage have emerged in online environments. Examples of such ‘unofficial’ heritage activities that are focused on specific places are social networking sites where historical photos of cities are shared (Garduño Freeman, 2018; Gregory, 2015; Lewi, Smith, Murray, & Cooke, 2016), online archives documenting local music cultures (Baker & Collins, 2016) and websites with stories about neighbourhoods (De Kreek & Van Zoonen, 2013). These practices allow internet users to participate in the construction of local heritage narratives, sometimes even challenging dominant and mainstream discourses (Flinn, Stevens, & Shepherd, 2009; Foth, Klaebe, & Hearn, 2008; Giaccardi, 2012). Community driven initiatives can raise awareness of heritage experiences of groups such as minorities and subcultures that are not or are insufficiently represented in authorised heritage institutions (Caswell & Mallick, 2014).

It has been observed that these participatory initiatives change the public role of heritage professionals (Silberman & Purser, 2012; Van der Hoeven, 2016). The authority of these professionals is challenged as it has become easier for people outside the heritage sector to set-up heritage projects by means of digital technologies (Giaccardi, 2012). Arguably, this requires a more facilitatory role from heritage professionals, supporting communities in their heritage activities (Silberman & Purser, 2012). Indeed, heritage organisations pay growing attention to public outreach and community work (Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt & Runnel, 2011). For example, heritage professionals initiate

³ http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=23772&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html# (accessed 19 May 2016).

crowdsourcing projects and collaborate with urban communities to digitise heritage. Of course, this does not mean that the expertise of heritage professionals has become obsolete in a participatory culture (Van der Hoeven, 2016). The knowledge and resources accumulated by museums and archives remain important to preserve the past in a sustainable manner. Also in online environments heritage professionals often still have a strong curatorial presence, clearly demarcating when and how audience can participate (Lewi et al., 2016).

The use of digital media by both established and grassroots organisations enables novel forms of narrating the urban past. Focusing on the connections between new media, heritage and place, Malpas (2008) argues that these media diversify existing heritage practices:

“The most interesting and exciting developments in new media, at least within cultural heritage practice, seem to me to be those that open up new ways to enter into existing places —often by drawing upon neglected sensory modalities or by bringing to the fore aspects of the place that may otherwise go unnoticed or be difficult to access— that look to enable new modes of engagement between users or new forms of collective activity.” (Malpas, 2008, p.207, p.207)

Analysing these new modes of engagement in a Facebook group with the name “Beautiful buildings and cool places Perth has lost”, Gregory (2015) finds that such online communities can foster the social capital and civic engagement needed to protest against the destruction of a city's heritage. She describes this Facebook group as an emotional community of shared values that enhances knowledge of the past. Online heritage practices thus enable the documentation and mapping of the affective dimensions of heritage (Caswell & Mallick, 2014; Cauchi-Santoro, 2016). People express through social media what the built environment of cities means to them. It is this shared process of meaning-making that makes social media particularly relevant to study in relation to historic urban landscapes.

The interactive social media highlight the strong connections between heritage and remembering (Silberman & Purser, 2012). They allow people to express their attachment to urban heritage, which is grounded in personal and collective memories. A sense of community can take shape through this process of remembering together. As found in studies on memory websites, the social act of remembering leads to online communities of people with a shared past (De Kreek, 2017; Gregory, 2015; Simon, 2012). Heritage organisations feed into this trend by using digital media to crowdsource memories from different urban communities. Through such participatory activities the voices of urban residents get a more central place in these institutional contexts. This concern with personal and collective memory ties in with the objective of the HUL recommendation to understand the diverse meanings that people ascribe to urban landscapes (Taylor, 2016).

Despite the growing research on social media and cultural heritage, too little attention has been paid to these ways in which new media technologies can contribute to the implementation of the HUL recommendation. Accordingly, in this article, I explore how social media can be used in the conservation of historic urban landscapes.

3. Methodology

To answer the research question, this study uses a qualitative content analysis of social media posts, policies, annual reports and business plans of various heritage projects and organisations. While the policy documents enable me to explore what role social media and digital projects have within an organisation's aims, the data on the concrete activities show how they actually employ social media. This allows me to identify best practices that can be used in the conservation of historic urban landscapes.

