

Dissonant Heritage and Urban Development Policies

Exploring future opportunities for inclusive
and resilient cities

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PRESENTATION

For urban development strategies, Heritage conservation has always been a challenge but also an incredible opportunity. Celebrated as a source for strengthening a sense of belonging, a shared identity, and rootedness, Cultural Heritage is a crucial element for keeping alive what Herb Stovel defined as a “sense of continuity.” In this framework, however, in the last years, we are facing the duty to deal with discordant interpretations of cultural assets (think, for example, cancel culture) or the necessity to envisage the future of places that remind us of traumatic events, for instance, the so-called Dissonant Heritage, which is, by definition, divisive.

Based on what was experienced and learned in Porto and Guimarães and extending the thought to the bigger international picture, this paper is a reflection on the possibility of turning these dissonances into a chance for better understanding contemporary complexities, to turn these controversies into a crucial point for building more inclusive and resilient cities. Dialogue and an open mind toward a shift of perspective at the base of conservation policies of Dissonant Heritage could help foster cutting-edge urban development strategies, holding high the goal of treating it as a tool of reconciliation between the communities that should take care of it.

INTRODUCTION [LS, AZ, EM]

The group “Heritage CONSERVATION *versus* Urban DEVELOPMENT” (Animateur: Paul Arnold, Rapporteur: Raluca-Maria Trifa) centred on a meaningful debate about the role of Heritage in Urban Development policies, discussing how Cultural Heritage can trigger sustainable development at different levels (for Culture, Economy, Society and Environment). In particular, participants focused on a new association/relationship of the terms in the group’s title, shifting from “*versus*” to “through,” defining a new one – Urban DEVELOPMENT Through Heritage CONSERVATION – as a declaration of intentions. The point of the discussion helped us broaden the abstract proposal about the Dissonant Heritage role in this development, better rooting the topic into Porto’s reality and pushing the Authors to dig into the aspects of risk assessment and risk mitigation. The contribution provides three consequential paragraphs: 1. An overview of recent international actions and the Sustainable Development Goals dealing with the urban issue in relation to Dissonant Heritage; 2. Dissonant Heritage as an emerging opportunity that can boost a sustainable urban development even starting from difficult premises; 3. A reflection on the Colonialist Heritage of Porto, how it raises new values and sense of equity and democracy.

Cultural Heritage is intrinsically linked to the surrounding environment and, consequently, to its related natural and anthropogenic risks. Global changes initiated in past centuries and particularly investing our own, are modifying the settings of and posing new threats to our historic built environment. Urban planning actions and cultural and natural heritage management strategies directly impact the preservation and safeguarding of historical assets. This renders increasingly urgent the need to define a shared approach at different levels that supplements good heritage conservation practices with sustainable urban development (UNESCO 2011; Bandarin and van Oers 2012). As already introduced, it is from these considerations that the TIB working group shared reflections on how sustainable urban development can be achieved through heritage conservation, moving away from the view that pits these two spheres against each other.

According to a 2018 report, 55% of the global population lives in urban areas (UN DESA 2018), with trends increasing. Another highlights how the built environment is responsible for nearly 40% of global greenhouse gas emissions (UN 2022). Rapid urban transformation has led to increasing water and air pollution, loss of biodiversity, and desertification (IPCC 2014). Moreover, human actions are related to increasing greenhouse emissions, the main cause of climate change (IPCC 2014). Under this light, the historic built environment, although constituting the minor part of cities, is inevitably affected by these changes. Increased tourist demand, growing gentrification, and the need for continuous innovation, in addition to the ongoing climatic changes, can be a threat to the historic heritage if not perfectly balanced with preservation and conservation practices (Bandarin and van Oers 2012).

