

Sustaining Historic Centres as Growing Documents of the History of Human, Cultural and Social Development throughout Oral Patrimony

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Abstract—This research has been developed from a framework that explores the Tangible and Intangible aspects of Historic Centres, finding how the Oral Patrimony has an intrinsic potential that connects these resources through Storytelling, for supporting their role as documents of the human, cultural and social development. Different cases will show the intrinsic narrative character of the Oral Patrimony and the strength of the Storytellers' voice, which even though are quite unexploited in Historic Centres, have all the potential for reinforcing their visual narrative. In this way, innovative journeys of Storytelling can be made within these scenarios, for revealing meaningful aspects of these sites and for creating (through the voice of inhabitants-Storytellers) an emotional approach that strengthens the role of these architectural documents in the reinforcement of the contemporary inhabitants-readers' sense of place, sense of belonging and therefore cultural identity.

Index Terms—Historic centres, cultural patrimony, cultural development, oral patrimony, narrative.

I. INTRODUCTION

Historic Centres have been a mirror of their population creativity for answering to the challenges that the environment has set up during their existence, therefore these sites are also tangible documents that reflect the history of their citizens. In fact these places help remembering, “*Who we really are, where we come from, and where we should go at the end of our earthly journey*” [1].

These special documents evidence a Cultural Heritage that has always needed to be changed for facing the changeable context and requirements of the population. In this way the living past has been nourished by several ideas, infrastructure improvements, aesthetic movements and trends, among others which have encouraged renewals and somehow gave to the Cultural Patrimony of Historic Centres its own life and mechanisms of evolution for lasting.

For this reason their Safeguarding and Valorisation (which preserve the cultural essence with a contemporary perspective that involves new strategies for transforming the heritage and increasing its value) keep alive in the locals' memories significant information of their Development at Human, Cultural and Social levels. Thus there is a

strengthening process of the cultural identity and social cohesion in these places, which at the same time reveals the human capabilities for creating and transforming these places throughout the time.

This relation between the population creativity and the urban environment is also relevant because is unrepeatable, in fact when the locals create, use and transform the different spaces of these centres there is a construction of inimitable urban tissues that build the unique and irreplaceable features of each historic site.

In this way the citizens of these centres have become a significant resource that has structured these places throughout their history, and thanks to their creativity they have been able to join past and present in an outstanding way. Additionally this human capital has also evidenced its mighty potential for constructing a future from the cultural and historic resources present in these places, giving to these sites an unquestionable role as documents of history.

Lately the UNESCO and other entities like ICOMOS, ICCROM and the IUCN have recognized the significance of this human capital and its role as engine that activates the Cultural Patrimony (intangible and tangible) of Historic Centres for building a future without denying a past. However there are new discussions and challenges because despite the Cultural Heritage present in each element of these urban systems, there have been critiques around the idealized narrations exhibited and their lack of connection with the urban reality and their inhabitants, which directly affects the evolution and sustainability of these urban centres.

However, before starting to analyze the entire problematic it is important to understand the role of these sites consolidating the idea of active *cultural spaces*, this category is used by the UNESCO for classifying some of the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, recognizing the significant and ancestral role of different places around the world as centres of artistic, religious and cultural activities, among others. These sites reflect how the tangible, intangible and human aspects get interwoven for building an *Urban Fabric*, and for supporting the development of a community at different levels (cultural, social, environmental, economic, etc.)

II. INTANGIBLE, TANGIBLE AND HUMAN TISSUES BEHIND HISTORIC CENTRES: RESOURCES OF IDENTITY AND DEVELOPMENT

Some interesting cases of this intricate structure can be seen in many Latin-American cultures where the

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contemporary identity is a mixture where opposite beliefs paradoxically coexist. In fact, despite the violent catholic evangelization (spread during the Spanish conquest), there is an undeniable indigenous heritage that has helped to shape a different catholic faith, which is also reflected in the architectural features of many religious spaces [2].