The data collection for this study was carried out in two steps. First, I made an inventory of publicly oriented cultural heritage practices in the cities of Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam and Maastricht. I included the three largest cities in the Netherlands, because I presumed that the

widest range of heritage practices would be found there. Amsterdam is the city in the Netherlands with the largest number of monuments and is particularly well-known for its seventeenth-century canal ring that is inscribed on the World Heritage List. In the nomination process for the canal ring area, Amsterdam explicitly positioned itself as a historic urban landscape (Veldpaus, 2015). Rotterdam is included on the World Heritage List with its Van Nelle factory, an icon of 20th-century industrial architecture. This city has no historical centre because it was destroyed in the Second World War. However, there are many heritage activities focused on its post-war redevelopment. To ensure geographical spread and diversity in the cases, I also collated heritage practices in Maastricht, a city in the Limburg province. This is one of the oldest cities in the Netherlands and is second in the ranking of places with the largest number of monuments.⁴ Of course, there are also interesting heritage initiatives in other cities, but these fall beyond the scope of this project. However, my aim is not to generalise my findings to all Dutch cities, but to explore inductively how social media can be used in the implementation of the HUL recommendation. Given the exploratory nature of the study, it was important to obtain an overview of the range and diversity of heritage activities in these cities. To be selected for this overview, the organisations, of course, had to engage with the heritage of one of the four cities. Art museums and heritage organisations with a national orientation were excluded because urban heritage is not their main focus. This produced a database with 70 entries, in which I recorded basic information such as the objective of the respective organisation or project and the kind of social media they use.

In the second data collection step, I selected 19 organisations for further analysis. The appendix to this article provides an overview of my final sample and describes the organisational context of each case. I made this selection on the basis of a purposive sampling strategy, which means that cases are chosen for their relevance in relation to the research question (Boeije, 2010). As discussed in the literature review, it is vital to examine both grassroots heritage practices and initiatives by established heritage institutions (e.g. museums and archives) because more people can contribute to the conservation of the urban past in a participatory culture (Garduño Freeman, 2018; Giaccardi, 2012). I therefore selected a cross-section of cases that represent the diverse ways in which social media are being used for local heritage practices (e.g. storytelling websites, Flickr, YouTube, maps etc.).

I took screenshots of relevant pages of the websites (i.e. the homepage, the ‘about us’ page and the last 10 messages that were posted) of each of these 19 projects and downloaded, if present, the organisation's policy documents (i.e. annual reports and collection plans). All these documents were loaded into Atlas.ti, a qualitative data analysis program. This enabled me to code the documents in order to analyse and categorise the data (Boeije, 2010). Starting with an open coding strategy, I labelled the documents on the basis of how social media are being used, how social media fit within the organisational objectives, what forms of participation are visible and what kind of content is being shared (e.g. photos, memories and/or opinions). In the second phase of axial coding, I narrowed down the code list by merging overlapping codes and deleting irrelevant ones. I also explored the connections between codes. In the final phase of selective coding, I identified central themes that capture the role of social media in relation to the HUL recommendation. These central themes will be presented in the remainder of this article by discussing representative examples from the research data.

4. Narrative practices and urban heritage conservation

My analysis of the data revealed that social media contribute to

⁴ According to the ranking of Statistics Netherlands (CBS): <http://statline.cbs.nl/Statweb/publication/?DM=SLNL&PA=83175NED&D1=a&D2=0,5-409&D3=l&HDR=T&STB=G1,G2&VW=T> (accessed 17 May 2016).

urban heritage conservation through narrative practices. These practices are understood here as online activities that use social media to express the diverse stories embedded in historic urban landscapes. In a participatory culture, social media enable both heritage institutions and the wider public to narrate the urban past in new ways (Garduño Freeman, 2018; Giaccardi, 2012).

Walter (2014) argues that narratives matter for heritage conservation, because they convey the significance of places; it is through stories that people express their identification with heritage. In other words, they are temporal structures that connect the past, present and future of a city. As these narratives can change over time, they correspond with the dynamic understanding of historic urban landscapes in UNESCO's approach. According to Walter (2014: 645), narratives enable us to state what we want to pass on to future generations:

“An understanding of narrative engages us and awakens us to the need, the responsibility even, to take that ‘story’ forward; in writing the next chapter, we must understand how the plot has developed thus far, and how to drive that plot onwards.”

