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Urban Scene Protection and Unconventional Practices—Contemporary Landscapes in World Heritage Cities of Spain

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Abstract: This paper theoretically examines the extent to which visual perception has excluded alternative forms of culture in World Heritage cities and towns in Spain. To do so, an initial review is carried out of the UNESCO framework and criteria which establishes the outstanding universal value of Spanish cities and towns. This is followed by a review of minor concepts such as informality and creativity, which are related to alternative conceptions of culture and heritage. Thirdly, a review of the literature provides an overview of the appraisal of the social value in the heritage realm. This is achieved through the Historic Urban Landscape approach, which is adapted to specific forms of local appraisal. An analysis of policy helps explain the need to review principles of protection in terms of ethical evaluations. The analysis shows that outdated policies clash with contemporary assessment and participatory methods of heritage-making.

Keywords: alternative culture; contemporary urban landscape; local character assessment; HUL approach



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1. Introduction

This research aims to analyse the extent to which urban landscape protection is excluding alternative forms of culture in heritage sites, specifically World Heritage (WH) cities and towns in Spain. The discussion also incorporates the Historic Towns and Cities nominated by UNESCO to offer further insight into the type of nominations, the criteria chosen for nomination, and the policies later enacted. The focus of the analysis is on cultural policy, as current heritage laws in Spain barely adapt to the requirements of contemporary urban values in heritage cities and towns. In this study, the UNESCO framework [1,2] helps to contextualise the Spanish National Law [3] at the time of nominations. Other international charters and documents from ICOMOS [4–6], the European Landscape Convention [7], and the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage [8] are also referenced since they all impacted on the conceptual reframing of the subsequent national and regional heritage laws. Among the UNESCO criteria established to nominate WH sites, Criteria ii and iii were applied homogeneously to five cities and towns in Spain. Currently, these two criteria are especially relevant as their definition allows interpretation in line with contemporary conceptualisations of heritage values [9]. Criterion ii refers to places that “exhibit an important interchange of human values over a span of time”, while Criterion iii explicitly outlines “the exceptionality of living cultural traditions or civilisations” [10].

Contemporary conceptualisations leave space to analyse how the recent literature has treated the changeable aspects of values in heritage, and the reinterpretative character of cultural traditions, in order to ascertain how contemporary local placemaking is affected by the framework of World Heritage nominations. In this context, the epistemologies of UNESCO for Spanish WH cities and towns, based on Criteria ii and iii, refer specifically to historic environments where contemporary cultural processes of appropriation, integration, and meaningfulness may take place, containing values, creations, and recreations that

help understand the site as the result of different tempos of contexts. Asquith [11] sees these complex processes as codes of practice—norms and contemporary behaviour—which are structured and restructured in specific settings. Proper contextualisation of these processes generates controversy which unfolds in the realm of urban conservation when eventually assuming alternative forms of placemaking as behavioural processes of socio-cultural stratification.

Harrison [12] speaks of new agencies and dialogues with place which make room for new assemblages to eventually challenge the conventional perceptions, assessments, and classifications of what is perceived as authentic [13]. Following this line of thought, Schorch [14] sees this social value as the complex grammar of embodied culture and cultural embodiment. Some authors emphasise the necessary divergences and local particularities of cultural heritage and, in turn, the scalar uncertainty in enhancing contemporary cultural processes [15]. Assuming this, the stock of knowledge based on local experience and everyday behaviour emerges in the form of “digested” processes where theory is assimilated in unique ways.

Within this framework, the term traditional communities is still considered valid for some rural areas, suburban areas or remote cultures [10]. However, in a town and historic city context, it refers to traditional population still inhabiting the old city [16]. Today, coexistence happens between communities in places corseted by heritage policy, where behavioural and spatial polycentrism brings about new identities that appropriate the contemporary old city differently [17,18]. This situation is contextualised globally, but each place performs independent configurations of culture to the extent that they are allowed [19].

In terms of placemaking, traditional community-based places tend to stratify independent creative subcultures as the result of potential expressions of culture and context [20]. This interpretation is supported by van Oers [21], who refers to evaluating historic environments as “perception, setting, material components, their relationship and the cultural constraints over time”. However, culture and context have not always determined how tradition-making is valued in urban contexts. At this point, the cultural rights of minorities readapt their own space and confront the institutional one.