The cultural site around the Church of *Santo Tomás* in *Chichicastenango* (Guatemala) is a remarkable example of this phenomenon; this place is a tangible picture that evidences the complexity behind the Latino-American catholic faith. The church was built on the top of a Mayan temple (this was the strategy implemented by the Catholic Church along the Latino-American territories for smoothing the process of evangelization) where constructive techniques and aesthetic features from the Spanish and Indigenous were merged for sheltering the reshaped catholic practices; for instance each stair of the main entrance represent one month of the Mayan Calendar.

Despite the initial purpose of these catholic immigrants, a progressive integration with the beliefs and rituals of the indigenous community was inevitable; consequently the indigenous of *Chichicastenango* have adjusted the cultural space of *Santo Tomás* for answering to the religious requirements of their ancestral communities. Thus the entrance scales, atrium and the central corridor of the main church are spaces adapted by the indigenous for their offerings of maize, flowers, candles and incense. Additionally it is quite impressive to see this syncretism in the indigenous women who use their traditional handmade fabrics for going to the Mass instead of the European mantilla made with lace.

Another interesting case can be seen in the urban design of many Latin-American colonial towns where *la plaza*, which is the focal growing point of these places, is also a space where the Catholic Church is mightily positioned, reflecting the importance of the religion for the community and tying this cultural facet to the physical constitution of the town. Furthermore *la plaza* has remained throughout the time as a central gathering point where the inhabitants meet after the mass, in the weekly market, in public celebrations and daily activities of leisure. Nevertheless this space has changed in many Latino-American towns, for example in Colombia at the beginning of the 20th century, most of them just had benches for adults and wide spaces for the market and for welcoming the children games, currently it is common to find football and basketball courts for answering the requirements of new generations, without compromising the long-established uses (described before), which are essential in the community life of these places.

The *Albayzín* (Granada, Spain) characterized by the Moorish medieval architecture, is a case that exemplifies how the different human settlements of a place merge their knowledge and values in the construction of their cities. Hence colourful *azulejos* that create astonishment patterns along the walls and floors and stunning ornamental works in stucco and sculpted wood, are just few of the features that make this site part of the UNESCO's list for being a "masterpiece of the human creative genius".

Furthermore the richness of this place is completed after

the Spanish re-conquest in 1492, when the Spanish catholic population added new features to the architecture, which can be seen in the churches and monasteries of the late Gothic that, although belong to a different style, harmonically complement the urban landscape. In a way this syncretism is the result of the adjustments that each group of inhabitants made to this place according to their cultural backgrounds. Thus the splendid details, that made the architecture of this place, are the reflection of the human values and the ancestral skills (inherited and learned throughout centuries) of the different communities that lived in this site.

Moreover, after the re-conquest many Muslims were converted to the Catholicism for remaining in this Spanish territory, among them there were several artisans and currently the influence of their work can be seen in the decorated altars and adornments still used in the catholic processions. This syncretism is a palpable example of how a space and its *material culture* (according to the Journal of Material Culture, this is a concept that "refers to the relationship between artefacts and social relations") evolve according to the creativity and the practices of each human settlement.

These examples evidence how "culture is organized and inherently tied to space and place" [3], because aspects like religion, culinary traditions, daily habits and gender roles, among others of an extensive list, are cultural resources that have a significant role in the creation and transformation of any place.

Nevertheless this complex and intangible structure behind Historic Centres was internationally recognized until The UNESCO's Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2003, before all the attention and resources were focused on preserving the tangibility of *Monuments and Sites* (groups of buildings, vernacular architecture, industrial and twentieth-century built heritage, historic gardens, the concept of 'cultural landscape', historic centres, etc.) isolating cultural and human resources that are part of these places' cores. For this reason nowadays most of the intangible cultural resources that have shaped Historic Centres are threatened, and there is an international concern in the implementation and development of strategies that safeguard and valorise the whole intangible and tangible structure of these architectural masterpieces, in an integrated mode; because: "The intangible heritage must be seen as a broader framework within which tangible heritage takes on its shape and significance" [4].

In fact the urban life of these places, which has intangible cultural aspects intrinsically attached, not only complements the architectural landscape but also keeps close the locals to these historic scenarios, creating an emotive relation between inhabitants and city that goes further than the functional realm. *Orhan Pamuk* underlines beautifully this aspect in the book *Memories and the City*: "I was slowly coming to understand that I love Istanbul for its ruins, for its *hüzün* (melancholy), for its glories one possessed and later lost", and this idea is later complemented with: "Why should we expect a city to cure us of our spiritual pains? Perhaps because we cannot help loving our city like a family".

