

Commonalities and Conflicts Between  
Urban Preservation and Social Sustainability  
in the Historic City of Bath

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research dissertation attempts to provide insight into the ways in which perceptions of social sustainability held by architects and heritage conservationists relate to the evolution of urban form, specifically within the context of urban preservation. Using the case study location of the historic city of Bath in southwest England, formally inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 1987 by UNESCO, the intersection of social sustainability and heritage conservation was explored through qualitative research built on a phenomenological epistemological framework, utilising thematic analysis of interviews of individuals with expertise in the built environment of the historic city to derive individual perceptions about the research question. Data was analyzed based from themes revealed within the academic literature surrounding heritage conservation, social sustainability, sense of place, agency, and complexity as they relate to Bath. Participant perceptions were further considered against indicators of social sustainability, including the targets for the UN Sustainable Development Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities (“Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable”). The data suggests that although there are potential conflicts within the common indicators of social sustainability as they relate to the practice of heritage conservation, nonetheless the perceptions of these indicators, specifically within the context of Bath, as held by the research participants primarily revealed commonalities along major themes. Furthermore, the data exposed opportunities for additional inquiry into the relationship between the two identified international programs and their impact on urbanism. Participants showed varying levels of engagement with the intersectionality of social sustainability and heritage conservation as they relate to the city of Bath, yet all disclosed professional intent to operationalise their understandings, in response to their individual perceptions of how to best serve the well-being of the historic city and the social relationships therein.



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This dissertation is dedicated to my daughter. Through her eyes, I see cities anew.

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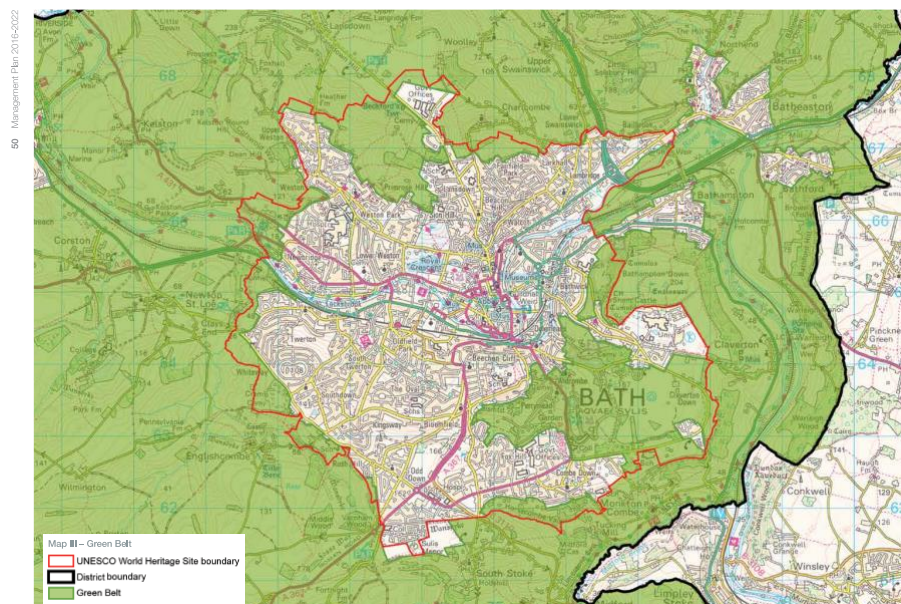
## **CHAPTER 01: INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the perceived influence of urban preservation, specifically resulting from the regulations associated with the maintenance of the status of the city of Bath as a World Heritage Site as designated by the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), on the social sustainability of the city. Interviews of experts on the built environment of Bath will be analyzed based on themes revealed within the academic literature surrounding heritage conservation, social sustainability, sense of place, agency, and complexity as they relate to Bath. Their perceptions will be further considered against indicators of social sustainability, including the targets for the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities (“Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable”) (United Nations 2015), in order to illustrate possible commonality and/or conflicts, as well as opportunities for further study, of the relationship between these two international programs and their impact on urbanism.

### **Historic and Geographic Context**

The city of Bath is the largest city the North East Somerset unitary authority council, situated along the Avon River surrounded by a protected landscape of limestone hills common across the southwest of England (Fergusson 2011, City of Bath World Heritage Site Steering Group 2016, Bath & North East Somerset Council 2017). Tourists have come to this location since the Romans to partake in its thermal

springs, the only of their kind in the England, and to explore its surrounding landscape (McNeill-Ritchie and Historic England 2017). As a result, Bath harbours centuries of cultural heritage, not least of which is a rich heritage of building. The architectural history of the city is unique, beginning in the second century A.D. with the establishment of a Roman spa in what remains the city centre, although Bath is more commonly known for its gracious supply of Georgian planning, architecture, and landscape (Abercrombie, Owens et al. 1945, Smithson 1980, Fergusson 2011, McNeill-Ritchie and Historic England 2017). Yet it is the breadth of cultural heritage across generations, including Roman archaeology, hot springs, Georgian town planning and architecture, and green setting of the city, that together provide Bath with what was found to be “outstanding universal value,” enough to be inscribed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site in 1987 (UNESCO World Heritage Committee 2013: 1).



**Figure 01.** Bath UNESCO World Heritage Site boundary, District boundary, and Green Belt map. Source: (City of Bath World Heritage Site Steering Group 2016: 50).

Although the ancient Roman ruins, as well as Medieval and Victorian architecture, contribute to the outstanding universal value of the heritage of Bath, it is the preserved Georgian buildings and spaces, developed widespread across the city in a manner similar to real estate development today, that are most often identified as the architectural icons of Bath's heritage offering (Rodwell 2007). With a population of 90,000, Bath receives each year an average of 4.5 million visitors, who arrive to visit over 5,000 historically listed buildings that are preserved monuments to Roman history, Medieval street patterns, and Georgian urbanism, in addition to the spa itself (City of Bath World Heritage Site Steering Group 2016). Within that context, Bath bears a tourism burden of its preservation, a characteristic not uncommon amongst well-preserved historic architecture in general, and amongst World Heritage Sites in particular (Rodwell 2006, Albert 2015, Labadi and Logan 2015).



**Figure 02.** Roman Baths.



**Figure 03.** Pulteney Weir.

Bath survived until the 1950s as a visually homogeneous urban landscape constructed in local stone with a coherent set of complimentary architectural styles and representing a diversity of building and dwelling types necessary for a fully functioning and socially inclusive city (Smithson 1980: 1, Rodwell 2007: 138,

Fergusson 2011: 11). Yet it was the destruction of many of these historic buildings and spaces over only a few short decades, the less-grand Grade III heritage fabric buildings in particular (Fergusson 2011: 8), that led to the organized effort to preserve the entire city of Bath through World Heritage status in a way unlike any other city today (Borsay 2000, City of Bath World Heritage Site Steering Group 2016).

### **Problem Context**

In *The Sack of Bath*, the 1973 publication that placed the destruction of the heritage of Bath on the international stage, journalist-turned-activist Adam Fergusson depicts a wonton disregard for the historic fabric of the city (Fergusson 2011). In particular, Fergusson offers in the preface of the 2011 reprint of the book a passionate critique of the responsibility that architects hold on the built environment, stating,

It is the arrogance in this case of those architects – employed, directed, and rewarded, of course, by the developer or the town planner – architects who determine in what shape of packing-case, cylinder, or rabbit hutch people shall live; who determine what cityscape, townscape, or landscape should be sacrificed to their whim ... (W)e all know that there will be ‘development,’ and often that it needs compromise. What sticks in the craw is being told that architects with impressive initials know best, or that the ‘new’ or ‘iconic’ is somehow morally superior to a respect for the existing proportions of a beautiful town. (Fergusson 2011: xiv)

Yet inherent in this condemnation of architects (and case for heritage conservation) is a failure to acknowledge the evolutionary nature of cities, their physical realm constantly adapting to their ever-changing social realm. In her research on urban and economic sociology, Tonkiss argues that the evolution of cities is a social process in which both formal planning of the built environment and informal construction of both public and private space combine to create the urbanism that we experience (Tonkiss 2005, Tonkiss 2013, Tonkiss 2017). Relatedly, urban sociologist Manuel Castells maintains that the evolution of cities is an historical product in which not only the physical realm but also the cultural meanings tied to the physical result from the generations of lives lived in its places and spaces (Cuthbert 2003). If cities are the combined effort of the production of space of the people within that city over time, then the built environment of cities is the combined effort of the production of architecture by those responsible for what constitutes the built environment at any given point in the evolution of a city (Lynch 1960, Lefebvre and Nicholson-Smith 1991, Cuthbert 2003). If this is the case, then it could be argued that the production of cities therefore stands to benefit from sustainable social conditions that support and encourage improved built environment, and vice versa.

### **Research Question**

This research seeks to answer the question: *in what ways do perceptions of social sustainability relate to the evolution of urban form, specifically within the context of heritage conservation?* In an attempt to answer this question, utilizing the epistemological framework of phenomenology in the design of a qualitative research

study that focuses on a geographical case study, I utilise expert interviews to collect data on the perceptions of social sustainability experienced by actors impacting the built realm in the historic city of Bath, specifically architects and heritage conservation practitioners. Based on this research, I then analyze the opportunities and obstacles involved in impacting social sustainability, as experienced by these expert local actors, with the hope of providing insight into the relationship between historic conservation and the various indicators of social sustainability within urban communities.

## CHAPTER 02: LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to explore the intersection of the separate disciplines of social sustainability and heritage conservation, the academic literature in both areas of study must first be examined, after which the areas of overlap can then be interpreted. I have therefore outlined the major applicable discourse within each individual discipline and then extracted relevant themes illustrating commonalities and conflicts between them in the following review.