Furthermore, the urban heritage narratives that are shared through social media allow us to understand the strong connections between tangible and intangible heritage. Narratives express the intangible meanings and memories associated with historic urban landscapes (Pocock, Collett, & Baulch, 2015). The HUL recommendation puts emphasis on these intangible aspects of heritage, as it seeks to address the sociocultural values associated with the built environment (Bandarin & Van Oers, 2012; Jigyasu, 2015). I will now discuss how the specific narrative practices of storytelling and mapping on social media contribute to this objective.

4.1. Storytelling

The first narrative practice I will consider is storytelling. In the context of the present article, storytelling concerns the use of social media for narrating the “layers of lived experience” (Cauchi-Santoro, 2016) that are embedded in historic urban landscapes. Social media have brought a new range of tools to narrate the urban past, allowing people and heritage organisations to exchange memories of particular cities or specific neighbourhoods. Through these media, it becomes easier to post memories and let others respond to them, facilitating practices of remembering-together (Simon, 2012). In this way, urban residents who might otherwise not physically meet are brought together in the virtual realms of the city. The storytelling practices that I observed include local memory websites (e.g. Geheugen van Oost, see Appendix), Facebook groups where people share and respond to historic photos of particular cities (e.g. Oud Amsterdam), a project in which elderly people create short videos about specific neighbourhoods and historic events (e.g. Haagse Herinneringen), and blogs dedicated to urban heritage (e.g. Bijlmer Museum). What these practices have in common is that they all use various combinations of text, photos and videos to narrate urban histories and memories.

Storytelling has several benefits for the conservation of urban heritage. Firstly, the various storytelling practices on social media invite citizens to actively engage with urban heritage in virtual spaces. These activities bring heritage materials (e.g. memories, photos and videos) into the public domain that might otherwise remain unknown. Furthermore, these practices enhance public knowledge of historic urban landscapes, as they bring heritage stories to the timelines of social media platforms that people use on a daily basis. Wilson and Desha (2016) found that the digital presence of heritage projects contributes to engaging a broad demographic. Social media allow heritage organisations to present urban heritage in an accessible manner and enable them to reach people who might otherwise not visit a museum or archive. The inclusion of historic photos in particular appears to be effective in attracting attention to urban heritage (Wilson & Desha, 2016). In the networked structure of the internet, such artefacts from

the heritage collections can be easily re-shared on a wide range of social media platforms. The popular social media can thus support the HUL recommendation's ambition to develop inclusive activities (article 27, UNESCO, 2011): “To communicate with all sectors of society, it is particularly important to reach out to youth and all underrepresented groups in order to encourage their participation.”

Past-blogging, for example, is such an engaging way of using storytelling to narrate urban histories. This activity can be defined as “the act of live blogging past events, as if they were happening in the present” (Migowski, Zago, & Barth, 2016, p. 39). To illustrate, in 2015, Museum Rotterdam tweeted about the aerial bombardment of Rotterdam as it happened during the Second World War. These tweets by the city museum were based on historical documents (e.g. diaries and battle reports) about the blitz that almost entirely destroyed the city centre. The following are three examples of the tweets that were posted exactly 75 years later:

“10:30 PM - 13 May 2015: #theattack1940 #battle The German commander issued an ultimatum in which Rotterdam is threatened with ‘complete destruction’.

8:31 PM - 13 May 2015: #theattack1940 #battle The sirens sound and so again we sit together in the shelter in this early morning hour.

3:02 PM - 13 May 2015: #theattack1940 #battle The sky turns so red that Kralingen Lake, due to the reflection of the fires in the city, looks like a sea of blood.”⁵

This example shows that storytelling can be used to make people of different generations aware of the ways in which historic events shaped the urban environment. As one person writes about the tweets: “I live in the area where the battle took place, so in the last of couple of days I looked at my familiar environment in a completely different way.”⁶ In this case the audience participation is limited to posting comments on the content shared by a heritage organisation. Although such institutional forms of storytelling are relevant to inform people about the histories associated with urban landscapes, the HUL recommendation also aims to actively involve urban communities in documenting urban heritage. Therefore I will now turn to forms of participation where people produce and share heritage content themselves.

