

ABSTRACT - 4. CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES IN HERITAGE DISCOURSE - A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE STATE OF THE ART IN HERITAGE DISCUSSIONS, CONSIDERING THE EVOLVING PERSPECTIVES AND CHALLENGES THAT HAVE EMERGED SINCE THE INCEPTION OF THE VENICE CHARTER. EXAMINING THE RELEVANCE OF THE VENICE CHARTER IN THE CURRENT CONTEXT, WITH A FOCUS ON CHALLENGES POSED BY THE WESTERN DIVIDE BETWEEN NATURE AND CULTURE, THE GROWING IMPORTANCE OF METROPOLISES, SOCIAL INEQUITIES, THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF HUMAN ACTIVITIES, DISASTERS AND CONFLICTS, AMONG OTHERS.

THE ROLE OF DIGITAL URBAN OBSERVATORIES FOR HERITAGE IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

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Since 2008, with the rapid expansion of cities and advances in technologies, urban observatories have been considered by UNESCO as a useful means for the visualisation, dissemination and analysis of urban-related information. Urban observatories are known for facilitating public participation and data collection that addresses contemporary challenges, such as urban growth, climate change, disasters and pandemics. However, the recognition of heritage as a vital component of urban observatories did not emerge until 2020. Consequently, little has been discussed about the role of observatories in relation to urban heritage, particularly from a Global South perspective, one that

symbolises a 'dynamic and changing set of locations'. Recent Southern approaches and critical heritage studies show that mainstream urban and heritage principles and definitions are often rooted in Eurocentric understandings which may not reflect the realities and manifestations of Global South contexts. Heritage conventions and charters, such as the Venice Charter of 1964, are a good illustration of this. Despite the relevance of the Venice Charter in advancing heritage discussions and setting out 'additional principles for restoration and preservation', the inclusion of contested, counterhegemonic and Southern notions of heritage, contemporary urban challenges and the role of digital tools for heritage preservation are falling short. Against this backdrop, the purpose and potential of heritage considerations within digital urban observatories and their relevance to planning, development, design and local communities are scrutinised in this paper. In particular, the authors review Southern and critical heritage theories and analyse existing urban observatories in Brazil and South Africa to identify whether and how digital urban observatories integrate and (re)present urban heritage information. This study reflects on the Global South challenges and the relevance of the Venice Charter, and contributes to global discourses around urban heritage preservation and the role of digital platforms.

Palavras-chave: urban heritage; urban observatories; global south; digital platforms; venice charter.