UNESCO [19] and ICOMOS [16] refer to communities when acknowledging the role of people inhabiting a specific place when environments, practices, and values are jointly contextualised. In this line of inquiry, it is perhaps more fitting to use the term urban habitat to emphasise inclusivity, permeability, and mutability [22]. Habitat refers to the distinctive character of a place or the specific ways in which cultures and subcultures build up, transform, and stratify practices [23]. This helps understand the relationships of communities as proof of shared ways of living and occupying space, and as a mutable option informally open to new configurations in an ambivalent space and time [24,25].

Since the Faro Convention [26], several important innovations in cultural policies have occurred, particularly for intangible heritage [8] and the diversity of cultural expressions [27]. The field of development within culture was later referenced within the International Development Agenda adopted in 2015 by the UN General assembly, the Agenda 2030. At the time, there were two important UNESCO Reports: *Re-Shaping Cultural Policies* [28], a policy study focused on the relationship between culture in all its forms and sustainable development, and the report *Culture: Urban Future*, prepared on the occasion of the Habitat III Conference [29]. The document recognises culture as a category linked to people, environment, and policies, and focuses especially on peace and tolerance, creativity and innovation, inclusivity, identity, local development, governance, and finance for sustainable development.

Consequently, this paper analyses how the cultural vulnerability of informal producers and local users remains an issue when contested by the theoretical WH contexts. The empirical part of the study—the one focused on data acquisition—recognises informal actors and informality in spontaneous and creative local practices as the reason for analysing emergent cultural scenarios in heritage sites. These are “everyday” scenarios where

conservation policies and laws confront ethical issues on subculture making and minorities' cultural vulnerability.

2. Material and Method

2.1. The Area of Study

This article examines the contribution of cultural elements and signs in the built environment to help to understand the current socio-cultural condition in five cities with WH areas in Spain: Toledo, Segovia, Salamanca, Cuenca, and Ávila. The researcher chose these five cities because they were nominated for their historic urban cores. Furthermore, the study of these five cases is motivated by the fact that, geographically, these places have demographic similarities and symbolic, patrimonial, and cultural associations between themselves and other nearby historical towns. The five cities belong to two inner and central regions of Spain, Castilla La Mancha, and Castilla-León.

2.2. Design of the Study

The research scheme refers to each phase by describing the aim, activity, outcome, and subsequent process to delineate the sequence. After empirical evaluation, the researcher wanted to analyse theoretical approaches to ascertain differences between the observed landscape and the regional and national laws theorising. All phases have a similar structure until reaching the discussion of empirical and theoretical methods (Table 1).

Table 1. Design of the research for the registration and characterisation of unconventional practices.

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5
Aim	Qualitative analysis	Organisation of data	Knowledge gathering	Digitalisation	Theoretical analysis
Activity	WH areas visual recognition	Categorisation and quantification	Face-to-face and online interviews	GIS database	Literature review
Outcome	Graphic register	Initial database	Transcriptions of space analysis	Empirical findings	Theoretical findings
	Classification	Culling of elements	Information analysis	Analysis of the spatial distribution	Discussion of empirical and theoretical

2.3. The Empirical On-Site Study—Phases 1 to 4

This section describes the methodology for assessing the various heritage values that the researcher had identified related to the heritage landscape. The empirical analysis consists of four phases (Table 1). To support this methodology, the researcher has conducted previous studies in this area for valuing architecture [13,22,30], rural landscapes [31,32], and stakeholders' manifestations [33]. Previous authors highlight examples of methodological approaches already established in Anglo-Saxon countries, including the Landscape Character Assessment [34–36]. Other authors such as Ferreti et al. [37], Yildirim [38], and Ruiz et al. [39] develop strategies for cataloguing different craft types in buildings. These approaches focus on identification and material value recognition criteria. Other methodological examples confirm that comprehensive cataloguing studies can create new fields of investigation for this work [40]. In this context, previous researchers such as Fuentes [41] highlight the different visions of vernacular architecture and criticise studies for neglecting the analysis of historical rural centres by prioritising studies on rural landscape architecture. In our case, the work before ethnographic data collection consisted of several visits to cities to register forms of expression that are “endangered” by contemporary conservation policy.