III. HISTORIC CENTRES CONFRONTING CONTEMPORARY PHENOMENA

Currently Historic Centres are struggling with many phenomena present in the contemporary context, which challenge and make vulnerable the intangible-tangible structures of these sites and therefore the identity of their communities, territories and the worldwide cultural diversity.

Safeguarding and valorising Historic Centres, among other resources of the Cultural Heritage, are initiatives with a local and global relevance. From a cultural, social and human perspective, keeping these sites as active documents and *Living-Cultural Places* is important not only for the community that has inherited them from centuries ago, but also because they construct and register the cultural diversity, which is the “*common heritage of humanity*”, where differences among communities are encouraged within an atmosphere of respect [5].

Unfortunately this is a challenging task because throughout the globalization and the new scenarios, which inevitably interconnect communities, there have appeared phenomena (like intolerance, massive tourism and homogenization, among others) that have threatened the Cultural Heritage of these special places-documents.

Contemporary strategies should allow people from other cultures to appreciate and read these differences, stimulating an enriching connivance and dialogue among them, because: “*At a time when social diversity is everywhere leading to fragmentation, it is only the cultural memory that will maintain the indispensable social bonds that enable a mosaic of people with different origins and cultures, and of different generations, to live together*” [6].

Understanding this global dynamic is one of the most challenging missions that the Cultural Patrimony needs to confront nowadays, instead of remaining isolated for preserving elements that, through the time, could lose their relevance and significance in the daily life of the citizens at the using and reading moments.

In fact, nowadays it is impossible to deny that the worldwide Cultural Patrimony is immersed in the Global Culture, which strongly influences everything around, and despite some facts that can suggest a cultural homogenization, there are others that could be quite positive for the development and strengthening of cultural aspects, because: “*What does seem clear is that it is not helpful to regard the global and local as dichotomies separated in space or time, it would seem that the process of Globalization and Localization are inextricably bound together in the current phase*” [7].

The creation of a balanced dialogue between these Historic Centres and modernity enriches these sites, because though they are meaningful registers of the past they should allow including the information of the present and future, for encouraging encounters with these historic scenarios with a prospective sense, which shows not only a nostalgic and glorious past but also its potential for promoting the future development of a territory.

A. Historic Centres and Their Tradition as Multifunctional Places: Facts and Risks

Throughout the time Historic Centres have been

recognized as the focal points of the cities that contain them, and this aspect is reflected in their long-established multifunctional nature. Diverse activities such as: work (business quarters), trade (market places), governance (town hall, law courts, churches, etc.), living (housing areas), consumption (public and private services and daily goods) and social life (entertainment, leisure, etc.), are continuously present and unfold in these historic cores, enriching the narrative of these architectural documents.

However even though UNESCO’s Historic Centres have become an international priority, and this nomination strictly demands the implementation of strategies that take a special care of the outstanding universal values of each place, these historic sites are facing new threats and challenges. One of them is related to the deterioration of the tissues between the inhabitants and their historic surroundings. Unfortunately being part of this UNESCO’s list, calls the attention of a large number of tourists and despite the economic benefits brought by this international prestige, the unstoppable entrance of tourists has deeply affected the social tissues of the locals with their Historic Centres [8].

Cities like Venice (Italy), Hoi An (Vietnam), Zamosc (Poland), Luang Prabang (Laos) and Zacatecas (Mexico) are just some of the few examples where the priorities of the citizens and the city have been left aside for the demands of the tourist industry. This situation inevitably affects the locals’ quality of life, causing the abandonment of these sites, and therefore one of their main functions: “*to be a place for citizens to live, work and socialise*” [9].

Consequently there is also a disconnection of the inhabitants to the Cultural Heritage inside these places that directly affects the sense of place and belonging, which are crucial aspects in the construction of the cultural identity of these historic sites and their communities [10].

Historic Centres need to reactivate these connections in these times where many global phenomena, like tourism, are penetrating our societies and jeopardizing many cultural resources and their tissues with the people who bear them. For this reason it is crucial to develop projects for the local residents [11] that strengthen their connections with the intangible-tangible resources of their territory as readers-citizens.