### **Social Sustainability**

On the topic of social sustainability, academic authors regularly reference *Our Common Future*, commonly referred to as the Brundtland Report (World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) 1987), as an initial base source for discussion (Littig and Griessler 2005, Robert, Parris et al. 2005, Vallance, Perkins et al. 2011, Boström 2012). Yet there is likewise consensus within the academic literature that social sustainability remains loosely defined and difficult to quantify (Stubbs 2004, Dempsey, Bramley et al. 2011, Boström 2012). Concepts such as “social capital” emerge within the discourse to more accurately describe the benefit of the formal and informal relationships that underpin the concept of social sustainability and contribute to quality of life (Putnam 2000: 19, Woolcock and Narayan 2000, Dempsey, Bramley et al. 2011). However, there remains a lack of consensus when it comes to the relationship between social sustainability and both



the built and open spaces of the urban realm (Stubbs 2004, Dempsey, Bramley et al. 2011, Harun, Zakariya et al. 2014, Avrami 2016, Hubbard 2018).

The literature offers some consistency on a number of key indicators to be considered within the context of social sustainability specifically relating to basic human needs, including equity, education, justice, safety, employment, culture, and sense of community (Littig and Griessler 2005, Rodwell 2007, Dempsey, Bramley et al. 2011, Vallance, Perkins et al. 2011, Albert 2015). Yet when considering sustainability measures in general, social indicators are often minimized in favour of economic or environmental considerations and, when present, are often politically motivated rather than empirically based (Littig and Griessler 2005). Nonetheless, consistently revealed in discussions of social sustainability are topics involving fundamental human needs such as physical well-being and quality of life, and topics involving equity, including equal access to economic and social opportunity (Landorf 2011).

Using goals as a means to measure the sustainability performance of cities is not a new concept, and numerous authors explore frameworks for doing so (Satterthwaite 1997, Robert, Parris et al. 2005, Avrami 2016, Broman and Robèrt 2017, Missimer, Robèrt et al. 2017, Missimer, Robèrt et al. 2017). Specific to this dissertation, UN Sustainable Development Goal 11 relating to sustainable cities (United Nations 2015) offers a comprehensive set of targets by which to consider the social sustainability of a city, reflecting the variety of social sustainability indicators evident in the academic literature. Important to the focus of this dissertation, there is early evidence within

the literature, given how recent the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were introduced, that there is use in considering the relationship between the evolution of historic urbanism and the urban sustainability outcomes that the SDGs seek to establish (Arslan, Durak et al. 2016). As a result, the use of the targets associated with Goal 11 offers a useful framework for evaluating the social sustainability impacts of the urbanism resulting from heritage conservation efforts. It should be noted, however, that a variety of additional evaluation systems and indicator rubrics exist, including Basic Needs Theory and related subsequent iterations (Hoadley 1981, Sinner, Baines et al. 2004), and Sustainable Development Theory and related subsequent iterations (Basiago 1998, Bramley and Power 2009), as will be detailed more thoroughly in the data analysis of this research.

Within the context of the conservation of historic buildings and properties, the general topic of sustainability has been evaluated, particularly as it relates to tourism often associated with such sites (Lowenthal 1998, Nasser 2003, Schmutz and Elliott 2016), as well as with the maintenance of specific buildings and properties themselves (Longstreth 2011, Walter 2013). By contrast, the specific topic of the sustainability of historic cities reveals less attention within the literature (Vehbi and Hoşkara 2009), although there is acknowledgment of the contribution that historic conservation can add to the proposition of sustainable urban development (Longstreth 2011, Young 2012, Phillips and Stein 2013, Harun, Zakariya et al. 2014, Mària and Salvadó 2017), highlighting the benefit that the lens of sustainable development goals might offer this area of inquiry.

## Heritage Conservation

While the conservation of heritage architecture began as romantic advocacy for historic buildings, today it is a formal discipline, the foundation of which is source for academic research, multidimensional policy, and governmental legislation (Rodwell 2007). The practice in its current conceptualisation dates to the period following World War II and the conditions of destruction and displacement that resulted, placing a need for authorized oversight of the evolution of urban form, exemplified by the *Town and Country Planning Act 1947* in the U.K., as well as a variety of additional global examples, administered at both the city and national level (Labadi and Logan 2015). Collectively, this growing global interest in explicit protections of heritage in conjunction with urban redevelopment can be seen to have eventually led to the adoption of the *1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*, more commonly known as the World Heritage Convention, by the then newly formed UNESCO, as positioned under the World Heritage Committee of the United Nations (UNESCO World Heritage Committee 1980, Rodwell 2007, Albert 2015, Labadi and Logan 2015). It is of note that the Convention significantly predates the Brundtland Report, in that it represents a call for protection of resources – in this case, cultural and natural heritage – that cannot be replicated, a theme that parallels the Brundtland Report closely and one that remains foundational to the literature as well as the regulations regarding sustainability (Rodwell 2007, Labadi and Logan 2015). It can be argued that the disciplines of sustainability and heritage conservation have mutually informed each other, in their parallel development, and that heritage conservation is a key element

underpinning sustainable development (Rodwell 2007, Albert 2015). Still, it was not until the adoption of the Budapest Declaration in 2002 that UNESCO formally addressed the intersection of sustainability and heritage conservation, and it was not until the issuance of the Vienna Memorandum in 2005 that UNESCO identified the need for integrative urban redevelopment that is compatible with existing heritage urbanism (UNESCO World Heritage Committee 2002, UNESCO World Heritage Committee 2005, Labadi and Logan 2015), suggesting further analysis of this intersection is warranted.

Because it is formally restricted through tools associated with the UNESCO World Heritage program, the city of Bath is an example of urbanism with significant contributions to cultural history, offering Bath a distinctive condition for study (Borsay 2000). Specific to the city, multiple authors have cited the challenge for historic urbanism to adapt to modern pressures, given the combination of the heritage conservation controls on the built environment as well as the greenbelt surrounding the city, which inhibits its physical expansion (Ford 1978, Graham, Tunbridge et al. 2000, Rodwell 2006). However, exploration of the relationship between social sustainability and heritage conservation remains a nascent area of research (Stubbs 2004, Landorf 2009, Landorf 2011, Albert 2015). Furthermore, the literature review did not reveal published information on research specific to this challenge within the city of Bath.

## Reports and Regulations

In a review of literature relevant to this research, it is important to address those reports, official documents, and formal organizations relating to both social sustainability and heritage conservation that provide regulatory foundation, governance direction, and localised advocacy to the built environment of Bath.

Although archival in nature, such a list should necessarily include those plans of John Wood the elder that determined many of the remaining iconic 18<sup>th</sup>-century buildings and spaces of Bath, including Queen Square, the Circus, and the Royal Crescent (Rodwell 2007). Following Bath's destruction during World War II, Sir Patrick Abercrombie, famous for his 1944 plan of London, drafted his *A Plan for Bath*, which provided the first comprehensive masterplan for the city. Although its recommendations were never realized as the author intended, it is noteworthy that the plan emphasises the local and national importance of the conservation of the historic architectural features of the city (Abercrombie, Owens et al. 1945, Branston and Brown 2013).

As previously mentioned, the *Town and Country Act 1947* and its multiple subsequent iterations and amendments, which thus inform the City of Bath development plan, would necessarily belong on a list such as this (Bath City Council 1957). Throughout the 1960s, local council commissioned a series of reports that attempted to address public concern over various urban matters, although their recommendations were of the era and in many cases reflected an "urban renewal" strategy that conflict with current best practices (Colin Buchanan and Partners 1965,

Colin Buchanan and Partners, Great Britain Ministry of Housing and Local Government et al. 1968, Fergusson 2011: 12). The 1978 report *Saving Bath: A Programme for Conservation* documents the study undertaken by the Bath Department of Architecture and Planning to research conservation needs within the city and determine priority areas for conservation investment and planning intervention (Worskett, Redston et al. 1978).

Relevant reports and conventions of both the UN and UNESCO have previously been cited, but it is worth reiterating that both organisations offer significant official recommendation to the topics of both sustainability and heritage conservation (Rodwell 2007). U.K. central government is author to various reports that drive governance strategy and analysis methodology of both sustainability and heritage conservation for local councils across the country (Great Britain. Parliament. 1882, Sturge and Great Britain. 1969, Department for Culture 2002, Department for Environment 2005, The Area Based Analysis Unit 2009, Department for Environment 2013). Specific to Bath, various national and regional policies, regulations, and strategies provide contextualization and offer further framing for analysis of the social sustainability of the city in particular (Department for Environment 2005, Department for Environment 2013, Bath & North East Somerset Council and Bath & North East Somerset Economic Partnership 2014). A variety of local Bath and North East Somerset council reports have served to steer process and policy as it pertains to aspects of the built environment, including both new construction as well as heritage conservation (Bath & North East Somerset Council 2010, Bath & North East

Somerset Council and Spiers and Major Associates 2010, Bath & North East Somerset Council and Landscape Projects 2015, Bath & North East Somerset Council and Landscape Projects 2015, City of Bath World Heritage Site Steering Group 2016, Bath & North East Somerset Council 2017). In addition, there are multiple sustainability and heritage conservation organizations and action groups focused on Bath or working within Bath, including Bath Deserves Better (Bath Deserves Better 2018), BIG – Bath and North East Somerset Independent Group (Bath and North East Somerset Independent Group 2018), and the Federation of Bath Residents’ Associations (Federation of Bath Residents’ Associations 2018).

## **Major Themes**

Several major themes relating to the intersection of social sustainability and cultural heritage emerged from a review of the academic literature proving particularly relevant to the research question and were therefore a focus of intent during analysis of the research data. The themes are detailed as follows.