At first, culture and development were considered two opposing dimensions (Bandarin and van Oers 2012). However, in the last decades the cultural heritage field has been invested by an ongoing paradigm shift promoting heritage as an asset to pursue sustainable development goals (UN 2002; Smeltzer 2013; Hosagrahar et al. 2016; Wiktor-Mach 2018; ICOMOS and IUCN 2018). Although voices still emphasize the need to strengthen this relationship (Labadi et al. 2021), the relevance of culture and heritage to support sustainable development is now globally recognized (UN 2015). As emerged during the group discussion, supported also by the vision shared by ICOMOS (2021), in its evolving and dynamic intrinsic features, heritage promotes social cohesion, identity and memory enabling development.

Through the years, UNESCO has been a strong supporter for the inclusion of culture both as driver and enabler in the sustainable development discourse, working to strengthen and consolidate the culture-development nexus (Wiktor-Mach 2020). As a landmark document for the recognition of relations between heritage conservation and development, the Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape were outlined in 2011 (Hosagrahar et al. 2016; Bokova 2021).

The international non-binding framework document encouraged an integrated approach for the preservation and management of cultural heritage with policies and practices for sustainable urban development (UNESCO 2011). In support of the ongoing efforts to increasingly integrate culture within the sustainable development sphere, the document states that “the principle of sustainable development provides for the conservation of existing resources, the active protection of urban heritage and its sustainable management is a condition *sine qua non* of development” (UNESCO 2011).

The lack of full integration of the role of culture for sustainable development at the RIO+20 Conference (Wiktor-Mach 2020) led UNESCO to recognise the need to incentivise greater efforts to place culture at the heart of the global sustainability agenda (UNESCO 2013). A breakthrough in this regard was the Hangzhou Declaration, which included pressures for the inclusion of culture within the next international framework for sustainable development.

With an innovative approach compared to the prior fifteen-year Millennium Development Goals, in 2015 the UN Agenda 2030 was adopted by all the 193 member states (UN 2015). The new global framework addresses the major challenges of our time, such as climate change and sustainable development, recognising the latter as a global shared journey to which everyone must contribute (UN 2015). The Agenda 2030 foresees 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be fulfilled in the following 15 years. The specific 169 targets included in the action plan aim at addressing the main issues related to development, including actions for sustainable cities (SDG 11) and climate change (SDG 13). However, some argue that more could have been done to emphasize the importance of heritage and tie it more closely to the SDGs, such as the Culture 2030 Goal campaign.

Regardless, although there is no SDG entirely devoted to culture, reference to culture across the Agenda 2030 is found in several of the SDGs and explicitly in SDG 11.4. Contained within the so-called “Urban SDG,” this target aims to “make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” by increasing efforts for the protection and safeguarding of cultural and natural heritage (UN 2015). Moreover, culture in its broader meaning is mentioned to inform other SDGs and targets, among others, related to education (SDG 4.7 highlights the role of culture in fighting violence and promote cultural diversity), and sustainable tourism (SDG 8.9 and 12b encourage practices in this sense, including local culture and products).

The Agenda 2030, with its holistic approach, connects all the most recent global frameworks and agendas, each of them informed by the culture dimension and closely related to cultural heritage. Among others, the Sendai Framework aimed at reducing risks from disasters (UNDRR 2015), the Paris Agreement following the COP21 dealing with climate change (UN Framework Convention on Climate Change 2015) and the Habitat III Conference which led to the development of a New Urban Agenda in 2016.

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR), formulated in 2015 by the UN, is the first global agreement after the implementation of the Agenda 2030 and includes specific references to cultural heritage. Through seven targets, it aims at reducing the impacts of disasters and in doing so, safeguarding development gains. Bearing in mind that climate change is one of the major compelling challenges of our time and a threat to progress towards sustainable development (UNDRR 2016), also by triggering and amplifying extreme events and disasters in frequency and intensity (IPCC 2014), this phenomenon undermines economic growth and social progress. On the one hand, the SFDRR recognises the urgency of reducing disaster risk to protect cultural heritage; on the other, it emphasises the role of the heritage sector in increasing resilience to climate change (UNDRR 2015).