2.3.1. Phases 1 and 2—Identification and Categorisation of the Character

Elements identified by the researcher as valuable to the local character of the historic environment include forms of expression, uses of elements in façades, openings, carpentry, balconies, and fencing (see Figures 1–3). Through visual sites' visits, the research identified

all the elements to be classified and registered. Classification and registration were conducted on-site manually using cadastral mapping. In several days of fieldwork, the research catalogued the different areas and elements of interest. Categorisation and quantification required explorative phone calls and informal meetings with locals. At least one person per city was contacted, and contacts served to contrast information about protection plans and the areas and elements of interest registered according to levels of importance. Those contacted belonged to the city council's department of urban planning.

2.3.2. Phase 3—Stakeholders' Interviews: Artisans and Neighbours

Contact with the council allowed the researcher to grasp information about artisans and some local associations. Face-to-face and online individual interviews were conducted with a total of ten artisans (two per city), including stonemasons, carpenters, and blacksmiths. Another five interviews were conducted with neighbours: an architect, an economist, a geographer, an anthropologist, and a merchant. Interviews were semi-structured with a series of themes about craftsmanship, materials, and tools, and the neighbourhood lifestyle. The interviews, based on the character, welfare, and sense of place, guided the purpose of questions; nonetheless, each interviewee responded to a conversation that exposed the advantages and constraints of inhabiting those WH areas. Interviews were structured to last from 45 minutes to one hour. All interviews were registered digitally and transcribed with a word processor.



Figure 1. A collection of tangible street elements linked to arts and crafts: Historical, Cultural and Tangible values in Tables 2 and 3. Phase 1 of the research (2020). Source: Author.



Figure 2. Recognition of intangible elements linked to Intangible, Spiritual, Social and Identity values in Tables 2 and 3. Ornamental practices at the time of interviews in the region of Cuenca. Phase 3 (2020). Source: Author.

- Oppenings ground floor
- Oppenings upper storeis
- Balconies
- Ironworks
- Carpentry ground floor
- Carpentry upper storeis
- Coatings
- Eaves



Figure 3. Data retrieved and digitally collected in a geospatial database using GIS software. An example from Cuenca. Phase 4 (2021). Source: Author.

Stemming from the interviews, one of the research's goals was to bring specialists and locals together. This research, the DocPlaces project, created an initial questionnaire with questions about a literature analysis on a terminology and conservation criterion that pertains to global historic city concepts. Due to the initial identification and analysis of

heritage elements, the involvement of stakeholders with diverse interests provided a more open interpretation of perhaps minor elements that build up neighbours' space. The topics covered in the interview dealt with neighbours' matters on governance participation and perception, demography and population coexistence and public-spiritedness, commerce and economy, infrastructure, and culture and cultural heritage.

2.3.3. Phase 4—Data Digitisation

The data collected during fieldwork was digitalised through CadTools. Information was later georeferenced to aid comprehension and serve as a helpful visual resource. In addition, the research employed geographical datasets to develop metrics and statistically analyse the local patterns (Figure 3). Likewise, by contrasting and comparing the regions of study, visualising the data gained from the on-site examination of WH areas enabled a thorough qualitative study of elements and techniques, with similarities and differences between neighbours and cities.

2.4. The Theoretical Approach—Phase 5

The theoretical approach brings to the fore the review of international values at the time of WH nominations (Table 2), together with an assessment of national and regional laws. By doing so, the researcher wants to justify how the theoretical laws, mainly national and regional, and their practical implementation are disconnected from signifying contemporary forms of culture and value (Table 3).

Table 2. Spanish WH cities and towns. Criteria of inscription and HUL implementation. Source: Adapted from whc.unesco.org and Pereira [42].

Spain	City Inscribed in the WH List	Year	Criteria				HUL
	Ávila (Old Town)	1985			iii	iv	-
	Cáceres (Old Town)	1986			iii	iv	-
	Córdoba (Historic Centre)	1984	i	ii	iii	iv	2
	Cuenca (Historic Walled Town)	1996		ii		v	-
	Salamanca (Old City)	1988	i	ii		iv	1
	Santiago de Compostela (Old Town)	1985	i	ii		iv	-
	Segovia (Old Town)	1985	i		iii	iv	-
	Toledo (Historic City)	1986	i	ii	iii	iv	-

2.4.1. (From) International Policies and Approaches

As a starting point, Table 2 summarises the first analysis of the UNESCO narratives according to Criteria ii and iii and accepts the argument put forward in this paper. The justification of these criteria summarises the rationale of values and attributes at nomination time. Furthermore, each criterion encapsulates some of the values intended for preservation. Contemporary values have served to classify nominations to analyse them better. Value 1 refers to the conservation of traditional dwellings and their materiality (Historic). Value 2 highlights the importance of past human interaction with vernacular places (Social–Cultural). Value 3 enhances the preservation of unspoilt past folklore (Intangible). Value 4 raises the importance of past and distant societies (Identity–Spiritual). Here, it is worth noting that the international documents referred to in Table 3, those that relate to fundamental contemporary values, are far behind the nomination of WH sites listed in Table 2.

