



RESEARCH PAPER

Exploring the Community Perspective to Participate in the Built Heritage Conservation

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ABSTRACT

This research focussed on exploring the intentions and perspectives of the community to participate in built heritage conservation in different roles. Communities play a pivotal role in the conservation of built heritage due to their indigenous knowledge, cultural practices and lived experience that usually shapes the identity of the place. This research employed qualitative research design for exploration of the community understanding, views, motivation and perceived roles in the conservation process. The results revealed a strong willingness among community members to engage in the built heritage conservation process. The study concluded with the living heritage concept that is mainly focussed on the involvement of the community, being the main custodians for sustainable heritage conservation. The recommendations defined the role of community at various levels of built heritage conservation process including decision-making, knowledge sharing and interpretation for long-term stewardship.

KEYWORDS Community Perspective, Willingness, Built Heritage, Conservation, Pakistan

Introduction

The conservation of built heritage is a complex process that does not allow any change to the original condition of the monument, rather it just preserves the structure and if the maintenance or repair is required it is to be done under set rules. Built Heritage Conservation is very critical as it is the only way to restore the heritage and save it for the future generation, it is a scientific technique of protection and restoration. In today's world, the concept of conservation highlights the importance of the people connected to it. The definition of importance is about the cultural values which inspire them to have an association with the built heritage. It is natural to conserve the values and traditions people have with the monuments. Communities associate themselves with a quality of a place by firmly getting attached to the values (Dadizadeh and Doğan, 2024). A heritage monument is a just material object when the quality of the place is not mentioned. The people are attached to the monument with time. An expert will keep in mind that the value of a heritage zone is recognized by its host community and their sentiments and sense of belonging is of great importance. Heritage values are preserved by citizens and the generations also play a part in the enhancement of the values. Cultural traditions play a vital role in a conservation process by maintaining values sustaining traditional values in historically rich surroundings. The change in historic surroundings is basic to a fundamental to a conservation journey. A systematic understanding of who is emotionally involved in a place and why they do so is therefore necessary. To conclude, community participation in the conservation of built heritage is very important as this process helps in the protection of the worthy. Significance is granted to heritage monuments through the mechanism they represent and people time and again find a connection to the built heritage through these elements. Good conservation practice is therefore achieved by accepting the values people attach to the built heritage.

Worldwide all regions are working on this new idea of community participation. In Europe, community participation is being practiced for a longer period now and it has shown very fruitful results. But in the Asian region, the concept is a new one and is being employed rapidly. The African region which is considered the most backward, surprisingly they have shown significant improvement in this regard. "Locals in Africa have been impulsive in the conservation when they gave value to the traditional knowledge" (Abraham Zerai, 2018).

Far east countries like Hongkong, China, Thailand, and Korea are on their road to finding the link between heritage conservation and the community. East Europe is relatively slow in this concept however in Turkey this concept has worked wonders, in Langkawi, Malaysia is the region that is taking the concept of community participation in heritage conservation to a higher level. Central Asian countries also have their share in this concept but China and Europe take the lead and have the success stories to share with the rest of the world.

The conservation of heritage is managed to make sure that heritage does not vanish and remains fresh for today and for the coming generation. The concept of conservation of built heritage has grown over the last centuries and today the concept of conservation emphasized the people living in the vicinity of the monument. It is about the traditions of the host community (Dadizadeh & Doğan, 2024). The idea is to discover the importance of community-led methods, if used in the conservation work, particularly the concept of a meaningful participatory process in conservation. The debate of historic conservation today is shifting the centre of attention from the physical involvement of a site to a more integrated approach, which involves also the social contexts of built heritage. There is a rising awareness that heritage can benefit society in the development of identities. Community participation then becomes a fundamental part of the contemporary conservation process. How to manage the process of public involvement is key to active and meaningful community participation, and it requires the use of a system to translate and solicit these processes. This research is focussed on exploring the community perspective for the involvement in the built heritage conservation.

Literature Review

The involvement of the Community in heritage conservation takes place all over the world. It has been part of the global authoritative bodies' agenda to involve the community directly related to the built heritage conservation as described below.