### **Theme: Value of Cultural Heritage**

UNESCO utilises the terminology “outstanding universal value” to describe the exceptional conditions of international value of monuments, groups of buildings, and sites necessary for World Heritage Site designation (UN Educational 1972: 2). The concept of the value of heritage, and the many ways to define and measure that value, is a recurring theme within the literature that proves particularly relevant when comparing individual perceptions about heritage conservation. Historic

urbanism contributes to cultural heritage, owing to a connection with past societies that its protection offers physical representation thereof. Although what today UNESCO describes as a “cultural landscape” (Rodwell 2007: 69) was not a category of protection at the time of the inscription of the city as a World Heritage Site in 1987, Bath is an excellent example of this type of landscape, and more specifically, of an “historic urban landscape” (UNESCO World Heritage Committee 2011: 3), meaning that its value is derived not solely from its individual historic buildings but also from the interrelation of those buildings with each other, as well as with the surrounding rural greenscape within which the built environment sits, weaving a cultural narrative through time (Bandarin and Oers 2012, Albert 2015). Yet this culture-based definition of value is not the sole outcome of a formally protected historic built realm. Historic architecture has become ever-increasingly economically valuable due to the growth of demand for its limited supply within the marketplace (Pendlebury, Townshend et al. 2004, Albert 2015). In contexts such as Bath, there are signals that this commodification has repercussions that are potentially detrimental to the social sustainability of the city.

Nonetheless, the move toward regulatory protection of heritage urbanism is often the result of public outcry from affected communities who are reacting in the face of losses associated with its destruction (Fergusson and Mowl 1989, Rodwell 2007), although in the case of Bath, the question could be raised as to whether residents today feel the same grassroots-based dedication to protection of the past when they are faced with the needs of the present and the anticipated needs of the future



(Labadi and Logan 2015, UNESCO World Heritage Committee 2017). The social value of cultural heritage, of which heritage urbanism is a key component, is a fundamental principle within the sustainable development agenda (UN General Assembly 2012, Albert 2015). Yet there is an imbalance between the ideals of civic engagement that are associated with social sustainability in general and the sustainable development goals in particular, such as participatory processes and opportunity for collective decision-making, and the common contemporary method of heritage site management, including the preclusion of adaptation and the limit of evolved interpretation, particularly in the U.K. (Smith 2006, Landorf 2009, Albert 2015, United Nations 2015). The literature thus reveals a potential conflict, particularly applicable within the context of Bath, between the formal protection of heritage urbanism and the aspirational goal of a socially sustainable city.

#### Theme: Importance of Quality of Life

A second relevant theme is that of the importance of the experience of a city to our understanding of the sustainability of that city. Here the literature reveals a variety of perspectives on the importance of a comprehensive consideration of what constitutes social sustainability, beyond the most fundamental of human needs to what might be described as quality of life indicators (Forrest and Kearns 2001, Brandon and Lombardi 2005, Colantonio and Dixon 2011). It is important to note that while basic human needs indicators, including statistics related to housing, employment, and crime, are typically more measurable in character, by contrast those indicators describing quality of life, including economic opportunity, social

connectivity, and civic investment, are often significantly less quantifiable and more susceptible to individual perceptions (Putnam 2000, Wood and Leighton 2010, Colantonio and Dixon 2011, Landorf 2011). Examples of quality of life measurements could include: the Indices of Deprivation in the U.K., which attempts to quantify health and living environment deprivation (The Area Based Analysis Unit 2009); social cohesion indicators in the E.U. that describe areas that the European Commission urges member states focus on in order to provide sustainable social protection systems (European Commission 2013); and even more meta-analytical methods, such as the multi-dimensional indices informing the Human Development Index and the Happy Life Years measurement, both of which underscore the potential value of examining subjective indicators to understand social sustainability (Knight and Rosa 2011, Frugoli, Almeida et al. 2015).

After exploring the intersection of social sustainability and heritage conservation through the lens of improved well-being, the literature reveals opportunity for further research. It is generally assumed that heritage conservation is a cornerstone of any socially sustainable city (Rodwell 2007), yet while major UNESCO declarations and memorandums have made reference to the integration of heritage within the sustainability agenda, little of meaning has been done to adapt the World Heritage Convention into a tool used to create sustainable development outcomes and support the Sustainable Development Agenda (Labadi and Logan 2015, United Nations 2015). Furthermore, while national U.K. policy objectives identify the importance of heritage-led regeneration to quality of life indicators (Department for

Culture 2002), there is not major academic research to support this claim (Stubbs 2004, Colomb 2007, Landorf 2011). Rather, the literature focuses on the potential contributions of urbanism on general social sustainability indicators (Claris and Scopelliti 2016), and on the interrelationship between civic participation and community investment, which in turn is presumed to contribute to common soft indicators of social sustainability (Landorf 2011). Landorf notes that Bramley and Power identify the broad threads of “social capital, social cohesion, and social identity” as being central to sustainable development (Bramley and Power 2009, Landorf 2011: 466), and these threads both reflect general understandings of heritage conversation and provide relevant areas for exploration of perception within the context of Bath. Historic urbanism connects people of today with societies of the past and, in so doing, has the ability to offer a sense of solidarity in shared memory and a means of connection to place (Albert 2015).

#### Theme: Perception and Sense of Place

Based on the concept that cities are not static but rather dynamic, as a result of the human dimension of urbanism, a third relevant theme emerges on the inextricable nature of individual perceptions or experiences of urbanism from our understanding of that urbanism itself. Marxist sociologist Henri Lefebvre is necessarily at the heart of this theme, particularly his 1991 treatise *The Production of Space*, in which he explores the relationship between the physical, social, and experiential capacities of urbanism (Lefebvre and Nicholson-Smith 1991). Lefebvre describes how the city (and thereby the spaces within it) does not exist “in itself,” absent the human

experience of the city (and the spaces within it) (Sayre 2009: 28). His argument hinges on the evolutionary nature of cities, a result of their inherent population density and the changing needs of that population over time and through generations, as they adapt and reproduce space based on their evolving needs (Fischer 1975, Lefebvre and Nicholson-Smith 1991, Brenner 2009, Parker 2015). Widely cited, Lefebvre's conceptualization reflects an epistemological framework utilized by an extensive list of authors who further define urban space in terms of human ecology and social interactions (Fischer 1975, Relph 1976, Giddens 1985, Merrifield 1993, Massey 1994, Merrifield 1997, Alberti 2009, Sayre 2009).

This understanding of the social nature of the built environment is not limited to the disciplines of social science and human geography. Of particular relevance is work on the theory of place by architect and theorist Christian Norberg-Schulz, in which he proposes the framework for the phenomenology of architecture by utilizing the concept of *genius loci* (Dovey 2010). This terminology, dating to the ancient Romans, refers to the "spirit of a place" and responds to the theory that our individual perceptions are shaped by that which we experience and the environment by which we are surrounded (Norberg-Schulz 1980: 18). Although this framework has been criticized for relying on an essentialist perspective that fails to acknowledge political and social constructs that inform our perceptions, there is nonetheless extensive literature from a variety of perspectives to support an ontological understanding of place beyond simply the physicality of the architecture (Norberg-Schulz 1980, Cresswell 2004, Dovey 2007, Steinert 2009, Dovey 2010). This

theorization contrasts that of Lefebvre, in that it places the built environment as central to our experiences, rather than our experiences serving to reproduce the built environment, yet both theories reflect a multidimensionality to place that goes beyond the physical and engages the perception of the individual.

The shared experiential dimension of urbanism does not solely reside in theoretical understandings but permeates the writing of urban practitioners as well. An urban planner, Kevin Lynch describes the significance of our visual perception of concrete space based on the mental maps we make to orient ourselves within the city, underscoring the importance of the legibility of urbanism to human movement and the elements of the built environment that inform, and that are informed by, that movement (Lynch 1960). Architect and designer Aldo Rossi describes the importance of “collective psychology” to the study of the city, acknowledging that our physical environments influence us in complex and intangible ways and that we in turn influence our physical environments (Rossi, Eisenman et al. 1982: 112).

These accounts of the importance of perception underscore a humanist understanding of cities, one that can be seen to permeate both the UNESCO World Heritage Convention as well as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNESCO World Heritage Committee 1980, United Nations 2015). Furthermore, these ideas around shared perception are only enhanced, when interwoven with a valuation of both historic urbanism and present quality of life, and suggest a deeper complexity to the urban itself. Additionally, they identify the significant contribution that expertise in the built environment might offer to the discourse.

## Theme: Authorship of the Built Environment

In grounding the selected data source for this research, an important theme is the significant role played by those professional actors responsible for determining the built environment. The architecture of the city tells us about ourselves, in symbolic fashion, yet what it tells us reflects the vision of those who hold agency to determine that vision (Mumford 1940, Steinert 2009). This agency is often associated with architects, who are the formal authors of urban form. In the case of a city with significant architectural heritage protections, however, this agency is also enjoyed by heritage conservationists and those associated agencies working to protect the historic character of the city. While these groups may frequently be assumed to be at odds, much as Fergusson described in *The Sack of Bath* and its subsequent related publications (Fergusson and Mowl 1989, Fergusson 2011, Fergusson 2013), they share a common language and toolkit, both representing society through the buildings and spaces that they design and/or protect.

Architects have significant influence on the social sustainability of the city, in so far as buildings impact targets such as those described in UN Sustainable Development Goal 11 (“Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable”) (United Nations 2015). Seen together, their designs create urbanism, which can either vastly improve quality of life, with buildings that provide shelter and utility and even beauty to society, or severely undermine well-being, with buildings that impose chaos and exclusivity and banality on society (Krier 1998, Hubbard 2018). Taken in

aggregate, their designs produce a “cultural map of structural change” that represents a physical manifestation of the shifting materiality of urban culture (Cuthbert 2003: 177). Architects have the capacity, through their visible transformation of the built environment, to provide a catalysing impact that produces social, cultural, or political change within a city (Knox 1987). Their impact is one of civic art, although within the profession there remains ongoing and arguably unnecessary internal debate as to what truly constitutes art and what is an appropriate expression of civic vision (Rossi, Eisenman et al. 1982, Rodwell 2007).