In 2016, the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Development “Habitat III” held a special session related to “Urban Culture and Heritage” (UNESCO 2015). In close alignment with the Agenda 2030, the meeting resulted in the definition of the New Urban Agenda, which poses cultural heritage as one of the main components for sustainable development strategies. Moreover, it recognises the role of cultural heritage as a driver to enhance community participation and responsibility (UNESCO 2015).

Under this framework, the experiences from participants of TIB Group stimulated the discussion and sharing of reflections and examples of how cultural heritage can serve as a promoter for social cohesion and an engine for strengthening a sense of belonging and collective identity. Moreover, insights emerged on how it supports fostering the knowledge of the places’ history and the valorisation of the historic parts of cities, also through sustainable tourism. Finally, expanding from what has already been emphasised by Hosagrahar et al. (2016), the group agreed on the contribution that urban cultural heritage in all its wider expressions can give to promoting the liveability of cities, and the historic built environments demonstrate mixed use and adaptation through times, sustaining reuse and restoration of historic buildings at valid circular processes, at the base of sustainable development.

Within the built environment, many cities host heritage sites representing controversial aspects of our twentieth-century history. This heritage has been the witness of some controversial events in European history, inherently mirroring the political representations of the time. The history that distinguishes this heritage carries with it a history that is at times turbulent and traumatic, incorporating the tensions of painful events of the past into the heritage building process and making it extremely tangible, leading to it being perceived often as “uncomfortable” or “dissonant” heritage.

At European level, the Urban Agenda, established with the Pact of Amsterdam (2016), specifically addresses the topic of Dissonant Heritage. Within the Partnership on Culture and Cultural Heritage (CCHP 2020), coordinated jointly by Germany and Italy, the Urban Agenda dedicates its Action 10 to “Integrated Approaches to Dissonant Heritage.” The aim of the Action is twofold. Firstly, the intention is to advocate for greater integration of Dissonant Heritage in urban and

regional development, to ensure proper conservation and sustainable development (Potz and Scheffer 2022). Secondly, it promotes the crucial role of Dissonant Heritage for educational purposes on history and democracy, as a possibility for reflection on controversial past events, in alignment with the broader intents of SDG 4.7. Within the sustainable development discourse, heritage dissonance can – and should – promote a paradigm shift from being an uncomfortable element to being seen as a resource for resistance to hegemonic discourses, becoming a condition that promotes multicultural societies built on history-aware discussions arising from multiple points of view that would converge in the values of awareness, inclusion, and acceptance (Kisić 2016). The following paragraph deepens these reflections, bringing examples on the potential of dissonant heritage to support urban sustainable development.

DISSONANT HERITAGE AS AN OPPORTUNITY [LS]

In the urban context, the issues related to Dissonant Heritage play a key role in the Urban Agenda of the European Union, which represents a new multi-level working method, for urban policy and practice, aimed to foster cooperation especially between Member States, Cities and the European Commission. As introduced above, the Urban Agenda recognizes the importance of a collective transnational reflection about this legacy in order to better address urban policies. Some important results are included in the documentation of the “Participatory lab Integrated Approaches for Dissonant Heritage in Europe in the framework of EU Regions Week,” organised within the Urban Agenda (11 October 2022). The objective of the lab was to increase awareness of the value and potential of Dissonant Heritage, with a special focus on the heritage from the twentieth century, which is furthermore one of the common points with the analysis “The World Heritage List. Filling the Gaps” (ICOMOS 2004) where the future prospects for the inclusion of new properties in the UNESCO Heritage List are defined. In the document, among the identified gaps, a particularly significant role is given to the narrative of modern architecture and the twentieth century more generally, with respect to what it stated as an unequivocal principle that “the 20th century is now history” (ICOMOS 2004: 42). The statement is obviously an invitation to deal with recent history, and it is clear that alongside more symbolically neutral architectures, easier to be recognized as heritage (such as, for instance, the UNESCO sites “The Architectural Work of Le Corbusier,” “The 20th-Century Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright” or “Tugendhat Villa in Brno”), the twentieth century presents the raw



FIG. 1 Berlin, The Herero stone in Berlin vandalized (Berlin's most controversial monument is vandalized 2023).

nerves of recent history, for example the legacy of non-democratic regimes and the phenomenon of colonialism.