The WH site classification reflects how material-centred valuations at the time of inscription created a detrimental effect for the continuity of non-architectural values at that time. Before the emergence of placemaking-based approaches to heritage, certain distant cultures already assumed informal spaces differently. By the end of the 20th century, those cultures were themselves considered chaotic and vibrant urban configurations [43,44].

At that time, they prompted questions on the WH cultural tightness and the need for adaptation to the local character [45,46]. In the 21st century, ICOMOS [16] incorporated the concepts of indigenous and traditional populations into the realm of historic cities, completely redefining the term. As a result, sensitivity towards traditional living subcultures in historic cities started to confront the still ongoing processes of cultural homogenisation. Before ICOMOS introduced community concepts in the urban context, the Council of Europe [7] and UNESCO [19] introduced the term cultural landscape in the heritage discourse. In the 1990s, anthropologists started researching urban settings in terms of cultural and ethnic interaction. However, those works were rarely connected to urban heritage and local-making processes (Figure 4).



Figure 4. (a) Door next to a nightclub. (b) La Cibeles perfume shop. Claimed spaces at the time of interviews in the Old Town of Salamanca (2021). Phase 3. Source: Author.

Table 3. Main values in WH cities and towns of Spain. Source: Adapted from Alsalloum [47].

Values	Definitions	Documents' References
Historic	Historic value includes the knowledge of what has occurred in the past. It also encompasses the history of aesthetics, science, and society. A place may have historic value because it has influences or has been influenced by a historic figure, event, phase, or activity.	[48–50]
Cultural	Cultural value can be understood through both tangible and intangible heritage features, including historical, archaeological, architectural, fabric and material, technological, aesthetic, scientific, spiritual, religious, social, traditional, political, identity, relative artistic or technical rarity values, and aspects associated with human activities.	[17,27,48]
Intangible	Intangible values are memory, beliefs, traditional knowledge, and attachment to place.	[6,51]
Spiritual	The spirit of place comprises tangible (buildings, sites, landscapes, routes, objects, settlement patterns, and land use practices) and intangible elements (memories, narratives, religious beliefs, written documents, rituals, festivals, traditional knowledge, values, textures, and colours).	[6,49,51]
Social	Social value generates a concern for safeguarding heritage properties. It is related to traditional social activities, compatible present-day use, contemporary social interaction, and social and cultural identity.	[17,29,48]
Identity	Identity is reflected in the continuous evolution of cultural heritage properties, in their historical character, in both present and past values, and in their material fabric. It can also include age, tradition, continuity, memorial, legendary, wonder, sentiment, spiritual, religious, symbolic, political, patriotic, and nationalistic aspects. In terms of architectural features, it relates to townscapes, roofscapes, main visual axes, and building plots.	[17,27,49,51]
	Cultural identity might include languages, societal structures, economic means, and spiritual beliefs.	

At that time, the European Landscape Convention [7], ICOMOS [51,52], and the Convention for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage [8] incorporated the ability of intangible heritage to be reinvented as “expressions of traditions interacting with the environment”. Nonetheless, UNESCO dissociates tangible and intangible nominations, which disentangles protected sites into actions and settings. The HUL approach has come to integrate them again, and “break walls between conservation and development” [53], but its optional implementation [54] has barely been endorsed as yet (Table 2). The lack of implementation favours dissociating the scene from the action since international methods of appraisal are not yet effectively addressed in cultural policy. Meanwhile, values contained in WH nominations lack the ability to integrate contemporary forms of cultural diversity. Managing cultural diversity and its dynamic stratification is similar to constantly writing places requiring subtle interpretation. This interpretation of built environments as hybridised everyday habitats rather than branded urban settings raises questions about the extent to which the values at the time of inscription, Criteria ii and iii, and the non-obligation to implement current recommendations and charters make these WH sites culturally equitable and socially sustainable (Table 3 and Figure 5).