As advocates for conservation and authorities on historic architecture, heritage conservationists hold a similar responsibility toward the social sustainability of the city as do architects, albeit in consideration of existing buildings and spaces as opposed to newly built design. Wright offers that their work provides context to the built environment; it tells us what is there and why that is the case, and also explains what is no longer there or never was and what the causes may have been (Cuthbert 2003). Protection of built heritage can offer communities validation through shared symbolism and recognition of a shared past (Knox 1987). Yet there is vulnerability within the field of a dogmatic protectionism that reduces the historic built realm to celebrated objects to be admired from a distance, rather than functional tools to be used and enjoyed (Rodwell 2007). As Boccardi describes, where wider social concerns have been neglected for the sake of preservation of physical constructs, unneeded conflicts have arisen that undermine the meaningful role that

conservationists play within the legacy of a culture (Pendlebury, Townshend et al. 2004, Albert 2015).

Based on a Lefebvrian understanding of cities as adaptive social constructs that result from the production of space, architecture is then the formal operationalization of the theory and the tool by which our cities are constantly rebuilt. Whether that architecture was created two thousand years ago, as in the case of the Roman ruins, or two hundred fifty years ago, as in the case of Georgian Bath, or is being created today, as in the case of the building projects cited within this research, the production of architecture, as Zukin describes, is an effort to adapt the urban landscape in a manner that represents the social context (Cuthbert 2003). Quoting architect and town planner Charles Robert Ashbee, Turner argues that the conservation of urban heritage must include,

... (N)ot only the things themselves, the streets, the houses, spires, towers, and domes, but the way of living, the idealism, the feeling for righteousness and fitness which these things connote, and with which every city with any claim to dignity and beauty is instinct. (Pro-Jerusalem Society Council, Ashbee et al. 1924, Albert 2015: 101)

This description of the built environment and its inherent social meaning might be a valid mission for anyone seeking to provide socially sustainable urbanism in Bath, regardless of whether they are an architect, heritage conservationist, or otherwise.



## Theme: Multidimensionality of the Urban

Weaving the physical, social, and temporal intersections of the previously outlined literature, a final merging theme found within the recent academic literature is the multidimensionality of that which we recognise as 'urban' and the potential for a new theoretical framework for urbanism understandings. Initiated by Brenner and Schmid, with subsequent discourse and critique (Walker 2015, Buckley and Strauss 2016, Storper and Scott 2016, Hubbard 2018), this proposal of an "epistemology of the urban" offers seven theses (Brenner and Schmid 2015). Of particular relevance to this research are Thesis 1 (the notion that the urban is a theoretical category that is not strictly bound by the physical alone), Thesis 2 (the notion that the urban is a process that is not strictly bound by any particular moment in time), Thesis 6 (the notion that the urban is in a constant innovative process of adaptation of socio-spatial arrangement), and Thesis 7 (the notion that this evolution of the urban is necessarily political and therefore inherently contestable) (Brenner and Schmid 2015). Additionally, their description of the recent urban trend of "... the establishment of a 'new metropolitan mainstream,' in which local and regional governments increasingly prioritize economic growth, property-led investment in flagship mega-projects, urban renewal and gentrification over job creation, social redistribution, equity, and participation," (Brenner 2013, Brenner and Schmid 2015: 4) reflects a matter of concern within much of the critique of the commodification of historic architecture under the banner of heritage conservation (Labadi and Logan 2015) and illustrates the conflict that such commodification can have with common

social sustainability indicators in particular (Rodwell 2007) and with UN Sustainable Development Goal 11 in general (United Nations 2015).

The argument of utilising the urban as its own theoretical framework is not without its own criticisms, and as Walker states, insofar as the urban is theoretical, urbanism is still an empirical entity with physical bounds and geographical context (Walker 2015). Yet the theme of multidimensionality reflects the duality of protection and innovation that a living historic city such as Bath must contend with when considering its own juncture of social sustainability and heritage conservation. Furthermore, within this theme lies a possible paradox at the meeting of the two disciplines: as both Labadi and Stubbs argue, there is the potential for inherent conflict to provide for both economic growth and social equity within the current neo-liberal global economic condition, and so it may be impossible to bring both the objectives of development and conservation to a single urban outcome, regardless of shared sustainable development and cultural heritage goals (Stubbs 2004, Labadi and Logan 2015). In this way, the multidimensionality of the urban as a theme within the literature offers a mechanism for interpreting potential commonalities and conflicts found within this research.

## CHAPTER 03: METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

For the purposes of this dissertation, I have chosen to use the terminology 'social sustainability' to define, as does the United Nations, those conditions in which individual opportunity is not limited by matters of basic needs and services (United Nations 2015). I have chosen to use the terminology 'built environment' to refer collectively to the spaces and voids and systems that constitute the physicality of the city (Cuthbert 2003). When specifically referring to 'architecture,' I mean to describe those buildings and their associated spaces that individually contribute to the built environment (Cuthbert 2003). When specifically referring to 'heritage conservation' within the context of urbanism, I mean to use the term in a similar manner to UNESCO, referring to any aspect of the intentional protection of the urban form of the city in order to preserve its cultural significance (UNESCO World Heritage Committee 1980).

The research of this dissertation is designed with an epistemological foundation of descriptive phenomenology as it relates to the relationship between urban preservation and social sustainability. With roots in the philosophical theories of Heidegger and Husserl, phenomenology focuses on the ways in which we know and the experiences by which we know (Morse 1994, Creswell 2013, Willis, Sullivan-Bolyai et al. 2016). Thus, the phenomenological paradigm provides a framework for inquiry into the way in which individuals organize their experiences and develop a

formal worldview, which in turn provides validity to individual perceptions and fundamentally grounds understanding in the experiential (Patton 1990, Morse 1994, Willis, Sullivan-Bolyai et al. 2016). As such, I chose to use phenomenology as the foundation for this research; the framework specifically responds to the challenges associated with quantitative measurement of social sustainability indicators and the influence of heritage conservation on those indicators, instead allowing inquiry to focus on the relevant perceptions of those actors directly impacting the built environment of Bath, specifically their perceptions of various social sustainability impacts of the culturally valuable urbanism and highly protected built realm therein (Husserl 2013, Willis, Sullivan-Bolyai et al. 2016). Furthermore, the epistemology reflects a Lefebvrian conception of the social nature of cities (Lefebvre and Nicholson-Smith 1991), and compliments a phenomenological understanding of the built environment (Norberg-Schulz 1980).

In its use in this research, the phenomenological framework remains solely epistemological in nature and focuses on the interpretations of the identified interview subjects in an attempt to codify patterns of perception (Eichelberger 1989, Patton 1990). Responding to this framework of lived experience, my analysis acknowledges the significance of the Lefebvre concept of the production of space (Lefebvre and Nicholson-Smith 1991), and it also considers recent academic inquiry into the critique of the urban age and the multidimensionality of the urban beyond simply the physical (Brenner and Schmid 2015). Additionally, the research epistemology reflects current debate in academic literature related to the ephemeral

nature of our understanding of social sustainability in general (Della Porta and Keating 2008).

The methodological practice for this dissertation is qualitative, utilizes a case study condition to provide geographical focus, and, using responses from participants identified on the basis of their role and expertise, employs an individual expert interview process to provide the source of research data (Morse 1994, Babbie 2010, Creswell 2013). My decision to conduct a qualitative study responds to both the intangibility of cultural heritage and the experientiality of social sustainability (Albert 2015). Practitioners in the fields of architecture and heritage conservation with expertise in informing the built environment of Bath were identified for contribution to the research data, and the sample set was purposefully restricted to provide a feasible amount of data that could be critically analyzed against themes identified within the academic literature related to the research question (Patton 1990, Curtis, Gesler et al. 2000, Noy 2008).

The case study location of Bath was chosen both for the vast amount of heritage urbanism, the substantial proportion of tourism as a human and economic impact on the city, and the formal regulatory conditions of protection, particularly including the fact that, due to outstanding universal value, the entire urban boundary and surrounding greenbelt of the city is inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is worth acknowledging that historic cities of such considerable cultural heritage contribution as to be eligible for UNESCO World Heritage status represent only a

small portion of the global urban condition, within the context of what is intended to be a holistically beneficial set of targets for the UN Sustainable Development Goals. However, this research examines the compatibility between the protection of culture, through preservation of urbanism, and the social sustainability of that urbanism. My analysis will seek to provide insight into the possibility that, with regulatory restrictions on the ability to physically evolve, the city of Bath may therefore face unique challenges to sustaining its society. In this way, this dissertation will contribute to knowledge of the relationship between the built realm and the social condition of historic cities. This research therefore provides context to some of the current pressures that the city of Bath faces in maintaining its World Heritage status, including the results of market pressure for large-scale development and affordable housing, as well as community demand for improved transport and enhanced quality of life.

### **Participant Identification and Selection**

Preliminary identification of interview subjects from the field of architecture relied on an analysis of content detailing architectural design proposals, and particularly included government documentation of application for development as well as media reporting of potential development, occurring in conjunction with and/or after the city of Bath was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987.

Additional consideration was given to architects with office locations in Bath and North East Somerset who are registered with the Royal Institute of British Architects with examples of projects located in Bath in their portfolios. In particular,

individuals with significant roles and unique insights in key recent development projects, including Thermae Bath Spa (2006), Southgate Shopping Centre and Bath Bus Station (2009), Bath Urban Extension Report (2011), Bath Western Riverside (2015), as well as the withdrawn Dyson Academy (rejected 2007), were initially sought for participation.

Preliminary identification of interview subjects from the field of heritage conservation relied on a similar analysis of content detailing heritage conservation efforts, though primarily depended on media reporting of potential development as well as general commentary on the built heritage in Bath, occurring in conjunction with and/or after the City of Bath was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987. Additionally, individuals from organizations such as Historic England, the National Trust, and SAVE Britain's Heritage, all of whom have identifiable oversight of matters related to Bath, were contacted for participation. Finally, individuals from the Bath Preservation Trust and the City of Bath World Heritage Site Steering Group were also contacted for participation.