Taking a step back with regard to the lab promoted by the Urban Agenda, as stated in the final document “Dissonant heritage is part of European history and cultural heritage. ... ‘Dissonant’ is not to be understood as a property inherent in any specific heritage site, but rather as a symptom that arises against a complex background of social, political and historical conditions” (Urban Agenda 2022). To explore the potential on urban development three parallel thematic tables dealt with some crucial aspects: the first “Dissonance against Environment and Climate,” the second “Wars and conflicts (previous and current)” and the third “Colonialism /racism.” The latter in particular explores an open issue that also concerns the city of Porto, which is intended to be reflected upon in this article.

Colonialism is one of the dissonant aspects which connects different kind of assets, often well-established silent presences in our urban context, where we can identify these “contaminated landscapes” (Pollack 2016). These range from the single artwork/piece – such as Edward Colston’s statue in Bristol crafted in 1895 or the Herero Stone located in Berlin-Neukölln which bears the memory of the German genocide in Namibia – to the remnants of public event – such as the Portuguese colonial exhibition of 1934 in Porto – to entire cities based on the conqueror’s urbanistic vision – as in the case of Asmara, inscribed on the UNESCO world list in 2017. It implies an effort on the part of both the territories subjected to colonialism and the colonisers to recast uncomfortable presences. Indeed, while on the one hand we have sites that bear traces (and wounds) of colonial aggression, by a kind of equal and opposite reaction, those monuments that the conquerors erected with the intention of celebrating their territorial expansions are proportionately difficult. It is precisely this equal and opposite force that the vestiges of colonialism unleash that allow us to think about how working together with communities on these issues on both sides can benefit urban development, so that it can be “sustainable” precisely by using this particular heritage as a driver. Some virtuous cases taken from the two opposite “banks” offer the signal to understand how to turn di-values into values or, at least, to recognise the distance covered from the controversial moment in history as an adequate depth to trace a path to redemption.

The already mentioned Herero stone in Berlin was erected to commemorate the German colonization of Namibia (FIG. 1), especially the repression of the Herero and Nama revolts against colonial rule that resulted in genocide (Pallaver 2017). The activities promoted from the Museum Neukölln in 2022 are a good example of how to involve community around a divisive symbol. Since 2022, the museum has been in charge of representing the Department of Urban History and Remembrance Culture, which is why it is thus involved in all questions of cultural memories characterised by diversity, including the Nazi era and using postcolonial structures to moderate transcultural dialogues.

The Stumbling Stone Project therefore is the result of some workshops organized by the Museum gathering together students from Berlin-Neukölln and Windhoek-Namibia. During the activities a first phase was for studying data and facts about the genocide and talking about it together, followed by an artistic performance aimed at developing future-oriented works cooperatively supported by German and Namibian students. They had to make their own small memorials as part of the workshop and these objects (small clay sculptures) were taken to the Herero Stone – located in a cemetery in Columbiadamm – and added as a contemporary cultural layer symbolising the incessant process of memory, that is subject to constant change. The objective was to make cohesion out of a symbol of division, making contemporary values out of historical dis-values, fostering a dialogue between two cultures to push the new generation to go beyond the traditional narrative and shape a meeting ground on (and over) the stone. In spite of the work carried out by the museum, there are reports on the Internet (“Berlin’s most controversial monument is vandalized... again,” 2023) that the stone was recently vandalised with an inscription in black letters, “No racist commemoration of Nazis and the perpetrators of genocide,” a sign that a constant cultural supervision of these monuments/artefacts is more necessary than ever.