In fact, one of the significant aspects of Historic Centres is that they are places where life continues, plenty of cultural features that only the inhabitants can ingrain and maintain active. Then even if they become dynamic tourist destinations, the abandonment by the local residents could lead to the death of these sites as documents and active elements of the worldwide Cultural Heritage.

The risk that these places are facing is to rely on a unique structure around tourism and become mono-functional centres deteriorating their narrative, despite all their potential for providing a rich urban life for citizens, tourists and other kind of users.

Many authors describe this phenomenon throughout the concept of historic Disneyland Centres, which after becoming unliveable places and break intangible tissues with their population become also unsustainable. In fact they are not longer able to evolve since they lose their human capital that, as it was explained before, is the main source of

the creativity that adjusts these sites to the contemporary and global challenges.

B. The Role of the Community and Its Intangible Cultural Know-How in the Process of Making Historic Centres Places-Documents of an Integrated Sustainable Development

Increasingly, the connection between Cultural Patrimony and Sustainable Development is better understood, and now it is clear that these domains need to be fully integrated, because the concept of sustainability is tightly related to the social, cultural and environmental realms and not only to the rigid idea of economic floatability [12], which isolates a significant richness formed by the intangible and tangible Cultural Heritage, the human creativity and skills, and the natural resources that throughout the time have demonstrated their meaningful role in the sustainability of a community and its territory.

In fact every place has its own cultural (intangible and tangible), human and environmental wealth, which not only structures a unique Cultural Patrimony but also displays a large amount of resources entirely available for being used in the development of a territory in different aspects. Moreover each place needs its own models of development according to their resources and the challenges of the environment, then why do many strategies isolate the cultural and human wealth and do not recognize its role in the development of a community?

Historic Centres are significant examples that reflect in their stunning urban landscapes, how people, throughout their cultural knowledge-practices and creativity, have taken a wise advantage of the resources available for generating adequate and valuable responses according to the requirements of their changing environment.

In this way inhabitants become the ones that know better their own territory, its resources and how to transform them. Thus all the knowledge and practices, inherited from one generation to other, construct a precious intangible archive that becomes tangible in the architecture of these special sites enriching these historic documents with a narrative that goes beyond the tangibility of ancient palaces, cathedrals, chapels, etc.

IV. PROJECTING A FUTURE FOR HISTORIC CENTRES THAT NETS TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE: OUTSTANDING CASES

Different strategies have been structured according to the particular characteristics of each Historic Centre; nevertheless all of them share an interest in re-building and reinforcing their *Urban Fabrics* for maintaining their roles as *Living and Cultural Places* and historic documents. Usually the general goals directly encourage the daily use of Historic Centres and the activation of traditional and modern cultural practices. In this way the architectural scenarios, the inhabitants and their quotidian life (plenty of intangible cultural practices) can be kept interconnected; simultaneously these tissues also link the past (Cultural Heritage) and present (current reality).

The cases collected, during this research around this issue of reactivating the urban weaves in Historic Centres, are

considered remarkable examples of the European reality. Most of them were encouraged and sponsored by the *European Regional Development Fund*, and were managed by *URBACT* (Connecting cities building successes), *Historiccentres_Net* (Networking for sustainability of historical centres), *HerO* (Heritage as Opportunity) and *INHERIT* (Investing in Heritage). However just two cases, that give a general idea of the different paths and strategies implemented in this field, will be described in this document.

Thus the "*Training School of Úbeda, Spain*" (of the *INHERIT* program) and the "*Cultural stimulation for the Old Town vitality in Lublin, Poland*" (of the *URBACT* and *HerO* programs) will be the examples that thanks to their outstanding accomplishments deserve to be mentioned and will show some possibilities present in this kind of projects.

The first case is the "*Training School of Úbeda*" in Andaluc á (Spain), which since its foundation in 1985 has been an active part of the Urban General Plans of this Spanish city, helping not only to physically improve the city but also writing in and architectonic language its evolution.