Following preliminary identification, a random selection process was utilized in determining the order in which to contact interview subjects. Subsequent identification of additional interview subjects relied on "snowball" or "chain" sampling method, using a networking process to identify additional informants through the recommendation of previously identified sources (Patton 1990: 178, Noy 2008: 328). In the case of this research sample set, some subjects identified

through snowball sampling were found without prompting by the researcher and were simply offered by identified subjects who declined to participate. However, the communication process utilized with every subject following a completed interview included a direct request for the contact information of additional suggested informants, based on their interview experience and subsequent understanding of the research.

In total, thirty-nine individuals were contacted by email and/or telephone requesting participation; of those contacted, five declined to participate, twenty-three did not respond to requests for participation or failed to complete coordination of the research interview, and eleven agreed to participate, the contributions of which were included within the research data. The sample set for this research includes data from a balanced combination of architecture and heritage conservation experts and thus will allow analytic generalizations about how the perceptions of architecture and heritage conservation professionals impact the built environment of Bath, if not statistical generalizations about how their perceptions impact the built environment in general (Curtis, Gesler et al. 2000, Creswell 2013).

There is academic debate on the definition of 'expert' within social science research methodology, as well as within broader theoretical frameworks, which is worth considering as it relates to this research, given that an individual's 'role and expertise in informing the built environment of Bath' served as the identifying factor for participant inclusion in the sample set. While requisite background knowledge for



this research was defined specifically regarding explicit knowledge, it is nonetheless the case—particularly considering the epistemological framework of the research—that background knowledge regarding implicit knowledge developed by way of lived experience is as potentially valid of an expertise. Furthermore, it is worth noting that it might not be possible for interview subjects to fully separate professional expertise from personal experience when responding to interview questions (Collins and Evans 2007, Bogner, Littig et al. 2009). Nonetheless, participants were identified based on their professional roles and the resulting expertise they could contribute; further, the research questions were structured in an attempt to specifically call upon on the professional knowledge of the interview subjects in an additional effort to draw this distinction (Moses and Knutsen 2012).

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

All interview subjects were questioned in a semi-structured manner to derive answers to a pre-determined series of questions related to their expertise, their work in Bath, and their perceptions on topics related to social sustainability and heritage conservation (see sample interview questions in Appendix). The interview process was intentionally conversational in style in an attempt to arrive at answers to the same series of questions from each interview subject through the course of a dialogue, rather than structured to ask the same series of questions in the same sequence and wording of each interview subject. The rationale for this choice of methodology was a desire to utilize an “interaction model” in which the interview is founded on a certain shared knowledge base in order to facilitate data production

and, by doing so, objectively document the subjective perceptions of the interview subjects (Bogdan and Biklen 2007, Bogner, Littig et al. 2009: 57). While this methodology led to a more complicated data analysis, it allowed for interview subjects to provide responses based on their individual perceptions, as was the goal of the data collection, and supported the epistemological basis of the research, rather than conform their responses to a strict set of questions based solely on the point of view of the researcher. Furthermore, this methodology is in keeping with the valid qualitative research expert interview practice of providing open-ended questions that encourage responsive interpretation on the part of the interview subject, particularly where such research has a phenomenological epistemology at its foundation (Maxwell 1992, Morse 1994, Creswell 2013). Interviews ranged in length from sixty minutes to one-hundred-and-twenty minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded with the permission of the subject and were subsequently transcribed for analysis.

Social sustainability indicators and related themes utilized to develop the sample interview questions and guide my contribution to the interview dialogue were derived from the targets of UN Sustainable Development Goal 11 and include: housing security, transport access, participatory planning, cultural and natural heritage protection, disaster resiliency, urban health quality, open space accessibility, systemic urban-to-rural connectivity, climate impact risk management, and sustainable and resilient culture of building (United Nations 2015). Additional social sustainability themes were also used to compliment my questioning process,

as multiple academic theories on social sustainability offer a direct or inferable provision of operational indicators and content themes (Landorf 2011). The Basic Needs Theory and subsequent related research offers fundamental gauges of well-being, including dignity, freedom of choice, participation, personal responsibility, empowerment, and sense of inclusion (Hoadley 1981). Likewise, the Sustainable Development Theory and subsequent related research offers measurements of basic societal health, including equity, accessibility, social networking and sharing, cultural identity, and community stability (Basiago 1998, Bramley and Power 2009).

Analysis of the outcomes of this research process focused on organizing and interpreting perceptions of individual actors on factors relating to the social sustainability of the City of Bath, but also involved drawing possible conclusions based on those perceptions. Interview transcripts were coded according to the major themes previously identified within the academic literature using a conventional approach to latent content analysis (see sample transcript coding excerpt in Appendix) (Maxwell 1992, Hsieh and Shannon 2005, Babbie 2010). The results of the initial coding process were then further analyzed against the area of expertise of the participant in an attempt to derive threads of commonality and/or conflict among and between categories of impact on the built environment.

### **Ethical Considerations and Limitations**

The ethical issues connected with this research included two primary areas: participant burdens and data protection/confidentiality. In the case of participant

burdens, participants were invited but not forced to participate in research interviews, and participation was facilitated so as to be as convenient and accessible for each subject. In addition, participants were fully informed of the objectives of the research and were provided an information sheet regarding the research process. Participants signed a consent form to confirm their consent to be identified within the dissertation and to document their awareness of the purpose, process, and procedure of the research prior to being interviewed (see sample written consent form in Appendix). In the case of data protection and confidentiality, all research documentation and recordings have been stored in an online location with back-up files stored in a physical data storage device. Interviews were recorded using an encrypted digital audio recorder, and sound files were immediately converted and saved to data storage upon completion of interview. Because all participants consented to being identified by name, no further confidentiality provisions were necessary.

There were no conflicts of interest associated with my conduction of this research; however, it is important to acknowledge the areas where this research may be limited, not only due to my own restrictions or biases as the researcher, but also resulting from the methodology of the research process. In general, qualitative research may be seen to contain inherent risk of bias, or at the very least be subject to questions of reliability, due to the nature of the methods of data collection, the subjective nature of the data, and the soundness of the subsequent analysis (Morse 1994, Flyvbjerg 2001, Della Porta and Keating 2008). However, I have attempted to

meet the basic characteristics of accepted qualitative inquiry as Creswell clearly outlines as best practice, including conducting interviews in the natural setting of the subject, collecting data myself, utilizing inductive and deductive data analysis, focusing on participants' meanings, adapting the research throughout the qualitative process by use of emergent design, clearly reflecting on my own role in the research, and approaching the dissertation holistically (Creswell 2013: 181-182).

Specific to my role as a researcher, and particularly as an urban designer with undergraduate study in classical architecture, it is possible that I could hold personal sympathies toward either architects and/or heritage conservationists which might impact the objectivity of my data analysis. However while these latent educational and professional connections to my interview subjects had the potential to introduce bias, the fact that I was their professional peer was likewise a helpful circumstance that allowed me to establish a rapport with the interview subjects so that they felt comfortable speaking about their perceptions of their work (Agar 1980, Patton 1990, Bogner, Littig et al. 2009, Babbie 2010). As I found to be true throughout the interview portion of this research process, "Frequently, the fact that the interviewer and the interviewee share a common scientific background or relevance system can increase the level of motivation on the part of the expert to participate in the interview," (Bogner, Littig et al. 2009: 2).

The selection process for interview subjects provided opportunity for bias. Although initial potential candidates were identified based on available documentation of

their work in Bath and were then contacted in a randomly selected order for participation, additional interview subjects were needed in order to fulfil a robust data set. However, these additional interview subjects were identified on the basis of the recommendation of a prior interview subjects and were therefore selected via a personal networking process rather than a more objective methodology. A further opportunity for bias results from the manner in which the interviews were conducted. Seven of the interview subjects were able to meet in person at a location of their choosing, which in all but one case was at their place of work; the remaining interviews were conducted via video or telephone conferencing. This discrepancy may have led to different levels of ease in conversation, comfort in interview surroundings, confidence in technology utilization, and time allocation provided to the interview process (Della Porta and Keating 2008, Creswell 2013).

## CHAPTER 04: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Organization of Data

All interview subjects consented to identification within this dissertation. So as to give context to the data, as well as to fully the level of background expertise of the participants in this research, interview subjects include:

	Name	Position	Key Expertise
Architects	Mr Ben Bolgar, RIBA RIAS FRSA	Senior Director at <i>The Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment</i> and Visiting Fellow at <i>Kellogg College, University of Oxford</i>	Lead on Bath Urban Extension Report and Bath Spa University Design Code, author of the Community Capital Framework
	Mr Peter Clegg, RIBA	Senior Partner at <i>Fielden Clegg Bradley Studios</i> , Professor at <i>University of Bath</i> , and Stirling Prize recipient	Lead on Bath Western Riverside Masterplan, practiced architecture with a focus on both sustainability and conservation in Bath for 40+ years
	Mr Adrian Griffiths, RIBA FRSA	Main Board Director U.K. at <i>Chapman Taylor</i>	Lead on SouthGate Shopping Centre
	Mr Edward Nash, RIBA AABC	Senior Partner at <i>Nash Partnership</i>	Lead on Roseberry Place at Bath Western Riverside, Onega Place, Grand Parade, and Hope House
	Mr Piers Taylor, RIBA	Principal at <i>Invisible Studio</i>	Lead on Stillpoint infill project, lecturer on architecture and design
Heritage Conservationists	Mr Tom Boden	General Manager at National Trust and former Head of Museums at <i>Bath Preservation Trust</i>	Responsible for the Bath Portfolio of National Trust properties, including Bath Skyline, Prior Park Landscape Gardens, and Bath Assembly Rooms, as well as over 500 acres of historic landscape
	Ms Ainslie Ensom	World Heritage Site Enhancement Fund Administrator and Architecture and Planning Committee Member at <i>Bath Preservation Trust</i>	Responsible for facilitation of public realm enhancement project funding and for providing comment on general planning, as well as all individual new development project applications, within Bath
	Mr Barry Gilbertson, RICS	Chair of <i>Bath World Heritage Advisory Board</i> , Professor at <i>University of Bath</i> , and former Trustee at <i>Bath Preservation Trust</i>	Responsible for direction of council-established World Heritage management organization
	Mr Geoffrey Tyack, FSA, FRHist.Soc.	Emerita and Emeritus Fellow at <i>Kellogg College, University of Oxford</i>	Author of numerous titles on heritage conservation; currently writing a book on British historic urban landscape
Other	Mr Andrew Grant, CMLI Hon FRIBA	Founding Director at <i>Grant Associates</i> and Chair of <i>Bathscape Landscape Partnership</i>	Lead on Wessex Water Operations Center, University of Bath masterplan, Bath Western Riverside, Bath City River Enterprise Area Masterplan, and Bath Quays
	Mr Adam Reynolds	Transportation Policy Advisor and Chair at <i>Cycle Bath</i>	Advocate for sustainable transportation policy in Bath and North East Somerset

**Table 01.** Participant information.

Reflecting the literature review concerning authorship of the built environment, participants have been separated into three categories based on their professional and/or organizational affiliation. *Architects* reflects those practitioners involved in new development in Bath post-1987 World Heritage inscription. *Heritage Conservationists* reflects those practitioners involved in Bath's architectural preservation work and/or affiliated with conservation-based authorities or organizations. *Other* reflects those practitioners working to impact the built environment of Bath but failing to meet the criteria of either previous category. Key expertise represents relevant work by the subject identified to merit inclusion in the research.