On the other side, Asmara is a testimony of how colonisation has become a driving force for urban development and a point of reworking events that belong to a difficult past. “Asmara: A Modernist African City” was inscribed on the WHL in 2017 as “one of the most complete and intact collections of modernist/rationalist architecture in the world” (criterion iv, UNESCO 2017) but it is also a place that symbolises colonialism and the effort to find Eritrean identity in the struggle for self-determination (criterion ii). The reason that pushed UNESCO can be found in the outstanding example of Italian rationalist language and early modernist urbanism at the beginning of the twentieth century applied to an African context, and, at the same time, in the role that the segregation had on Asmara’s development. The city “contributed significantly to Eritrea’s particular response to the tangible legacies of its colonial past. Despite the evidence of its colonial imprint, Asmara has been incorporated into the Eritrean identity, acquiring important meaning during the struggle for self-determination that motivated early efforts for its protection” (criterion ii, UNESCO 2017). The outstanding urban features of Asmara have been considered a starting point for the contemporary narration, without forgetting the subjugation of the Eritrean people and the hard path to their redemption.

It is possible to observe that sites related to a dissonance, to a trauma, therefore could act as “a true mediator and producer of memory, a subject operator of new rewritings, an agent among others that contributes to creating the interpretive clothes of a given collective historical experience” (Violi 2014). Porto, classified as UNESCO site in 1996, allows a reflection on the colonial legacy and the role it can play.



FIG. 2 Guimarães, People posing in front of Dom Afonso Henriques's statue, 2022.

Cultural Heritage has always played a crucial role in describing the balance of power among different groups within the society, becoming a strategic tool for cultural policies. This relation is clearly made explicit through the so-called “intentional monuments” (but not only), which plainly represent the manifested translation of the values with which a community identifies.

This connection between dissonant heritage and the acknowledgement of shifted values, can strongly influence a sustainable urban development; beyond being divisive and not commonly shared by communities at first sight, this difficult legacy could foster new ways of understanding the built environment – it can be a trigger to involve communities and push them to find a space of relationship and confrontation, a sort of liminal space. The dissonance that is often embedded in cultural heritage talks precisely about possible mutations in the scale of values or offers the opportunity to consider different perspectives from the mainstream ones, capable of bringing historically marginalized positions to the table for debate. In this sense reflecting today about aware preservation policies of this heritage can be crucial to promote a more democratic society.

During the visit to Guimãraes, for example, it was possible to discover how the statue of Dom Afonso Henriques, Portugal's first king, is still deeply permeated with a unanimously shared consensus (FIG. 2). As he was considered responsible for the creation of the nation, his role was never questioned over time, and neither was his statue, erected at a time, in 1887, when most of the European countries were rooting themselves in a nation-state polity. Other Portuguese examples might be relevant to understand the potentialities of Dissonant Heritage for a sustainable development. This is the case of the Portuguese Colonial Exhibition; the world fair was organised between June 16 and September 30, 1934, by the *Estado Novo* regime under António de Oliveira Salazar (Neves Alves 2021). The exhibition was meant to celebrate the Portuguese colonial achievements in Africa and Asia. Inside the 400 pavilions located in the Crystal Palace gardens, the native people from the colonies were exhibited like curiosities, their traditional settlements were reproduced, and their cultures were proudly showed off (Neves Alves 2021). Moreover, the replica of significant monuments, the streets renamed after “exotic” places such as Avenida da Índia, Estrada Angolana, Avenida Mozambique, metaphorically allowed local people to travel all around the world satisfying their anthropological interest, or more naively, the inquisitiveness that characterised those years.

However, at the same time, the exhibition served a crucial propaganda purpose. For the regime that promulgated the 1930 Colonial Act, indeed, it was important to strengthen the idea of a Portuguese Empire based on a multicultural colonialism, thanks to which the descendant of the glorious sailors and discoverers could help other people to evolve in their civilization (Neves Alves 2021). A specific example of this rhetoric can be traced to the decision of erecting a temporary monument in front of the main building, meant to praise the Portuguese Colonial Efforts (FIG. 3).