Since the beginning this school has been the place where people can learn and be trained in the different artisan trades that were ancestrally used in the construction of this historic site. However during a long period these practices and the knowledge behind them were in danger of disappearing, projecting dramatic consequences for the future of the Cultural Heritage present in this city; for this reason this school was founded and has been actively involved in the recovering and maintenance of the different scenarios (buildings, pedestrian paths, parks, plazas, etc.) that keep this city in the UNESCO's World Heritage List.

This scheme of training new generations has confronted the lack of qualified people for working in the different ongoing projects of the Historic Centre; additionally this strategy is tied to the problem of youth unemployment, creating a web that not only sustains the tangible and intangible cultural resources (architecture of the historic city and the traditional knowledge-practices of construction) in an interconnected way, but also gives new economic perspectives to the citizens based on their Cultural Patrimony.

This strategy projects new economic possibilities to the citizens for fostering their active participation in the Construction, Safeguarding and Valorisation of their Historic Places - Documents, making the Historic Centre a place full of vitality where culture and economy can harmonically meet.

The second case is the "*Cultural stimulation for the Old Town vitality in Lublin*", which has been developed since 1995 in Lublin (Poland) as an integral part of the General Urban Plans of this European city. This strategy is mainly focused on synchronizing the renovation of several buildings of the Old Town, in connection with the reactivation of cultural and artistic activities, giving a new dynamic to this area of the city and reaffirming its traditional character as multicultural and artistic hub. Subsequently a large amount of business opportunities emerged, confirming the multifunctional nature of this Historic Centre.

In fact several businesses were located in this area, because the vibrant atmosphere lived in this Old Town became a

perfect scenario for new restaurants, galleries and cabarets, among others, helping to make of this hub the favourite place of many residents. In this way the tissues among local communities, economy, contemporary culture and intangible-tangible Cultural Heritage, became an active reality that continuously stimulate the *Urban Fabric* of Lublin and its growing as historic document.

These efforts have been also coordinated with educational programs with a perspective mainly focused on traditional and contemporary cultural expressions, which can help new generations to be the future bearers of the sensitiveness, skills and knowledge that will keep the spirit of this European cultural centre. This project worked educating receptive audiences that have been stimulated and supported for creating the future cultural offers of Lublin, structuring a sustainable cycle that assures the long-term maintenance of this cultural hub. On the other hand this initiative was also synchronized with the application for becoming the European Capital of Culture 2016, which despite being unsuccessful encouraged a significant development in this city.

Throughout these projects it is possible to realize how each strategy takes a different path according to the cultural resources available, which in a way define the hallmark of the Historic Centre. Additionally they reveal how according to the expectations of the inhabitants and the projections made by the General Urban Plans, each Historic Centre can reinforce its own hallmark (which means to reinforce its identity) for reconstructing all the *Urban Fabric* necessary, and keeping these places as the Historic Document that they represent, which reveal their role as unique and irreplaceable *Living and Cultural Places* of the current reality.

Whereby Historic Centres have become connecting links that allow identifying a past in a contemporary reality, because they carry a meaningful Cultural Heritage without neglecting their potential for being active urban spaces of the present and future. Therefore their preservation and valorisation as multifunctional places ensures the continuity of cultural identity, the nourishment of the social cohesion and creates a context that learns from the past for projecting a future.

And once again *Orhan Pamuk* poetically supports this idea in his book *Memories and the City*: “*Here amid the old stones and the old wooden houses, history made peace with its ruins; ruins nourished life and gave new life to history*”.

V. ORAL PATRIMONY: A NARRATIVE RESOURCE THAT INTEGRATES COMMUNITIES WITH THEIR INTANGIBLE CULTURE AND THEIR HISTORIC SURROUNDINGS

Among all the cultural resources of a community, the Oral Patrimony is a source that contains a wide approach to all the expressions that make part of its Intangible Cultural Heritage, because as the UNESCO has stated: “*Language is considered the vehicle of all the traditions and cultural expressions, even the language itself*”. In fact Oral Patrimony archives permit to have an initial understanding of the stories told from one generation to other for passing knowledge about social practices as rituals, festive events and simple daily routines, performing arts, knowledge and practices

concerning nature and the universe and different traditional craftsmanship as cooking, construction, trades, etc.