"Authorities are given a chance to make sure that contribution of other parties like locals, NGO'S and site managers in the heritage conservation procedure" (UNESCO, 2016) Conservation of a place should not be done without the contribution of the people who have a deep relationship with the heritage monuments" (ICOMOS,1999) "involvement of the locals in the suggested route is important to share the responsibility of the maintenance of the heritage area" (WHC,1995)

The examples of contribution are categorized into five steps

- Definition of Heritage
- Policy development
- Support of built
- Fortification of built Heritage
- Built Heritage is used as a tool for community development

(Joint Project COMUS and EUROCITIES; 2018)

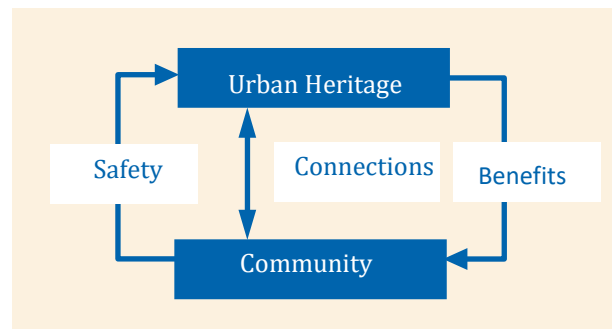


Figure.1 Relationship between Built Heritage and Community COMUS and EUROCITIES; 2018)

Due to the variation in communities, there are different needs and interests. The following are the main points for community involvement.

- Distinguish, recognize, organize, and equilibrium.
- Relate, unite, correspond, and authorize.
- Reinforce capabilities.

The above-mentioned ladder model can guide the determination of the levels of participation and power distribution. It helps make the grounds for set of guidelines for the conservation experts, government officials, and communities to recognize how beneficial the community's role could be in heritage management.

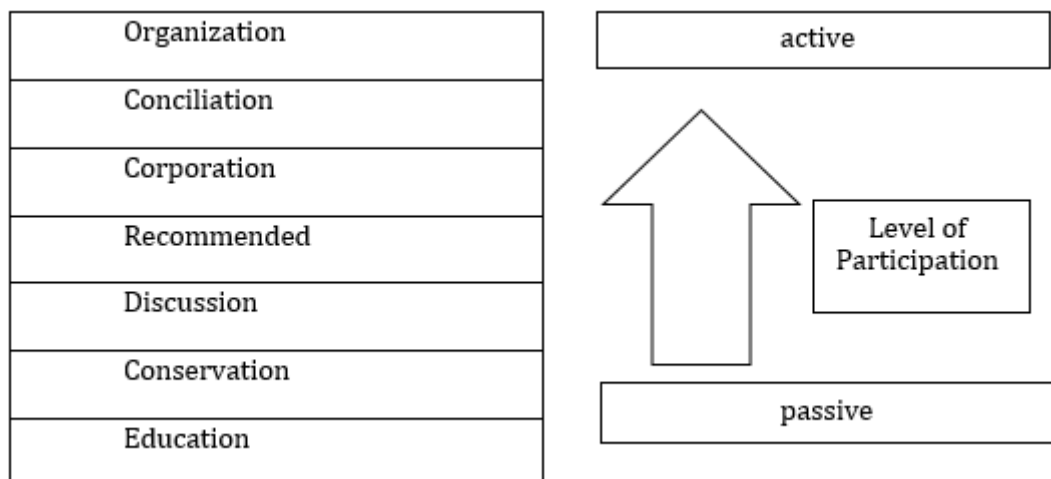


Figure 2 Arnstein's Ladder of Contribution (Chan, 2016)

The people-centered approach is used where the community is dominant and living the modern life applied particularly in the vicinity of the monuments and heritage zone because the area is occupied by the host community where they are leading their lives in the present time, yet they are neighbors to the landmarks of the glorious past. The model directs how communities can be active members of the conservation. Communities are taken on board to work out the long-term policies to boost the capabilities of the natives so that they can effectively control the ongoing activities related to the conservation work and come up with the managerial policies for the heritage conservation process. Co-management (Reggers, 2016) is all about making people sit in the central position it is used in some parts of Australia, India, and Nepal.

The Living Heritage model (Poulios, 2014) wants to maintain the primary and original purpose of the. This includes the recognition of communities as the owner of their built heritage and authorizing the community's conservation procedure taking benefits from their traditions and linking conservation to progress.