If at the time the fair was visited by 1.3 million people (Neves Alves 2021), decades later, it is now possible not only to observe the consequences entrenched in the colonialisation process, but those nested in the exhibition as well. Instead of promoting a real multicultural society, it emphasised the clash of cultures and supported a dynamic of power that exacerbated a rift between the indigenous populations coming from the colonies and the citizen from the continent.

And it is exactly the above-mentioned monument that today proves this shift of perspective and provides an interesting key to interpreting the present. Created by Alberto Ponce and sculptor José de Sousa Caldas, the statue was ten meters high comprising six human figures with a symbol on their torso, standing around a pillar, representing the personifications of colonisation. The warrior, the missionary, the merchants, the doctor, the farmer, and the woman were meant to be impermanent and were thus made from plaster, so at the end of the fair the monument was dismantled. Nevertheless, in 1984, after long discussions and ten years after the end of the regime, the sculpture was rebuilt using a more durable material, stone, 5 km away. For a long time, it was ignored, but in June 2018, because of the values (or better dis-values) is epitomised, the statue was vandalised, and the feet of the human figures were painted with a red spray varnish.

Something similar happened to the Monument to the Discoveries in Lisbon. In the shape of a caravel bow, recalling the people, the faith, the weapons, and the navigating tools of the age of the overseas navigations, the huge statue celebrated the period of the discoveries. It was built on the waterside of the Square of Empire constructed during the 1940 Exhibition, exactly where the ships used to set sail, and, like its Porto counterpart, it was meant to be dismantled after the fair.

Also in this case, in 1960, according to the aspiration to monumentalise the imperial imaginary connected to the Portuguese Colonial War, the *Estado Novo* regime came to the decision of rebuilding the monument in a bigger scale, commemorating the 500 years of the death of Henry of the Navigator. Despite being in an area that was used, in the 1970s, as a neglected storage of wooden containers for the modern immigrants from the colonies (Neves Alves 2021), the monuments became one of the most sought-after tourist spots of the city. Nevertheless, contemporary protests did not spare it, and today activists regularly vandalise the base with writings of dissent (FIG. 4).

These provocative gestures regularly occurring to both the monuments in Porto and Lisbon, scathingly labelled as disrespectful, have the power to raise awareness on the need for a deeper understanding and more attentive interpretation of the colonialist past.

An attempt on this regard is being made by the artist Barbara Neves Salves in collaboration with the theatre maker Pedro Manuel and the sculptor Daniel Silva for the Monuments to the Portuguese Colonial Efforts in Porto. In the frame of the Faculty of Fine Arts of the city and the cultural space Maus Hábitos, thanks to the creation of a silicon casts of the six symbols of the statues, they kicked off a speculative workshop, engaging a debate with local community on how to create positive memory starting from this dissonant memory (Neves Salves



FIG. 3 Porto, Portuguese Colonial Exhibition, view of the main building and of the Monuments to the Portuguese Monuments to Colonial Effort in the Square of the Empire (Neves Alves 2021).



FIG. 4 Lisbon, Padrão dos Descobrimentos vandalised (Dickmans 2022).



FIG. 5 Porto, the realisation of the silicon casts of the Portuguese Monuments to Colonial Effort produced during the speculative workshop (Neves Alves 2021).



FIG. 6 Brussels, statue of Émile Pierre Joseph Storms in Ixelles. Wikicommons.



FIG. 7 Brussels, the cleansing of the statue of Leopold II. Available at: <<https://www.itv.com/news/2020-06-30/who-was-belgian-king-leopold-ii-and-why-is-his-statue-being-pulled-down>> [Accessed 30 May 2023].



FIG. 8 Brussels, Detail of the hands of Leopold II statue.

2023) (FIG. 5). The artistic practice, moving from the physical consistency of the monument, paved the way for a fruitful confrontation testifying the strong potential of this Dissonant Heritage to raise a conscious Heritage Discourse, able to overcome selective narratives.