This definition shows the intrinsic narrative character of the Oral Patrimony, which has all the potential for reinforcing the visual narrative commonly used in Historic Centres. Throughout the integration of visual and oral features these sites could have an approach to their inhabitants that strengthens their sense of place and belonging and therefore their cultural identity, which is a challenge that must be confronted nowadays. In fact the different documents of the Oral Patrimony merge different aspects of the tangible scenarios with the intangibility of the quotidian life (which is plenty of cultural and traditional features) revealing how the stories of the locals are also the stories of their places and their cultural practices.

Additionally the emotional stimuli found in the stories can support the architectural narrative which even though is plenty of aesthetic features, that make it quite rich, is missing some meanings that are archived in the memories of the inhabitants, and represent the individual layers that build the collective memory of these sites [13].

The use of these oral resources is a process full of meaningful aspects that deepen in Historic Centres, because “*a well-told story conveys great quantities of information in relatively few words in a format that is easily assimilated by the listener*” [14]. In this way the stories evidence how citizens have woven a dynamic fabric with the intangible and tangible elements of these notorious scenarios, giving sense to these places.

Actually Storytelling helps Historic Centres to reveal their role as cores of the cities, not only because the most relevant architecture is found inside of them, but also because they have been the scenarios of the different practices that make them *Living and Cultural Places* throughout their history.

A. Storytellers and the Stimuli of Their Voice

The importance of Storytellers in the transmission of traditional knowledge is undeniable; as the Malian writer Amadou Hampaté Bâ said: “*In Africa, when an old person dies a library burns down*”. Many non-western cultures share this perspective about elderly with huge respect, because they are considered preservers and transmitters of innumerable cultural aspects [15].

For western cultures this image of Storytellers is also found and despite not being quite recognized is present and alive. Cases where grandmothers teach recipes to their grandchildren or talk about past experiences that show the beliefs of the society years ago, are just some examples of how western Storytellers spontaneously act in their daily life.

Although the performances of western and non-western Storytellers are different, both are charged of emotional stimuli that give sense to the stories, and one of the most important tools for achieving this goal is the voice. This narrative tool is a powerful resource because possesses a unique flexibility able to play with intonations and expressions, among others, for emphasizing meanings and emotions; and even if printing archives have an important role giving stability to this Cultural Patrimony, when printed tales are read miss significant contents, which just a Storyteller can transmit throughout its voice [16].

On the other hand, this process of Storytelling and cultural transmission depends on the fragile nature of the memory, which cannot retain everything.

Currently it is well known the urgency of its protection like in the case of any resource that belongs to the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Since the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2003, it was internationally recognized that this kind of heritage needs special approaches for its safeguarding which, additionally to the usual inventories and analysis, involve a special support to the bearers for avoiding situations where the death of a bearer means the end of his knowledge.

This support is also for encouraging bearers to continue performing their practices (in this case as Storytellers), which is a natural way of involving them in the protection, preservation and reinforcement of their own Cultural Heritage (Tangible and Intangible). In the area of Storytelling few cases have been developed, challenging museums to incorporate the voice of the Storytellers (which can also be called cultural bearers) into the exhibitions.

In this way Storytellers emerge from their voices, and throughout a skilful use of this narrative tool, contextualize the public into fictional-real scenarios encouraging people to get appropriate of the reality told in the stories.

However it is important to remind that even though the stories connect with the past they should not bring people to fall into a stagnation that romantically exalts past epochs, rather this kind of approach should encourage people to project themselves into the future.

Historic Centres are adequate scenarios for this kind of Storytelling, because this fusion not only contextualizes the stories but also completes the meaning of the architectural landscape, improving the reading qualities of these documents. This proposal is an integration of the intangible and tangible resources of the Cultural Patrimony and the goal is to listen to the stories in the surroundings (buildings and spaces) that have witnessed them, without forgetting how the architectural details and the emotional stimuli of the stories are features that enrich this whole narrative.

These stories, that are also the stories of the locals, are usually complemented with family pictures plenty of emotional aspects that simultaneously show how the different spaces of Historic Centres have been created, used and transformed, assembling a complete portrait of these places.