Figure 5. José Pardo Bazar in the Old Town of Ávila (2021). Phase 3. Source: Author.

2.4.2. (To) National and Regional Policies and Standards

To contextualise the empirical work in an international perspective, it is appropriate to cross reference the above referred international approaches with national and regional heritage laws in Spanish WH cities and towns. The contemporary legal framework for the safeguarding of Historic Spanish Heritage dates back to 1985 and was designed to regulate the most important national heritage as Historic Sites and Monuments, in keeping with the guidelines set by UNESCO [1,2]. Based on the supranational documents, the national law details what constitutes Historic-Artistic Heritage—*Patrimonio histórico artístico*—in Spain: monuments, historic places and sites, gardens, and archaeological sites, all of which might require protection as “Assets of Cultural Interest”.

It is essential to highlight that in its preamble, Spanish law [3] emphasises the material relevance of the Historic-Artistic Heritage. In the case of vernacular architecture, this is only considered when connected to a specific craft or to an architectural form considered of traditional relevance. Crafts are viewed as minority aspects of culture to be studied and recorded (Art. 47). As regards the protection and the criteria for providing recognition,

the National Law [3] provides a single category of protection, that of “Asset of Cultural Interest”. This recognition eventually forces municipalities to draft Special Protection Plans for traditional areas and to catalogue individual assets and their associated outdoor spaces (Art. 37).

In WH nominations, Criteria ii and iii recognise the exchange of human values over time and the exceptionality of living cultural traditions. The reason for discussing these criteria is that Spanish National Law does not specifically contemplate the implicit dynamic iterations as heritage qualities. This is the case with WH cities and towns in Spain; small regional historic cities declared WH sites under Criteria i to iv. Nonetheless, an interpretation of the National Law and the statement for their nomination reveals that preference was given at the time to Criterion iv: “to be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history” (Table 2). Over time, this more “static” criterion, stemming from the Venice Charter, has prevailed over the rest of the criteria and nowadays, almost all WH cities and towns in Spain are suffering from governance issues. Following the implementation of the National Law, mayors have voiced grave concerns about the presence of inappropriate or anti-aesthetic elements and processes of decay and continuous abandonment. The heritage labelling itself resulted in the partial displacement of “anti-aesthetic” elements in the name of an institutionalised form of culture-making. The adoption of WH recommendations, their assimilation into the National Law, and their contextual implementation provide specific aesthetic and socio-cultural constraints which prevent alternative values from critically evolving in time and hinder the provision of appropriate surveillance methods for people inhabiting these sites.

Therefore, it seems relevant to clarify whether urban landscape protection provides an adequate assessment framework to catalyse cultural evolution and prevent WH cities and towns from enduring homogenising processes. At this point, the Spanish law for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage [55] helps further discuss the limited regulation of intangible heritage in the Spanish Historic Heritage Law [3]. At the time, the term intangible was used solely when referring to ethnographic heritage. However, the more recent law further defines what it considers Intangible Heritage Assets (Art. 2), and these include craftsmanship, crafts, and forms of collective socialisation and organisations, and are in keeping with the stipulations of the Valletta Principles [16]. The law [55] sets out general principles that the state, regions, and municipalities must respect when preparing and developing actions for the safeguarding of intangible heritage (Art. 3). These include the principle of the role of communities which carry intangible cultural heritage, as holders, maintainers, and legitimate users thereof; the principle of participation, to respect, maintain, and promote the prominence of groups, communities, organisations, and citizen associations in the recreation, transmission, and dissemination of intangible cultural heritage; the principle of dynamism inherent to the intangible cultural heritage, which by definition is a living heritage that responds to practices in constant change, with individuals, groups, and communities at the centre of them; the principle of sustainability of intangible cultural manifestations, avoiding quantitative and qualitative alterations of their cultural elements.

International charters and documents from ICOMOS [5,6,48,51], the European Landscape Convention [7], and UNESCO [8] also influenced the conceptual reframing of the National Law on Intangible Heritage [55] and various other regional laws on cultural heritage. The updated Valencian [56] and Basque [57,58] laws incorporated the potential of intangible heritage to be continually reinterpreted and “reconstructed”, subject to their continued intelligibility and legitimacy. The Valencian Law interprets cultural events as those which are an expression of traditions (Art. 26), while the Basque Law specifies in the explanatory memorandum that heritage should be “transmitted generationally and continuously recreated by communities, interacting with its environment and history in the form of identity, continuity, diversity, and creativity”.