A second benefit of storytelling is that it enables people to express their attachments to the built environment. This ties in with the objective of the historic urban landscape approach, namely to raise awareness of the sociocultural significance of urban heritage for past, present and future generations. The HUL recommendation, therefore, calls for civic engagement tools that facilitate dialogues between people about the key values in their urban areas (article 24, UNESCO, 2011). Storytelling on social media is relevant to foster such civic engagement because it sheds light on the affective and social values associated with cities (Van der Hoeven, 2018). Local memory websites, for example, facilitate storytelling by asking people to share memories on specific themes such as neighbourhood shops, sports clubs and schools. An example is a project from The Hague (“Haagse herinneringen”) that enables citizens to develop short videos about such topics. This project is a collaboration between the library, city archive, city museum and an adult learning organisation. The digital stories posted on its website demonstrate how people identify with their urban environment and how this is part of their personal biographies. A video about the Second World War from one participant is accompanied by the following summary:

“During the war, I wandered through The Hague, building a ‘street plan’ of memories. I walked to places that were restricted by the Germans. I saw joys and sorrows during the period of reconstruction and renewal: I

⁵ All the Dutch quotations have been translated by the author.

⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/museum.rotterdam/posts/918723681483021> (last accessed 6 June 2018).

saw the cut-down forest of The Hague grow again and, during the royal march (1947), I experienced the waste land that would later become Moerwijk.”⁷

This quotation illustrates that these kinds of website function as platforms for contemporary and former residents to share memories of how specific urban places were experienced in the past. They give insight into the values of people who live in these places, shifting the attention to the social and emotional significance of urban heritage. This citizen perspective is often missing in urban conservation, because the professional orientation of, for example, architectural historians tends to be privileged (Taylor, 2016).

A third theme that emerges from the data is that social media are used to reflect on how cities have changed over the years and could develop in the future. On the social media platforms I examined, people verbally and visually recall buildings that have disappeared, historic events, and the various ways in which cities have evolved into the places we know today. As the HUL recommendation recognises, cities are dynamic entities that change all the time through processes such as regeneration, globalisation and urban growth. Remembering on social media platforms enables people to comment on these changes and to express the diverse histories of a place. As Garduño Freeman (2018) observes, social media bring more opportunities for people to discuss urban heritage. In this way, a larger number of voices can participate in narrating the urban past.

The Bijlmer Museum in Amsterdam is an interesting example of a grassroots initiative that is used to comment on the past, present and future of an urban area. It illustrates how social media enable people to become storytellers themselves, taking more control over how urban landscapes are narrated. Bijlmer Museum is the name given to both a blog and the remaining part of the Bijlmermeer high-rise estate. The tagline of the blog reads “the history of a disparaged utopia”, referring to the public perception of this neighbourhood as failure of urban planning. The bad reputation of this post-war social housing estate spawned large-scale urban renewal in recent decades (Helleman & Wassenberg, 2004). The Bijlmermeer neighbourhood was constructed in the 1960s and early 1970s, but many high-rise buildings have already been demolished, because the neighbourhood soon struggled with poverty and other social issues. Aiming to ultimately establish a physical museum in the Bijlmermeer, the virtual version reflects on the heritage of the neighbourhood.⁸ Although many traces of the original Bijlmermeer are disappearing, the bloggers write passionately about its architecture, comment critically on the neighbourhood’s renewal and organise walking tours and exhibitions. An example is this excerpt from a blog post about the failed attempt to preserve what is described as an iconic ramp connected to the apartment buildings:

“A unique object in the old Bijlmer was the concrete ramp, which just like the metro from the 70s was designed in the Béton Brut style (i.e. Brutalist architecture). [...] Only one last ramp is still standing proudly. As the Bijlmer Museum, we intended to save this icon from its impending destruction. For us, it was not only a beautiful object [...] but also a symbol of everything that went wrong during the realisation of the bijlmer design”.

This example demonstrates that social media can be used to share narratives that provide a counterweight to the common perception of a particular urban area. Instead of merely focusing on the well-known failures of the neighbourhood, the initiators also raise awareness of the historic value of this place. Arguably, this neighbourhood has heritage value as it is testimony to post-war ideas on large-scale urban planning.

⁷ http://www.haagseherinneringen.nl/pagina/551/de_mars_naar_wederopbouw (accessed 9 February 2017).

⁸ In February 2017 the first physical exhibition was opened (<https://bijlmermuseum.com/2017/01/24/bijlmer-museum-van-steen/>, accessed 14 February 2017).