### **General Observations**

In general, the interview subjects were interested in matters related to the research question and displayed a strong level of engagement with both the topic of social sustainability and heritage conservation. While professional expertise was the focus of the interview questions, personal expertise based on lived experience factored into many of the responses, particularly for the eight of the eleven participants who currently live in Bath. The variation in interview length reflects differing conversational styles but also different levels of personal interest in the topics involved, as can be seen in such response details as personal anecdotes or additional non-Bath examples offered.



## **Value of Heritage**

Participants cited a variety of means by which Bath's heritage is a valuable asset.

The cultural value that the historic urbanism provides was addressed by all participants, not simply as a by-product of discussion about World Heritage status, but additionally as an attractor for investment (Mr Gilbertson), a lure for tourism (Ms Ensom), an draw for creative talent (Mr Grant), a tool for understanding sense of place (Mr Griffiths), and a lure to which people will always want to live (Mr Nash). There was disagreement as to whether visitors are truly aware of Bath as an historic spa town, however; Mr Bolgar suggested that perhaps only since the renovation of the Thermae Bath Spa had the historic nature of the city as a place of healing waters truly been appreciated, whereas Mr Boden, Mr Grant, Mr Nash, and Mr Tyack mentioned it as a constant visitor draw for the city. It is noteworthy that Mr Boden cited the statistic that there are 17,000 individual members of the National Trust living in Bath, a city of only 90,000 residents. If accurate, that proportionality illustrates a strong sense of value among the current population to the philanthropy of and responsibility for heritage conservation.

Maintaining and updating historic properties, whether residential or commercial, can be a costly endeavour, as cited by many participants. To this point, Mr Gilbertson noted his perception that the significant numbers of tourists coming to Bath are doing so to see the Georgian architecture of the city, almost all of which is owned and maintained by private citizens. Further, he noted his belief that this puts a burden on the local authority to maintain the public realm in a manner in keeping

with the maintenance of the private realm. This comment helps contextualize the observed high cost of real estate in the city and points to the complexity associated with the value, both cultural and financial, that the built heritage of Bath enjoys. Every participant cited concern about the inaccessibility and unaffordability of housing in Bath, underscoring a level of awareness of the challenge that this issue presents to the social sustainability of the city and to its ability to meet UN Sustainable Development Goal 11 (United Nations 2015). As Mr Bolgar pointed out, Bath is beautiful and has good rail connectivity, so it is therefore a desirable place to live, stating, “Good cities that are well-connected attract people who have choice.”<sup>1</sup>

The role of visitors, having been drawn to the city specifically because of the outstanding universal value of the built heritage, and their impact on Bath is one area where participant perceptions varied widely and did not mirror areas of expertise. Some saw the opportunity that tourist spending offers the economy and the diversity that visitors from around the world bring to Bath, while others cited the added traffic congestion and the hollowing out of city centre residents as a result of tourist-accommodating, short-term-letting investments as detriments to the good of the city. Still, the majority noted the consistency of Bath’s tourism trade throughout its history. When viewing cities as historical products, Castells proposes that urban function remains as a legacy resulting from the historical definition of that city, its purpose, and its people (Cuthbert 2003). From its founding Roman settlement, Bath was a city to which visitors traveled to benefit in a physical sense from their visit.

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with author, 15 June 2018, The Lord Stanley in London.

And yet, Castells would argue that regardless of this constant, the social meaning of Bath has necessarily evolved as new generations of people have claimed the city as their own, including—yet far from exclusive to—the many visitors over many centuries (Cuthbert 2003). As a result, while the question of whether visitors to Bath contribute or detract from the social sustainability of the city may remain unresolved by the data, it is nonetheless true that they play a significant role in the social meaning of the city.



**Figure 04.** Royal Crescent.

The extraordinary beauty of Bath was cited by all of the participants as a benefit resulting from the aesthetics of the conserved heritage, but the financial value of that beauty is not necessarily enjoyed equitably. Mr Boden, Mr Clegg, Ms Ensom, and Mr Grant all noted the extraordinary inequality in the city, citing pockets of deprivation like the Twerton neighbourhood as being some of the poorest in the entire country, a statistic reflected in local council poverty reporting (Bath & North East Somerset Council 2010). Here it is also important to remember, as both Barbier

and Markandya and Labadi point out, that claims that social sustainability investment and heritage conservation-led redevelopment exert a positive economic impact on cities are not necessarily accurate; in fact, the implementation of both can result not in improved equity, but rather in quite the opposite: gentrification (Barbier, Markandya et al. 2013, Labadi and Logan 2015). As Mr Tyack noted, it is worth considering the loss of many Grade III historic buildings, mainly residences, during what Fergusson called the “sack of Bath,” as well as whether the protection during that time of more of the functional fabric buildings of the city would have helped mitigate the escalating costs of real estate today (Worskett, Redston et al. 1978, Fergusson 2011: 12). One can only speculate as to the answer, but the subject is worth further consideration and could merit additional research.

### **Quality of Life**

Many factors were cited by participants as contributing to quality of life aspects of Bath, including its incredible beauty, inherent walkability, natural landscape setting and fingers of greenbelt that reach deep into the city centre, rich cultural offer, and spaces that have stood the test of time. Those participants living in Bath (Mr Boden, Mr Clegg, Ms Ensom, Mr Gilbertson, Mr Grant, Mr Nash, Mr Reynolds, and Mr Taylor) each provided ample personal example of the way in which its quality of life adds to their daily experience. Mr Reynolds noted that census reports he has reviewed suggest Bath may have the highest level of pedestrian commuting in the country; if accurate, this suggests a common practice that equates to social

sustainability indicators such as significant decrease in mortality rates, significant increase in employment levels, and promotion of sense of place while fostering community identity (Claris and Scopelliti 2016).



**Figure 05.** Lansdown Crescent.



**Figure 06.** Kennet & Avon Canal.

Still, the data also shows broad-based concern among participants about the liveability and capacity of social capital in Bath. Landorf suggests a framework for evaluating the social sustainability of historic urban environments, built on key social sustainability themes, derived in part from both Basic Needs and Sustainable Development Theories, that incorporates quality of life indicators, including social equity (quality and diversity of housing, access to education, cultural events, and governmental effectiveness), social coherence (public participation, association with place, social inclusivity and diversity), and basic needs (housing affordability, quality of the built environment, perception of met needs) (Landorf 2011: 472). Many of these indicators can be identified within the data results, some as characteristics in which Bath is perceived to provide great offer and others in which Bath is perceived

to fail to accommodate. Regarding the operationalisation of quality of life indicators, Mr Bolgar noted his authorship of the Community Capital Framework (The Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment 2017), a tool for evaluating social sustainability based on indicators deeply rooted in both the Basic Needs and Sustainable Development Theories (Hoadley 1981, Basiago 1998, Sinner, Baines et al. 2004, Bramley and Power 2009) yet adaptable to local context. My review of the framework uncovered a qualitative system by which to examine the broader quality of life context of social sustainability, including sense of belonging, opportunity for social exchange, inclusive and diverse populations, supportive educational and governmental systems, and access to services and amenities (The Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment 2017).

In response to specific consideration of UN Sustainable Development Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities ("Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable"), participants agreed that Bath is safe. There were mixed perceptions of its level of inclusivity; some accepted the friendliness of the city and its willingness to welcome more diverse subgroups, such as student or tourist populations, as representative of its tolerant nature, while others felt compelled by the demographics, which paint a homogenous picture of the population as being white, middle-to-upper class, and white-collar. All of the participants perceived Bath to be resilient, in so far as it is not particularly prone to natural disasters, and further, that it seems well-situated to respond to shocks it might face of economic, social, or environmental nature. One point made by both Mr Grant and Mr Taylor was that its

longevity is a testament to the resilience of Bath. And finally, in terms of whether Bath is sustainable, perceptions were broad-based when asked directly as part of the interview questioning. However, in looking more generally at the variety of ways in which participants commented on the sustainability of Bath, there appears to be a common view that Bath exhibits a level of sustainability, although this acknowledgment was qualified by each participant in a manner reflecting their individual perceptions. In particular, the lack of diversity within the social demographics of the city was noted by most participants as being a source of concern and a challenge to the well-being of the community over all.