The “glorious period” has long been celebrated. Consider, for example, how the uniqueness and authenticity of local traditional techniques that characterise the birth and evolution of Guimãraes’s historic centre since medieval times and their ability to influence the architecture of colonised cities in Africa and the New World are among the main reasons for its inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List (UNESCO 2001). But the social, cultural, and economic repercussions of this period must now be more deeply indagated, trying to transcend the politically targeted narration that entailed the “amnesic consequences” described by Cardina (2016).

After the death of George Floyd, thanks to the Black Lives Matter movement, the same sentiment pervaded the whole world and the statues of past authorities involved in the slave trade or colonial activities started to be steadily contested. It happened in Bristol, where the already-mentioned Edward Colston statue was torn from its pedestal and thrown into the river. After heated debates, the statue was moved to the museum of local history where it is displayed in a pool of water lying horizontally, a testament to the changed set of values of the community.

The same occurred recently in Brussels where the statue of Émile Pierre Joseph Storms in Ixelles (FIG. 6) and the more renowned equestrian statue of Leopold II, promoter of the brutal conquest of Congo, are periodically painted in red by activists and promptly cleaned by the municipality. Still, despite the cleansing, the municipality decided to keep light traces of the red varnishes and with a strong symbolism these bloody coloured pigments are left on the king’s hands (FIGG. 7-8).

Moreover, a specific commission was established in November 2020, the first in Europe, to investigate possible strategies to decolonise the public space of the capital. The results of the commissions involved the commitment to foster new studies, promote cooperation between the states, enshrine commemorative days for the colonial victims, the creation of dedicated monuments, the opening of a museum about the colonial history, and the claim not to erase the traces of colonisation, but to avoid a distorted and asymmetric narrative between white colonisers and black colonised (Chambre des Représentants de Belgique 2021; Commission Spéciale Passé Colonial 2021). Significantly related to this topic, in March 2023 CIVA Museum in Brussels launched the project “Style Congo. Heritage and Heresy” which is currently hosting exhibitions, specific talks, and guided visits of the city, to address the traces of colonisation in the public space. Accordingly, what emerged as crucial from the Commission report is the need to put participatory processes, involving the largest possible community, at the base of any intervention on this controversial heritage. As underlined during the workshop, indeed, managing the risk of controversies, bitterness and clashes among different social, ethnic or religious groups, as any other risk, requires short-, medium- and long-term strategies based on education, communication and participation, three key pillars which can affect the quality of citizen lives.

This approach, embracing the 2005 Faro Convention, puts who deals with cultural heritage preservation in charge of a new responsibility, that is to say the awareness that dealing with Dissonant Heritage has to set the conditions to turn this legacy into a driver for a sustainable development supporting democracy, social equity, inclusion and cultural enrichment, with a view to the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

CONCLUSION [LS, AZ, EM]

All considered, going back to the fundamental theme discussed by the group during the workshop, the reflections presented here allowed for the exploration of the potentialities that Dissonant Heritage can offer in supporting urban development. Firstly, the direct connection of Dissonant Heritage with the events that marked it can encourage critical reflections on our past. In a general understanding of history dominated by the narration proposed by hegemonic groups, it could support the negotiation of the past, that is to say its questioning and understanding as underlined by Macdonald (2009). It can serve as a driver to promote dialogue among communities for democratic cohesion, it can reduce social inequalities, promote inclusiveness, and create more resilient places. Furthermore, adaptively reusing Dissonant Heritage, with adequate conservation principles, can sustain local development on environmental, economic, and cultural perspectives, deeply embedding the concept of sustainable development.

George Perry Floyd Jr. was an African American man. On May 25, 2020, he was murdered by a white police officer during an arrest in Minneapolis, Minnesota (US). Black Lives Matter is an international movement, born in 2013, committed to fighting racism against Black communities.

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