This project serves as a platform to reflect upon the past and future of this urban area by storytelling the various stages of the neighbourhood.

Of course, such social media projects alone are not enough to influence decision-making on urban renewal. Gregory (2015), however, provides evidence that online spaces where historic photos are shared can engender a sense of loss and thus provoke protest against the destruction and deterioration of heritage buildings. The digital engagement with heritage often goes hand in hand with activities in actual space, such as walking tours and exhibitions (Van der Hoeven, 2018). For these reasons, social media must be taken seriously as platforms for the discussion of personal and collective attachments to historic urban landscapes.

4.2. Mapping

The second narrative practice that contributes to the conservation of historic urban landscapes is mapping. Maps tell stories as they represent the histories and memories embedded in specific places (Caquard, 2013). The advent of Web 2.0 opened up new opportunities for heritage organisations and citizens to geolocate urban heritage and present it on a map. Google Maps, for example, has made it easier to combine several layers of information containing geocoded objects. The tools used to create maps are now widely available and have become more user-friendly. According to Hardey (2007, p.875): “Cities are represented by vast amounts of data and for the first time there is the potential for much of this data to enter the public domain.” Technological innovations that make use of the global positioning system (GPS) and geographical information systems (GIS) have enabled more user engagement in urban mapping (Mattioli, 2014). It thus becomes possible to crowdsource maps by letting people add their own information.

The first advantage of mapping practices is that they offer heritage organisations new ways of presenting their collections by combining geocoded items from different databases and collections. They thus address the HUL recommendation’s aim of using information and communication technology to document the complex historic layering of urban landscapes (article 27, UNESCO, 2011). For example, images of archaeological artefacts, memories, historical photos, Wikipedia entries and newspaper articles can be put on a single map. Moreover, by overlaying historical maps, how cities have evolved becomes visible. In Rotterdam, for instance, the city museum and city archives collaborated to create a map about the history of the city. As they explain on the website:

“This website introduces you to different aspects of the history of Rotterdam. The historical maps provide an overview of how Rotterdam has grown over the course of the last centuries. The different themes give information on the basis of locations, stories and visual material. By clicking the mouse button, you will find for each location additional information from newspaper articles, an explanation of street names, and visual material and objects that have been connected to a location (sometimes associatively).”⁹

The map also facilitates user involvement, as people can post comments or share their own memories.

Secondly, maps can be used for the in-depth narration of a specific heritage of a city. The project Financial Heritage on the Map, for example, documents the financial history of the Netherlands, with a focus on the city of Amsterdam. The website shows historical photos and Wikipedia information of former banks, stock exchanges and offices. This project is a grassroots initiative of someone working in the financial sector who has a particular interest in financial history. In addition to a digital map, he also hosts walking tours about Amsterdam’s financial heritage. This is a good example of how people outside the heritage sector use new media to participate in heritage practices. In a

⁹ www.rotterdaminkaart.nl (accessed 22 March 2017).

Table 1

The contributions of two narrative practices that use social media in the conservation of historic urban landscapes.

Storytelling	Mapping
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Enhances public engagement with heritage conservation. ● Gains detailed insider perspectives on historic urban landscapes from citizens. ● Provides insight into the sociocultural values that people attach to urban heritage. ● Reflects on how cities have changed over the years and could develop in the future. ● Critically comments on urban heritage conservation and urban renewal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● New ways of presenting heritage collections through geocoded heritage artefacts. ● Visually shows how historic urban landscapes have evolved over the years. ● Crowdsourcing and showing the locations of intangible and tangible heritage. ● Showing the diverse narratives of a place (i.e. the layering of historic urban landscapes).

participatory culture, there are more opportunities to share cultural content through tools such as maps.

Thirdly, mapping practices can be used to present the diverse histories associated with a place visually. As the HUL recommendation focuses on the historic layering of values and attributes, the ways in which maps combine multiple layers of information render them particularly relevant for this approach. According to Smith (2015, p. 229), mapping the different ways in which communities experience a place is vital to the conservation of historic urban landscapes:

“Various subcultures may inhabit the same physical space in different ways, and their various realities can be mapped on top of each other. This is essential to prevent interventions that benefit one community while destroying key patterns that benefit another.”