Unfortunately most of these stories or oral documents are still archived in the memories of the communities, many of them are already lost and others are completely disseminated around the world due the migration phenomena. For this reason, researchers that are currently working in the area of Oral Patrimony are aware of the importance of a continuous collection of these documents (involving all generations).

B. Enriching the Emotional Stimuli of Historic Centres with the Oral Patrimony

In the case of Historic Centres the uncountable features of the architecture are already visual stimuli that can be more notable throughout different strategies. Among all the possibilities for achieving this enhancement the Oral Patrimony has revealed, in this research, a potential for accomplishing this goal throughout a meaningful and

narrative path.

This assumption is based on the fact that the stories of the Oral Patrimony are a resource that nets events with the scenario, revealing how the *Urban Fabric* of these places is a harmonic construction among inhabitants, cultural practices (Intangible Cultural Heritage) and the architectural landscape (Tangible Cultural Heritage). Furthermore these stories are a useful resource for understanding the surroundings of a Historic Centre, how they have been created, used, transformed and how during the time this creates special bonds with the inhabitants.

For the Story-listeners-readers the mentioned bonds and nets can be much more perceived when the stories are told by the protagonists-storytellers themselves, because as protagonists, who have experienced the narrated events, the expressiveness of their language (verbal and non verbal) is quite strong making listeners-readers to get connected with their emotions, and creating imaginary scenes of the events and scenarios described.

Thereby the memories and emotions are kept alive thanks to the Storytellers' voice, which simultaneously reminds us the importance of the scenarios, events and people of Historic Centres. Additionally, Storytellers make this process not only a scientific practice, that technically speaks about Cultural Heritage preservation, but also an emotive path which can make these sites (with all their intangible richness) to endure at the core of the communities.

Nevertheless it is essential to keep in mind the importance of avoiding possible stagnations caused by the nostalgia and melancholy of the stories, and then even if the stories net a past they should also weave some tissues with the future, for projecting the content of the stories in the development of these places, their communities and their territory.

C. Storytelling in the Construction of Memorable, Emotive and Enduring Narratives-Scenes in Historic Centres

During this research some cases of Storytelling were collected, which show the significant role of this resource complementing the visual narrative of a scenario. However in this document just three cases will be described for emphasizing the most important aspects that make Storytelling an outstanding narrative tool.

Sensible Map and *Sensitive City* are two cases (developed by *Studio Azzurro*, and available in <http://www.studioazzurro.com/>), which show different urban landscapes profoundly connected with the quotidian events of their inhabitants; in *Sensible Map* the scenarios are traditional Moroccan cities, and in *Sensitive City* the scenarios are Historic Centres of the Italian territory. In both cases (as part of the exhibitions) inhabitants tell their personal stories that narrate these quotidian events, and bring visitors to an interactive journey around different scenarios. In addition the emotions of the Storytellers or "*portatori di storie*" (bearers of stories) reflect the value of these places at different levels, which go further than the physical and practical explanations.

For achieving this, *Studio Azzurro* made a large projection that shows a flow of people, who are the inhabitants-storytellers of the mentioned places. This

projection is connected to an interactive system that gives visitors the possibility of stopping any Storyteller just by a touch, with the purpose of encouraging an encounter between people from different places (exhibition visitors and Storytellers of different cities). After this first approach the Storyteller starts narrating its most significant experiences in the city, accompanied by the projection of those urban spots described in the stories. In this way Storytellers take visitors throughout personal journeys, which show how the architecture gains an intangible and human core, thanks to the events that day after day become an essential part of the city configuration.

The third case is called the *Museo Audiovisivo della Resistenza* - The Audiovisual Museum of the Resistance (also by *Studio Azzurro*) in the Italian city of *Fosdinovo* in the province of *Massa Carrara*. This is an initiative structured throughout the testimonies of the population of *Massa Carrara* and *La Spezia* that lived and witnessed the *Second War World*. The testimonies reveal all the efforts of this population for overcoming the havocs of this dramatic episode of the History, and although this case does not use the traditional elements recognized as part of the Cultural Heritage (Arts, Rituals, Know- How, Nature and Monuments and Sites), it is undeniable how the experiences lived in this entire period have helped shaping the character and cultural identity of the communities of *Massa Carrara* and *La Spezia*.