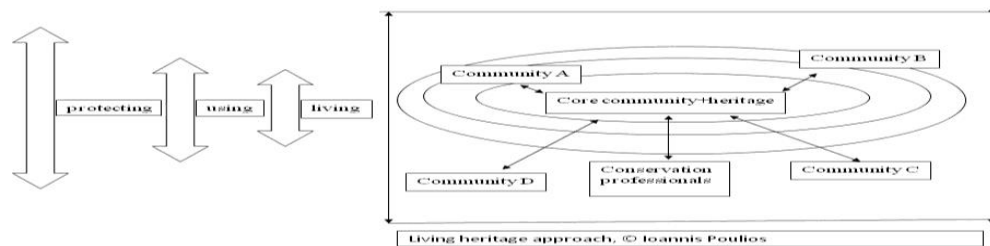


Figure 3 Living Heritage Approach (Poulios, 2014)

Built heritage assets model concerning the community, also called the COBA model. This model explains heritage conservation after analysing all possible levels step by step and also creates a link among them.

Material and Methods

The research is focused on understanding the perspectives of the community for participation in built heritage conservation. Therefore, the Lahore Walled City was taken as a case study and data was collected through questionnaires/ semi-structured interviews from the community members to explore their perception, motivations, experiences in addition to their roles in the conservation process. The methodology enabled in gathering in-depth understanding and opinions of the community members. The semi-structured interviews further allowed deeper exploration of the individual experiences and the future engagements parameters for built heritage conservation.

The historic center of Lahore called the Walled City is located north of the city and northwest of the river Ravi. The historic district is often referred to as the Inner City or "Androon Shehr". It is somewhat trapezoidal and may be spotted on a map from its surroundings (Figure-4). The LWC's beginnings are claimed to have been earlier than its links with Muslim invasions and kingdoms, beginning with Mahmud of Ghazna in the 11th century.



Figure-4 GIS Image of Walled City (Courtesy WCLA Sustainable Development)

Lahore's Walled City is a tight-knit community. Ceremonies and pleasure are honored without caste, religion, color, and creed. The 256 hectares that makeup Lahore's

Walled City. Thus has a total population of 200,000, where 860 individuals live there per square kilometer.

Results and Discussions

The role and participation of community in the conservation work is not a novel phenomenon. This method has always been used across the world for sustainable built heritage conservation. Unfortunately, it was not fully explored in the country like Pakistan due to absence of framework that knit community into the conservation process through proper guidelines. This particular research explored community perspectives in addition to their opinions for future engagements in these conservation projects. The following statistical analysis and graphical presentation is for the collected data from the community.

Table 1
Age of the Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	15-25	30	10.0	10.0	10.0
	25-40	100	33.3	33.3	43.3
	40-50	100	33.3	33.3	75.7
	Above 50	70	23.3	23.3	100.0
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	

The participants with the highest contribution to this research (concerning their age) are 40- 50 years, which is most probably 75.5 %. Whereas, the second highest is the youth between the age of 25-40 years nearly 43.3%.

The following table illustrate their professional and financial resources (Table 2) of the Participants, contributed to the research.

Table 2
Profession of the People who Participated

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Student	30	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Self-Employed	150	50.0	50.0	50.0
	On job	20	5.7	5.7	5.7
	Other	100	33.3	33.3	100.0
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	

Most of the people who contributed to this very research were self-employed, which means they are supported by local businesses, freelancing, and the community of the local area in general. Nearly 50 % of the people were self-employed.

Table 3
People Willing on Conservation Participation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	220	73.3	73.3	73.3
	No	80	25.7	25.7	100.0
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	

Table 4
Opinion on Community Inclusive Approach

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	With C.P	198	55.0	55.0	55.0
	Without C.P	102	34.0	34.0	100.0
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	

The study illustrates how 55.0 % of the people agree with and supported the idea of conservation work being done to the heritage.

Table 5
Wish to Work at a Policy-Making Level

Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
119	39.7	39.9	39.9
179	59.7	50.1	100.0
298	99.3	100.0	
2	.7		
300	100.0		

Individuals of the community wholly appreciated the official policy-making in the community for Heritage conservation. 50.1 % of people validate the idea of policymaking.

Table 6
Part of Mobilizing a Team

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	280	93.3	93.3	93.3
	No	20	5.7	5.7	100.0
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	

Opportunity for Community Members

The following table 7 illustrates how participants in general reacted to the process of getting employment, the purpose of conservation, and how the common man should act.