At this point, it is important to refer to the cultural heritage laws from Castilla-León [59] and Castilla La Mancha [60], regions where most of the WH cities and towns in Spain are located. Regional laws there make no mention of the intangible nature of historic cities or *conjuntos históricos* (Art. 39). The latter refers only to adequate maintenance and harmonic interventions, while the former makes some reference to the values linked to Criteria ii and iii: “the conservation of (. . .) ethnographic and anthropological values, the landscape and the general characteristics of their environment” (Art. 42.2).

This fragment is quite open to interpretation, as underlying values and ideals can be particularly enduring and often upheld and articulated through knowledge, as well as through direct forms of creation maintained and promoted over time. Here, mainstream heritage eventually leads to the neglect or omission of minor expressions through occasional massive, direct, and forceful actions of control intentionally supporting specific values. Therefore, an ethical interpretation of policy allows correlating hidden structures of socio-cultural processes with institutionalised culture-making.

3. Results of the Theoretical and Empirical Work

The empirical work compiles the analysis of the elements explained in Figures 1–5 and is based on the experience transmitted by stakeholders. This mixed source is helpful beyond the academic and normative realm. The procedure looks for a truthful consideration of what inhabitants acknowledge as heritage and considers this social value among the historical and architectural ones. The outcome is a digital database of places, where the eventual presence and variations of characteristics allow future researchers to obtain quantitative statistics by further linking these values to others to be additionally retrieved in relation to leisure and tourism. Accordingly, integrating tangible and intangible elements into a spatial dataset is a feature of this research.

The study graphically analysed chosen areas by recording and photographing the elements and main features of craftsmanship. It resulted in a pool of more than 15,000 photographs on practices, ephemeral and fixed forms of craft, and other forms of expression and adaptation (Figures 1 and 2). A digital database, organised by city and street, helped gather all this visual information to be geo-referenced. We registered the different dwellings and associated the photographs that belonged to each of them. A range of colours categorised the pictures and helped conduct a qualitative and quantitative classification of urban environments (Figure 3).

Through interviews about cultural heritage elements and techniques, the general features of local architecture, and the daily life of WH areas, the study registered a holistic understanding of places; not merely the historical, architectural, or ethnographic, but the contemporary, social, and intangible. During interviews, neighbours raised questions and concerns about conservation and development, tourism, transport, and facilities, with all of them factors affecting their habitat. Responses revealed current fears and particular quirks linked to space usage. The significance of interviews relied on connecting them with the maps under analysis; in that way, specific zones of WH areas now serve to analyse pressures and abandon further development in these WH cities [30].

Accordingly, the three initial phases of the empirical work allowed the study to retrieve valuable information about formal and informal manifestations in WH areas. The zoning of the crucial areas at different levels helped see the evolution of practices and signal endangered zones. Using cartographic plans, the researcher prioritised analysing elements and streets according to their relevance.

The review of cultural policy demonstrates that it can be seen as an oppressive form of power if alien to local values. Adaptation to the individual characterisation of sites contributes to enriching heritage-making. Although these culturally diverse environments are not necessarily exotic or remote, they require a specific approach, knowledge, negotiation, and space for alternative perceptions on what constitutes the unconventional creation of space (Figures 2 and 4). The absence of recommendations for empirical approaches in the

national and regional heritage laws makes the heritage landscape alien to quotidian aspects of contemporary human–space interactions.

The local empirical methods for appraisal demonstrate how the urban realm can reflect culture and diversity in spatial elements (Figure 3). These vectors are redetermined through interactions among stakeholders' minor elements that build up neighbours' space. The term "cultural relevance" is widely referenced in the Burra Charter [48] when defining compatible uses, related places, objects, and interpretation (Art. 1). The empirical work has demonstrated how WH cities, scrutinised as local entities, should behold culture-making as an open and uncertain relational construction of space. After the theoretical analysis, the question that arises is how we can consider cultural policies from state parties to be open and assume unwritten forms of culture.

In the empirical realm, placemaking processes document tangible and intangible values and how they merge with the contextual diversity of alternative socio-spatial spaces. The existence of mainstream and alternative areas in WH cities paves the way for reconceptualising heritage values (Table 3). In addition, it is feasible in those areas that escape the constraints of existing predeterminations (Table 2). Accordingly, the results of the empirical work demonstrate how alternative socio-cultural processes emerge in unattended areas, those away from the main assets, and act as a contextual layer with the potential to become enduring alternative scenarios [32]. Thus, reclaiming and valorising the unattended spaces to ensure they are appropriately recognised and incorporated into the national and regional policies may favour cultural diversity and plural futures for historic urban landscapes.