The exhibition is made with several projections that show different people, that lived this period (women, farmers, deportees, partisans of the resistance, etc.), telling their own stories of the war, which are meaningful oral documents that have been usually omitted in the official historic archives.

On the other hand the large-scale of the projections help to show all the Storytellers expressions that accompany the narrations, showing a non-verbal language that reinforces the sense of each story.

This exhibition is mainly focused on educational purposes that recognize the multiple human sides that have been part of this tragic event, and throughout the power of these Storytellers, the visitors can be transported to the different scenes of the war and construct in their minds a whole picture of the life during this period.

Finally, like in the different contemporary cases of safeguarding, in this exhibition there is also an intrinsic purpose of valorisation or re-contextualization, which intends to show new generations the importance of democracy, liberty and justice in the construction of a society.

These exhibitions offer the opportunity of creating unique and personal journeys throughout cultural scenarios, making them documents that combine visual features of the architecture and the territory with the stories of the locals, into a narrative plenty of stimuli.

In this way the stories of the people can be perceived as the stories of a place and a territory, because they weave throughout emotive and personal scenes the remarkable architecture and landscapes of these sites with the cultural practices that have identified them throughout their history.

D. The Role of Digital Cultural Heritage Updating These Architectural Documents to the Contemporary Readers

This implementation of new technologies in the Cultural

Heritage arena has been structured for shaping the concept of *Digital Cultural Heritage*, where new technologies have helped in the enhancement of people interaction with their Cultural Patrimony, making them better cultural readers.

The benefits can be analyzed from the concept of *Interaction Design*, which proposes an approach between objects and users that transcends the functionality, because creates the necessary channels for a communicative and responsive experience [17]. In other words through *Interaction Design* artefacts get the possibility of socializing, because they are designed for responding people and the stimuli of the environment.

The purpose is to build a closer encounter between cultural readers and cultural goods, which encourages people to have a personal and dynamic experience with their Cultural Patrimony that overcomes the conservative approach of receptacles, which are focused on merely visual encounters that do not allow people to get close and read deeply [18].

According to the type of Cultural Heritage and reader, technologies can offer stimulating ways of interaction, which people genuinely enjoy. For the new generations that are quite immersed in this kind of reality, plenty of technological tools, New Technologies are providing useful tools that can easily capture their attention and engagement not only as readers but also as cultural bearers.

In this way the documents that Historic Centres represent can be kept alive, and open new possibilities for their own evolution, adjusting their reading qualities for the changeable context and citizens-readers.

VI. CONCLUSION

The integration of the different typologies of stories, found in the Oral Patrimony, with the architectural landscape of Historic Centres structures a process able to reinforce the narrative of these places, which although is already quite rich of aesthetic features that make it visually remarkable, needs to deepen in the intangible and human meanings hidden behind the architectural tangibility.

With the Oral Patrimony the richness of the urban landscape is complemented by an intrinsic narrative, which additionally has a large amount of emotional aspects imprinted by the Storytellers' voices that reveal meaningful facets related to the creation, use and transformation/evolution of these sites.

In this way citizens and visitors can have a deeper understanding of the different scenarios that make part of Historic Centres, and how the intangible cultural practices of their population have had a significant role building the material culture and the multifaceted character of these places-documents.

For this process it is important to make this integration in the urban space of the Historic Centres, because in this way the stories will be told in the adequate scenarios and there will be a cumulus of stimuli (intangible and tangible) able to foster the visualization of the scenes narrated by the Storytellers; because as N. Gershon, W. Page affirm "*Storytelling allows visualization to reveal information as effectively and intuitively as if the viewer were watching a movie*" [19].

With this strategy the stories of the citizens enrich the architectural documents that Historic Centres represent, weaving cultural resources (Tangible and Intangible) throughout new technologies for updating their narrative to the capabilities of the contemporary readers. The goal of this narrative is to make readers aware of the richness present in these sites and the history carried by them, thus new generations can understand the history of their development at human, cultural and social levels.

Additionally when the narrative of Historic Centres is adjusted to contemporary readers, these sites get inside of a valorisation process that makes them evolve as *Living and Cultural Places* and not only as historic documents. Thus Historic Centres get inside of a developing process determined by the contemporary readers-citizens.

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