In a dynamic way, maps visually present heritage materials that would otherwise be separate fragments (Haskins, 2015). Through mash-ups of different collections and information sources, they thus offer rich platforms for identifying the intangible dimensions of urban cultural heritage. Using them to document the subjective experiences of places can be understood as a form of counter-mapping. According to Cauchi-Santoro (2016, p.44), “counter-mapping attempts to unearth forgotten knowledge and thus points toward alternative senses of space and place”. As Hudson and Zimmerman (2015) argue, mapping projects use data visualisation to make visible what might be invisible and can thus document repressed histories. In the project Mapping Slavery, for example, the urban histories associated with Dutch slavery and the country’s colonial past are mapped by a group of historians and heritage professionals; among other things, it discusses which people were benefitting from slavery in the Dutch colonies. Furthermore, the project asks: “What traces of slavery/enslavement can we find in the Netherlands, in the streets, in museums, in archives and in intangible heritage?”¹⁰ In answering this question, the project contributes to mapping the different histories associated with urban landscapes.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

UNESCO’s Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape marks a new approach to the conservation of urban heritage (Bandarin & Van Oers, 2015; Taylor, 2016). It understands urban areas as constituted by a historic layering of tangible and intangible heritage. Addressing the recommendation’s call for studies on the use of information and communication technologies to analyse the complex layering of urban areas, this article’s aim was to explore how social media can contribute to the conservation of historic urban landscapes.

A challenge in the implementation of the HUL recommendation is to do justice to the intangible dimensions of urban landscapes. Traditionally, heritage conservation has focused on buildings and monuments instead of social significance (Pocock et al., 2015; Sykes & Ludwig, 2015). The recommendation requires the development of civic engagement tools that enable the identification of key values in urban areas. This article argued that the accessible social media are one of the vital tools to engage a wider audience in the conservation of urban

landscapes. The online heritage practices discussed in this article mediate the engagement with urban heritage. Furthermore, they constitute a people-centred form of urban conservation, providing insight into the diverse experiences associated with the urban past. These contributions of social media to urban heritage conservation are summarised in Table 1 by distinguishing the narrative practices of storytelling and mapping.

The main contribution to the HUL approach lies in social media’s capacity to present the historic layering of values in urban landscapes and let citizens participate in their further documentation.¹¹ Social media not only enhance the public’s knowledge of historic urban landscapes by rendering heritage more accessible, but they also extend this knowledge by crowdsourcing inputs from citizens. Particularly when combined with attractive historic images, online narrative practices have the potential to engage a broad demographic of citizens (Wilson & Desha, 2016). Storytelling and mapping practices thus enable there to be a greater awareness of the diverse heritage of cities. Finally, social media are vital platforms for people to comment on the ways in which urban planning decisions affect historic urban landscapes.

To conclude, the following are some tentative recommendations for urban heritage practitioners and researchers. Firstly, online urban heritage practices seem to have more impact when they feed into wider media attention and combine different media types. For example, local television stations and newspapers can raise awareness of storytelling projects in order to reach more potential participants. Furthermore, the use of historic photos and other visual material appears to be very effective in drawing attention to heritage narratives (Garduño Freeman, 2018; Wilson & Desha, 2016). Secondly, it is relevant for grassroots online projects to consider collaborations with heritage institutions such as archives. This allows these projects to draw on professional expertise and to ensure that crowdsourced heritage is archived for the future in a sustainable manner. Otherwise, the valuable heritage narratives shared by citizens may be lost when websites go offline because of a lack of funding or their reliance on just a few key individuals (Baker & Collins, 2016). However, too much top-down professional involvement can hamper citizen engagement, as the very appeal of social media is the autonomy that people have to share what they find relevant (a further discussion of this dilemma can be found in: De Kreek, 2017; Roued-Cunliffe & Copeland, 2017). Thirdly, the social media practices discussed in this article seem to have a wider resonance when they tie in with other activities in cities. Mapping projects, for example, can lead to city walks past the places put on the map. Fourthly, both researchers and heritage practitioners need to pay attention to standardisation. When projects use similar protocols and formats, it becomes easier to compare content and to integrate different data sources. When stories are geotagged, for example, they can be overlaid on a map to show the actual locations of memories. Finally, more research is needed to better understand how social media can be used in urban planning decisions. They can potentially contribute to cultural mapping efforts, in which information on local communities is gathered for development purposes (Longley & Duxbury, 2016). The findings of this

¹¹ This contribution relates to the objectives of the HUL Recommendation that are discussed in paragraphs 21, 24, 26 and 27 (UNESCO, 2011).