The theoretical approach to correlate international values at the time of WH nominations (Table 2), together with the analysis of national and regional laws, demonstrate that policies still fail to convey contemporary dynamism and a variety of perceptions and values (Table 3). Nonetheless, today, UNESCO accepts creative and innovative local-making processes that result in critical dynamic processes eventually affecting the physical conservation of the historic environment. Accordingly, the dual range of values, tangible (static) and intangible (dynamic) [13], of these sites involves the difficult task, not yet adopted in national and regional policies, for developing integrative policies to both mobilise and include plural approaches to the urban scene protection. In this regard, the theoretical review demonstrates how governance processes fail to effectively engage "everyday" scenarios and confront ethical issues on subculture making and minorities' cultural vulnerability conveyed by the intangible character of sites (Figures 2 and 4).

Conversely, the theoretical review has demonstrated how international charters already emphasise the need for cultural policies, both national and regional, to contextualise the preservation of their own processes of artistic creation [7,19]. What has been demonstrated is that conservation policies fail to be critical in the contemporary context. National and regional policies still cull what must be included in the preservation processes. Hence, for the alternative to be recognised and perhaps preserved as it is, alternative policies require pluralistic forms of placemaking to acknowledge how the intangible, and perhaps more idiosyncratic, creations are preserved and sustained.

4. Discussion

International heritage conservation institutions now place society at the core of heritage-making processes. Nonetheless, the social value relies mainly on interactions, perception, and participation, and appears less concerned with contemporary production [19,61,62]. The implications of this have not yet been fully analysed and will determine the nature of heritage in the 21st century, particularly in cities where the key drivers of development take place [63]. Following this, the contemporary system of heritage values has favoured the collective dimension at a social level. In this sense, the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) approach aims to reinforce ideas of collectivism, creativity, and diversity [10,19,64]. This has been a continuous topic of discussion among academics specialising in urban governance [65–69]; nonetheless, minor forms of placemaking have been overlooked, failing to enhance plural and alternative culture-making in heritage sites.

The search for specificities in culture calls for new insights on how the approach and understanding of cultural heritage are brought about and assimilated differently. This specificity is what other authors refer to as an epistemology of urban informalities and innovations [10]. As a result, the question this paper addresses is how the notions of creativity, culture, and context need to embrace informalities and whether these informalities are part of the social value, empirically and theoretically (Table 3). The HUL approach already mentioned that there is a need for “a new generation of urban planning integrating territorial values with local ones, and historic layers with the present-day environment, because the present day is so significant that it has to be reflected concretely. This includes the young generations, digital technologies, our ways of communication and interaction, etc. The present-day should be very actively reflected” [70]. Nonetheless, the HUL approach has been scarcely implemented (Table 2) and demonstrates that outdated forms of governance may still prevail. Accordingly, the extent to which communities have been subjected for decades to direct or indirect forms of cultural regulation requires examining the connectedness between placemaking, power, and space. This becomes even more necessary as the role of heritage-making today considers new values and forms of governance [71].

After 30 years of WH nominations, the cases under study require actualisation in theoretical and methodological terms. Reviewing nominations under new practice-based methodologies, such as the HUL approach, helps collect alternative scenarios in WH cities, challenging the constructed images of the past by policies and forcing new arguments on the cultural diversity of sites. The stance expressed in this research is that past conceptualisations of sites incorporate assumptions regarding the desirable and undesirable in change, modification, and transformation of cultural heritage. New forms of aesthetic appraisal (values) help embrace forms of local-making and contest the loss of cultural vitality and the perception of undesirable changes in the urban imagery.

International methodologies promoting alternative placemaking and complementary place-based values (Table 3) are not applied yet to WH nominations. The way these places are ruled cannot engage with the diverse and heterogeneous iterations, with distinctive and innovative cultural structures emerging from concepts closer to the dynamic realm of the intangible. Depending on the context, these cultural structures can be seen as part of “disordered”, abandoned and, isolated environments, escaping from policies and the power they exercise. These areas emerged as contestation and provided a different cultural rhythm. However, it is compelling for heritage laws and policies to make past and contemporary parallel scenarios coexist in a shared space.