Table 7
Employee in Heritage Conservation

Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
170	55.7	55.7	55.7
130	43.3	43.3	100.0
300	100.0	100.0	

Table 8
As an Opportunity to Get a Job

Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
270	90.0	90.0	90.0
30	10.0	10.0	100.0
300	100.0	100.0	

Individuals of the community wholly appreciated the official as a chance to land a job in the community for heritage conservation. 90.0 % of people validate the idea of policymaking.

Table 9
Community Participation as a Tool to Enhance the Tourism Potential

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	290	95.7	95.7	95.7
	No	10	3.3	3.3	100.0
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	

Individuals of the community wholly appreciated the enchanting tourism to get a job in the community for Heritage conservation. 95.7 % of people validate the idea of this idea for a better economic pickup for locals and the community.

Table 10
Opportunity towards Sustainability

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	270	90.0	90.0	90.0
	No	30	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	

Individuals of the community wholly appreciated the community participation as an opportunity to bring sustainability to get a job in the community for Heritage conservation. 90.0 % of people validate the idea.

Table 11
Need for a Framework

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	289	95.3	95.3	95.3
	No	11	3.7	3.7	100.0
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	

Individuals of the community approved the idea that a framework of community participation where 95.3% of people validate and approve it. Whereas 3.7% of people did not agree with it.

Table 12
Need for a Framework

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	275	91.7	91.7	91.7
	No	25	8.3	8.3	100.0
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	

The results show approval for the Public and Local Collaboration for Heritage Conservation as 91.7% of people agreed with the idea. Whereas 8.3 % of people disapproved.

Table 13
Authority should be given to the Community

Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
10	3.3	3.3	3.3
290	95.7	95.7	100.0
300	100.0	100.0	

The results show that approval for the authority should be given to the community Collaboration for Heritage Conservation as 95.7% of people agreed upon the idea. Whereas 3.3 % of people disapproved.

Table 14
C. P necessary for an Effective Heritage Conservation Work

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	257	89.0	89.0	89.0
	No	33	11.0	11.0	100.0
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	

Community participation is necessary for effective heritage conservation work 89.0 % of people agree with it. Whereas, 11.0 % of people disagree with it.

This research highlighted the local community willingness to participate in the sustainable conservation of built heritage. The community members strong inclination towards active participation in conservation process is appreciable for multiple roles including decision-making, knowledge sharing and long-term stewardship. The two larger participants group, one from middle-aged (40-50) and the other young (25-40) showed willingness from their expertise and future-oriented engagements.

The strong relationship with heritage was observed between the self-employed individuals, freelancers and local entrepreneurs. The half of the respondents were self-employed emphasizing the community-based economic structures are interconnected with the heritage assets. They were of the opinion that heritage conservation initiatives are not to be conceived as just the cultural need but should also be vowed for economic sustainability and employment generation at the local level. Most of the participants expressed strong support for the heritage conservation rather portraying it as a resource intensive activity or disturbance to their privacy. They showed readiness and expertise to be part of the conservation process. They also expressed their concerns for the limited resources available for the conservation of the built heritage and lack of any guidelines for the same.

The case of Walled City of Lahore depicts the immediate need to be integrated in the urban development projects. Conservation initiatives that generate the economic opportunities and recognition for the local participation is the only solution for both heritage preservation and socio-economic needs. Furthermore, the research surfaced the institutional and legislative challenges in addition to lack of clarity among all stakeholders that is a major hindrance in the sustainable built heritage conservation. These factors contributed towards lack of interest in the presence of high commitment level from the local community.

Conclusions

The research highlighted community members willingness to participate in the sustainable built heritage conservation. This was further complemented with their perception about the multiple roles for the participation in the conservation process. Their readiness for the participation in decision-making, knowledge sharing and long-term stewardship in the built heritage conservation showed their motivation emphasizing their lived experiences as essential for the preservation of the cultural identity. The research further depicted the living heritage approach as the solution reflecting the communities as the main custodian of the built heritage. Sustainable heritage conservation is the result of inclusive approach aligned with the governance, conservation policies, economic integration and community aspirations, not only to preserve the cultural asset but to a productive living component of the urban life.

Recommendations:

- The community willingness and perception should be further enhanced through capacity building.
- The awareness sessions and focus group for formulations of basic guidelines should be developed among all stakeholders.
- Living Heritage Concept should be interpreted according to the local community for successful and sustainable heritage conservation.

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