¹⁰ <http://mappingslavery.nl/en/over-ons/> (last accessed 6 June 2018).

study suggest that social media are a rich source of heritage content that could be used to assess how people identify with places and what the significant locations are in cities. This could feed into the trend where urban planners use new media technologies to evaluate urban projects and everyday life spaces (Kleinhans, Ham, & Evans-Cowley, 2015; Mattioli, 2014). By making information about cities available on an unprecedented scale, social media could thus contribute to informed

urban planning decisions.

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Appendix

Organisation	Description	Social media used	URL
Amsterdam Museum	The city museum of Amsterdam.	Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, YouTube, Pinterest, blogs and local memory websites.	Amsterdammuseum.nl
Museum het Schip	Museum about the architecture of the Amsterdam School. The museum hosts a digital platform called Wendingen.	Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, TripAdvisor and a digital platform called 'Wendingen'.	Hetschip.nl
Belvédère Rotterdam	The House of Intangible Heritage in Rotterdam, which makes visible the people and communities of Rotterdam by means of art, culture and stories.	Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Vimeo and Instagram.	Belvedererotterdam.nl
Bijlmer Museum	A non-institutional, virtual museum dedicated to the Bijlmermeer neighbourhood in Amsterdam.	Blog and Facebook.	Bijlmermuseum.com
Financieel Erfgoed op de Kaart	A non-institutional project that maps the financial history of the Netherlands, particularly focusing on Amsterdam. The project was initiated by someone working in the financial sector.	Interactive map, YouTube and Facebook.	Financieelerfgoedopdekaart.nl
Geheugen van Oost	A local memory website dedicated to the eastern borough of Amsterdam. This website receives support from the Amsterdam Museum.	Local memory website, Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest.	Geheugenvanoost.amsterdam
The Historical Museum of The Hague	The city museum of the Hague.	Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr and Instagram.	Haagshistorischmuseum.nl
Imagine IC	Imagine IC documents the heritage of contemporary youth in Amsterdam.	Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr and Soundcloud.	Imagineic.nl
Museum Rotterdam	The city museum of Rotterdam.	Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.	Museumrotterdam.nl
Museum Zonder Muren Transvaal	A private initiative by people working in the cultural sector, hosting exhibitions and cultural events in Amsterdam's Transvaal neighbourhood.	Facebook.	Museumzondermuren.com
Ongekend Bijzonder	An oral history project about refugees in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht.	Twitter, YouTube and Facebook.	Ongekendbijzonder.nl/
Oud Amsterdam	A non-institutional Facebook page where historical photos of Amsterdam are shared.	Twitter and Facebook.	Facebook.com/oudamsterdam/
Rotterdam in Kaart	A collaboration between different heritage organisations to collate stories, historical information and photos on a virtual map.	Interactive map.	Rotterdaminkaart.nl
Rotterdam Vertelt Stadsarchief Rotterdam	A grassroots foundation focused on oral history projects in Rotterdam. The city archive of Rotterdam.	Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube and Facebook.	Rotterdamvertelt.nl Stadsarchief.rotterdam.nl
Wederopbouw Rotterdam	A website that tells the story of the post-war reconstruction of Rotterdam. It is a collaboration between the municipality and various public and private heritage organisations.	Facebook and Twitter.	Wederopbouwrotterdam.nl
Zicht op Maastricht	This project, which is a collaboration between various heritage organisations, documents the cultural biography of Maastricht using timelines, maps and stories.	An interactive website, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter.	Zichtopmaastricht.nl
Haagse Herinneringen	An oral history project in which elderly people create 'digi-tales' about the history of The Hague. The project is a collaboration between the library, city archive, city museum and the educational organisation ETV.nl Haaglanden.	An interactive website, Facebook and YouTube.	Haagseherinneringen.nl
Mapping slavery	Mapping Slavery gives a broader audience access to traces of the Dutch slavery heritage. It is a collaboration between various historians and heritage organisations.	Facebook, twitter and maps.	Mappingsslavery.nl

Overview of the organisations included in the analysis for this study.

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