Speaking about practical detractors from the quality of life in Bath, the majority of participants cited the challenge that vehicular traffic, both within the city and by means of access to and from the city, creates to quality of life issues. Mr Reynolds and Mr Nash both spoke to the physical benefit, as well as the feeling of connection to the sense of place, that walking and/or cycling provide. Mr Boden noted that there are different expectations of transportation today that may be in conflict with the historic compact city centre of Bath. Mr Reynolds actively advises on shifting transportation within the city to modes and with design that will be more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable. Yet the fraught issue of urban traffic congestion can, at the very least, be traced to the 1960s, when Bath already found itself choked by vehicular traffic. The chief recommendation from the 1965 Buchanan Report, for a tunnel crossing beneath the centre of Georgian Bath, was ultimately defeated through public outcry to the partial destruction of Queen Square that it would have

required (Colin Buchanan and Partners 1965, Rodwell 2007). Traffic clearly remains a significant area of discontent within Bath, when considering perceptions of quality of life. Of significance given his leadership role as Chair of the Bath World Heritage Advisory Board, Mr Gilbertson noted his proposal to council to establish a coach congestion charge, to deter the impact of tourist coaches on the tight streets of the city centre, a concern shared by almost every participant. This concern is further reinforced in the *Public Realm and Movement Strategy* report commissioned by council to address the degradation of the public realm of Bath particularly resulting from increases in vehicular traffic in the city centre (Bath & North East Somerset Council 2010).

In operationalising social sustainability within their work, some participants were explicit about their intentionality to respond to social well-being. Mr Boden cited that central to the 19<sup>th</sup>-century founding of his organisation was a desire by its patrons to preserve and protect places of beauty for the urban poor to be able to experience. Mr Grant explained that his practice has expanded its understandings of sustainability beyond the mechanical, because he perceives the quantitative to be meaningless unless it actually connects with people. Finally, Mr Griffiths stated that for him, the social component of sustainability is where he focuses his work, creating places that people want to be, come back to, and walk through.



## Perception and Sense of Place

Regardless of background, participants responded strongly of Bath's distinct *genius loci*. Mr Grant acknowledged the sense of place in Bath, stating, "I'm sure most people intuitively feel this is a place that people have lived in for thousands of years ... It's where humans feel happy or have felt comfortable to inhabit."<sup>2</sup> Mr Griffiths spoke of his own work, saying, "People bond with their sense of place. It becomes their home. It becomes where they want to naturally go to. That's where we need to get to."<sup>3</sup> The heritage urbanism of Bath was perceived by the majority of participants as critical to the city's sense of place. This reflects the literature, which identifies that urbanism is often found to be pleasing when it holds a distinct character related to its location or physical condition, allowing the individual to self-identify in terms of time and geography (Norberg-Schulz 1980, Krier 1998, Rodwell 2007). Mr Boden and Ms Ensom, both heritage conservationists, and Mr Taylor, an architect, went so far as to describe Bath as a potential model city, an exemplar of how we might continue to create sustainable built environments into the future, though Mr Bolgar disputed any notion of a planned ideal, citing his own research on the development process of Georgian Bath and the extemporal manner by which buildings were located based on viewsheds and captured hilltops.

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<sup>2</sup> Interview with author, 19 June 2018, Grant Associates offices in Bath.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with author, 20 June 2018, Chapman Taylor offices in London.



**Figure 07.** Royal Circus.



**Figure 08.** View from No. 1 Royal Crescent.

Georgian architecture was frequently cited as essential to the perception of Bath's sense of place, central not only to the common image of the city but to the outstanding universal value by which Bath was made eligible as a World Heritage Site (City of Bath World Heritage Site Steering Group 2016). Still it is the complete legacy of the preserved urbanism of Bath that fully tells Bathonians about themselves, their way of living, and their sense of ideals; indeed, the participants in this research repeatedly acknowledged their personal relationship with the architecture of the city. Relatedly, Mr Taylor noted the denial of the opportunity to make a 21<sup>st</sup> century Bath, asking, "...where do we reflect that in our built environment in a way...that makes sense of who we are..."<sup>4</sup> As New York City planning director Lewis Mumford once stated,

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<sup>4</sup> Interview with author, 13 June 2018, Invisible Studio offices outside Bath.

... (A)rchitecture reflects and focuses such a wide variety of social facts: the character and resources of the natural environment, the state of the industrial arts and the empirical tradition and experimental knowledge that go into their application, the processes of social organization and association, and the beliefs and world-outlooks of a whole society. (Mumford 1940: 403)

This seems true of Bath, based on the perceptions of the interview subjects of this research, and raises the question of how a 21<sup>st</sup> century awareness of the indicators of sustainability, including UN Sustainable Development Goal 11 in particular, can be integrated into the built environment if it is not allowed to evolve.

It is important to ask, as Yin and DiStefano do, of the individuals for whom heritage is being preserved (Labadi and Logan 2015). In the case of Bath, where annual visitors outnumber residents by an extraordinary factor noted by Mr Gilbertson, with over 5.8 million visitors to a city with just under 90,000 residents (City of Bath World Heritage Site Steering Group 2016), it can be presumed that the city is protected for those outside of Bath as much as for those within. Although he celebrated the achievement of preservation activists in establishing valuation of the past similar to that of the future, still Mr Bolgar described his perception that historians, not designers, have dictated the terms of protection within Bath, creating a fundamental failure to understand the manner in which the historic urbanism was created in the past and therefore how equally valuable urbanism might be created in the future.

Further, in consideration of new construction within the city, the issue of appropriate development scale and the question of for whom development is intended is not new to the critique of built infill in Bath. Architectural historian Mowl cited similar concerns in his 1989 review of what he then considered successes and failures of development occurring in the years following the original 1973 publication of *The Sack of Bath* (Fergusson and Mowl 1989). Yet significantly, inherent in perception of sense of place are the individual experiences of ownership that attend that perception. In the case of Bath, the research reflects that the experience of the *genius loci* of the city seems to be shared not only by residents living and working there, but also by those who have chosen to invest in the its valuable heritage (e.g. its historic architecture)—and by the millions of visitors who travel there each year as well.

### **Authorship of the Built Environment**

Interwoven throughout this research are the paired underlying issues of expertise on the built environment, and who holds agency in determining the built environment. In an historic city such as Bath, where the built environment is perceived to be a precious commodity—and especially where that commodity is highly guarded by regulations associated with the status of the city as a World Heritage Site—the authorship of the urbanism is a crucial space of contestation. For example, central U.K. government sets housing provision requirements for Bath and North East Somerset Council, but it is the responsibility of local council (with the oversight of their various agencies and approval boards) to enforce those provisions upon

developers (Bath & North East Somerset Council 2017). As Mr Boden and Ms Ensom both cited, however, their shared perception is that local enforcement often fails to occur. To that end, consistent in perceptions of heritage conservationists was a certain distrust of the intentions of the development industry. That pattern was less evident in perceptions of the rest of the participants. While this conflict is not surprising, it is also important to note that in general, there was less observable contestation, either explicitly stated or implicitly inferred, between participants with variant areas of expertise than one might expect, given the potential difference of priorities between the two disciplines.

My selection of participants was based on the Spondrel view of special knowledge as it relates to the role of the professional (Bogner, Littig et al. 2009), yet all of the participants made some reference to the role of the community in the authorship of the built environment. While this shared perception of the importance of common expertise reflects more recent social science understandings on forms of knowledge production (Bogner, Littig et al. 2009: 19), it also reinforces key components of social sustainability in general, such as participatory planning and sense of inclusion (Rodwell 2007, Dempsey, Bramley et al. 2011, Vallance, Perkins et al. 2011, Albert 2015). As Clarke reminds us, architecture is political in nature: the location and manner and style in which we build reflects structures of power and statements on culture that are not only significant in their inception but carry these legacies for as long as they are preserved (Cuthbert 2003). The choice to protect large portions of Bath carries political meaning, and the choice to build new within Bath carries its

own political meaning as well; both represent “symbolic capital,” and we must not fail to acknowledge this fact (Cuthbert 2003: 38). Within this context, the authorship of the built environment by professional actors with formal expertise then raises the question of what authorship those outside these two fields might offer to the dialogue. Furthermore, if the indicators of social sustainability are to be met, a city must be careful not to acquiesce the decision-making power over its symbolic built capital too willingly to the political nature of architectural and/or heritage expertise.

Nevertheless, both architects and heritage conservationists clearly offer significant contributions to the understanding of what best sustains a society. As Wright outlines in her writing on the cultural setting of urbanism, urban historians contribute a knowledge of the complex time dimensionality of cities that can contextualize the urban in a way other experts cannot, while architects contribute an understanding of the conceptual framework by which theory is fundamental to the the design process within any era of architecture, past to present (Cuthbert 2003: 171-172). Mr Bolgar described his desire for an improved shared decision-making process toward the built environment in Bath, one that is inclusive of all disciplines and knowledges holding expertise in aspects of the urban realm, with a shared goal of further elevating those features of the built environment that establish Bath’s outstanding universal value according to World Heritage standard, regardless of whether that goal invokes additional protection or further development.

The research data suggests that the participants consistently perceived the role of the public as relevant to the assurance of socially sustainable outcomes, underscoring a shared appreciation for the community in the authorship of the built environment by classically defined experts in the subject. This relevance reflects an understanding of the social sustainability indicator of participatory planning, which was evinced to have been used by at least some of the architects. Further, this relevance highlights an opportunity for additional research on the topic, through the incorporation into the data set of a cross-sample of the Bath community. This inclusion would support a more authentic approach to heritage conservation, one that acknowledges the importance of the voice of society in authoring a built environment that fully represents the shared self-image of the community (Rodwell 2007).