Recognising these spaces is a way to tackle the failure of the displacement of emotional and humane aspects in cultural appraisal when merely recognising the material value. The occasional carelessness of conservation policies has the potential to cull the diversity, originality, and creativity of interpretations and how they build up distinctive everyday places. The configuration of what constitutes contemporary culture in the historic city materialises as social constructs that coexist partly or totally disengaged from dominant forms of governance.

The empirical work has helped ascertain how it can help culture evolve in historic environments by acquiring new forms of expression and being part of the sequential stratification of the contemporary epoch. Allowing empirical practices entails accepting informalities and the different ways in which individuals and societies experience the place. Spanish cultural policy barely interprets these *conjuntos históricos* as alive habitats likely to stratify socio-culturally. The historic city evolves through time by hosting relationships of superposition (actualisation), succession (cohabitation), and continuity (abandonment). It also hosts phenomena that break up and cross temporal discontinuities (displacement and relocation); something that is inherent to a dynamic stratigraphic process.

Incorporating informal local practices into urban conservation reflects the importance of cultural variations in creating plural and lasting structures in the contemporary WH city. This study appeals to minorities and the particularities of local placemaking when challenging the conventions put forward in WH criteria and national laws. These terms

are exposed as arguments calling for change in the conceptualisation of culture and values by national and regional laws, and their application to local heritage conservation. To this end, this study has focused specifically on Criteria ii and iii (Table 2) to reach an actualised understanding of socio-cultural values (Table 3).

The problem of adequately engaging past and present forms of legacy has been exacerbated by methodological challenges. Today, innovative practices focus on socio-cultural nodes of heritage values, resources, interpretation, management, development, promotion, and wellbeing, with the major endeavour of integrating diverse voices. These methodologies applied in a specific cultural area highlight the importance of raising awareness about what is entailed in an intellectual and political space, on the understanding that intellectual exploration depends on contemporary discourses of values and the local implementation of global forms of assessment.

Methods for “managing action” seek a truthful consideration of what is acknowledged as heritage under a sort of as-yet-unresolved dualism between authentic places to visit and authentic places to live in. The city, understood as living cultural processes, exposes historic environments to unconventional determinations of space in which cultural transpositions and simulations offer the potential for new and heterogeneous interpretations in continuous recontextualization. By reviewing Bandarin [63], it is unclear yet how contemporary appraisals are specifically tackling ethical issues for local culture-making. Nonetheless, these contemporary appraisals foster alternative forms of culture production and perception, as processes of recognition capable of restoring knowledge and sensibilities in intertwined scenarios of the past [32,72]. These cultural hybridisations bring interpretation, ingenuity, intentionality, and improvisation, offering multiple options for places to explain meanings that may unintentionally result in idiosyncratic innovation and experimentation (the values described in Table 3).

In this study, the theoretical analysis has dissected how the conscious adaptation of regulations affects preserving static values. The empirical work has reflected how the unconscious adoption of more dynamic structures might be a helpful contribution towards the recognition of new forms of heritage values at protected sites. In this regard, the appraisal methodology and the critical evaluation of theory affect decisions and the dilemma of whether more practice or theory-based approaches are better suited to a specific site. Sensitive methodological approaches face the problem to oppose obsolete forms of policy. Hence, international methods of evaluation, such as those that have guided the empirical approach, need redefinition locally. Policy needs review for governments to endorse renewed approaches, with ethical processes placed at the core intention of methodologies and according to local realities.

5. Conclusions

Historic environments are not subject to incidental activities but to theoretical constraints and the role of practices in different scenarios. This study refers to approaches that do not shy away from mutability and informal practices when the interpretation of laws and policies is at stake. It shows the pressing need to accept plural interpretations into the urban landscape conservation process as an added value, promoting conditions for role innovation and the dynamism of culture-making.

This research concludes that cultural diversity comes with empirical approaches when incorporating new, local, and perhaps minor forms of valorisation. Besides, the research claims that national and regional policies endorse empirical practices. This paradigm moves away from the vernacularising connotations of policies, and introduces meanings related to objects that evolve in time and into the contemporary habitation of space. Finally, the study demonstrates that empirical and theoretical approaches are complementary and necessary to oversee how heritage landscapes evolve, treating WH nominations as dynamic processes and values.

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