### **Multidimensionality of the Urban**

The participants in this research each offered their own unique illustration of the multidimensionality of the urban, the shared sense of place that people feel about Bath, and yet the individuality of the experienced urbanism of Bath. While the heritage conservationists in general shared a clear sensitivity for the historic architecture of the city, they likewise appreciated the contemporary challenges that the city must contend with. Similarly, while the architects in general shared a clear interest in what can be built to improve upon the urbanism of the city, they likewise respected the value that the heritage of the city contributes to their work and their own personal lives in Bath. Out of these dichotomies, it becomes clear that there is

the potential for a notional redefinition of what constitutes the urban, with regards to Bath, reflecting the complexity of the challenge of protecting the old while supporting the evolutionary new within the historic city. Of the heritage built environment, Mr Bolgar described a certain flexibility necessary for an effective sustainability strategy within the city, “one that builds on the columns as foundations but has a strategy to transform.”<sup>5</sup> Likewise, of the heritage natural setting, Mr Nash described an expectation for continued investment, “an obligation to consider the enhancement of the setting of the city, rather than just the preservation of it.”<sup>6</sup> Both comments underscore the theme by demonstrating the author’s perception of the urban as a conceptual and contestable process.

As previously noted within the theme of sense of place, of question amongst the majority of the participants was for whom Bath is being preserved. Mr Bolgar boldly suggested, “Clearly NIMBYism<sup>7</sup> has taken advantage of the World Heritage status of Bath,” with regards to the extent to which protections have been ascribed in order to deter new development, irrespective of his perceptions of contribution to the cultural heritage of the city.<sup>8</sup> There was consistent concern amongst architects of the outcome, whether intended or derivative, of heritage conservation stifling the natural evolutionary nature of urbanism in Bath. This concern sits in concert with the shared regret by most participants that current real estate speculation in Bath is

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<sup>5</sup> Interview with author, 15 June 2018, The Lord Stanley in London.

<sup>6</sup> Interview with author, 14 June 2018, Nash Partnership offices in Bath.

<sup>7</sup> NIMBY refers to “Not in My Back Yard,” an acronym used to describe anti-development supporters of local land use conflicts (Eranti 2017).

<sup>8</sup> Interview with author, 15 June 2018, The Lord Stanley in London.



driving unaffordability and leading to empty heritage properties that dampen the vitality of the city centre. Yet these parallel concerns recall a comment by Mr Nash on what he described as the “rampant speculation” that fuelled the development of Georgian Bath, and his gratitude that it did so as to produce the historic fabric valued today.<sup>9</sup> Within the context of the literature theme, this intersectionality of market demand with restricted development based on the priority of preservation in Bath relates to multiple points made by Brenner and Schmid, illustrating the politically contestable nature of the evolution of the urban, and additionally raising question as to whether conservation-related regulation unnaturally inhibits the innovative process of socio-spatial arrangement of the built environment (Brenner and Schmid 2015). In this way, the research demonstrates that Bath offers potential for further inquiry based on the declension of sociological theories confronting the complexity of the urban, including recall of the work of Simmel, Weber, and the Chicago School, in addition to further exploration of the work of Lefebvre, as has been initiated within this dissertation, and including the ongoing discourse surrounding an epistemology of the urban (Harding 2014, Brenner and Schmid 2015, Parker 2015).

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<sup>9</sup> Interview with author, 14 June 2018, Nash Partnership offices in Bath.



**Figure 09.** Margaret's Buildings.



**Figure 10.** SouthGate.

Mr Clegg described Bath as being “finished, as a city ... (T)here’s no vacant sites anymore, anywhere,”<sup>10</sup> and Mr Taylor reiterated a similar perception. Yet they and fellow architects within the data set were selected for having recently contributed to the built environment of Bath in ways that have arguably impacted the social sustainability of the city. Whether it’s added housing or improved public amenities or redeveloped or reimagined commercial landscapes, their work has affected quality of life within Bath by impacting the social dimension of the urban. Lefebvre addresses “the complexity of the urban phenomenon,” admonishing any understanding of the urban as purely physical in nature and arguing that the city as an object exists only as an historical construct, not as something that can actually be lived and experienced (Lefebvre and Bononno 2003: 56). In *The Urban Revolution*,

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<sup>10</sup> Interview with author, 20 July 2018, via Skype.

he argues for both a pluralistic, theoretical approach to the city and the interdisciplinary cooperation necessary for such an approach (Buckley and Strauss 2016). In 1961, journalist Jane Jacobs similarly described the “organized complexity” that inhabits cities while lamenting that this point of view of the interrelated intersection of the various systems and structures that combine to make up the urban was not one shared by many professionals responsible for that urban (Jacobs 1961: 559). Yet as the literature review anticipated and as the research data suggests, the coming together of these concepts—the merging of the social with the urban—remains a complicated challenge of perception among professional experts of the built environment. After all, the majority of participants struggled at times to fully integrate understandings of the built environment with understandings of the social realm in their responses, although all were knowledgeable about both topics and articulate in their discussions.

However, one comment stood out against that general trend. In response to a question about how he integrates social sustainability into his work, Mr Tyack offered, “I was trained as a historian, not as a geographer or architect or anything like that. I don’t think you can understand cities without people, you really can’t. The built form reflects social change...”<sup>11</sup> His perception of the significance of the social meaning of cities neatly aligns with the theme of the multidimensionality of the urban, and further, it reflects a breadth of understanding of the nature of cities that stood out among the participants for its clarity and coherence.

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<sup>11</sup> Interview with author, 14 June 2018, Kellogg College in Oxford.

## Reflection

In reflecting on the results of this research, I return to the research question, e.g., the impact of urban heritage conservation on the social sustainability of the city of Bath. To begin at the broadest level, the data suggests that the indicators of UN Sustainable Development Goal 11 and the World Heritage Convention are not incompatible, although the analysis provides further details as to the themes by which their commonality, as well as conflicts in their compatibility, might be considered. In its maintenance of the status of the inscription of Bath as a World Heritage Site, the *City of Bath World Heritage Site Management Plan 2016-2022* addresses similar themes to those found in this research; specifically, that Bath faces unique challenges in improving its social sustainability within its heritage context. The document outlines the priorities of Managing Development, Transport, Public Realm, Interpretation and Education, and Environmental Resilience and identifies strategies for addressing these priorities (City of Bath World Heritage Site Steering Group 2016); whether those strategies will be implemented, and to what level they will succeed, remains to be seen.



**Figure 11.** Aerial view of the city centre of Bath. Source: (City of Bath World Heritage Site Steering Group 2016: 67).

The data illustrates that individual perceptions of actors impacting the built environment at the intersection of social sustainability and heritage conservation are distinctly qualitative in nature. Just as the built environment is multidimensional within its place in time, so too is the understanding of the built environment multidimensional in its authorship and experience. As Castells argues, the built environment cannot be extracted from the myriad social relationships within it; to do so would be in conflict with the fundamental principle of social science to see nature and culture as intertwined (Cuthbert 2003: 59). Yet without a widely acknowledged, comprehensive theoretical framework by which to evaluate this complex relationship, study of the intersectionality of social sustainability and heritage conservation will be forced to, as this dissertation has, remain squarely in

the realm of perception of place and without the means by which to offer a robust quantitative methodology for study (Stubbs 2004). Nonetheless, additional exploration of the research question, expanded on the basis of a significantly more robust and diverse sample set, would add to understandings. The data set for this dissertation only represented the formal production of space, and additional research could call attention to the role of the informal production of space within the context of architecture and heritage conservation (Lefebvre and Nicholson-Smith 1991).

Further research could focus on perceptions of social sustainability belonging to additional actors that impact the outcome of the built environment of Bath, particularly real estate developers and related building industry professionals and financiers, as well as local councillors and other decision-making or oversight authorities. Additionally, and perhaps even more importantly, would be further research focused on perceptions of social sustainability belonging to individuals who live and/or work in Bath as studied against demographic indicators and socio-economic descriptors. Acknowledging that a fundamental indicator of social sustainability is an individual sense of agency within the community (Landorf 2011), a more thorough study of the social sustainability of Bath would necessarily be inclusive of a thorough cross-section of Bath society, painting a more complete picture of perceptions across social relationships.

Utilising Bath, a living city nearly unprecedented in its draw of outsiders, as a case study location offered the opportunity to address the research question within an architectural context that is unique in both the complexity of its heritage and the regulation of its protections. And yet, in contemporary society, architecture—particularly that which is costly to produce and even more costly to maintain against deterioration that naturally comes with age—can be seen as an investment without a guarantee of meaningful economic, social, or even emotional return, a luxury that seems vastly inferior to the far more pressing basic needs of society (De Botton 2006, Goldberger 2009). Yet the responsibility that architects and heritage preservationists bear in prescribing for the built environment of Bath is perhaps one of the most important investments into the future of a city whose urbanism is its sense of place. Exploring this same topic in a different geographic location could lead to an alternate set of findings, and it is worth reiterating that Bath is not a city that shares the same major social, geo-political, environmental, or economic challenges that other World Heritage Sites and/or cities addressing the Sustainable Development Goals may face. However, even at a reduced scale, Bath does face related systemic challenges, as the data reveals.

Five years ago, in celebrating the fortieth anniversary of the publication of *The Sack of Bath*, during a lecture at the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution, Adam Fergusson lamented the word “sustainability” as terminology used by planners indiscriminately to gain public approval of their schemes (Fergusson 2013: 5). However, at least as it relates to social sustainability, this dissertation reveals that, of

the subjects interviewed, all of whom demonstrate expertise in the built environment, this pessimistic view does not match the perceptions of the participants of their own work. These professionals take very seriously their role in influencing the quality of life of the people who populate their designs and protections, and they operationalise their perceptions of social sustainability thoughtfully, if not always successfully, within their work and within the unique setting of Bath. While each expert may have a different view of how to best support the value of the heritage of the city, they nonetheless all acknowledge its significance; every participant expressed what I would characterise as a sense of treasure of the city of Bath and its sustainable future. In that way, they are not unlike the rest of those who have come to this same city for the past two thousand years, simply to benefit from being in Bath.



## CHAPTER 05: CONCLUSION

This research dissertation was designed to provide insight into the ways in which perceptions of social sustainability, specifically those held by architects and heritage conservationists, relate to the evolution of urban form, specifically within the context of heritage conservation. The intersection of social sustainability and heritage conservation was studied utilising thematic analysis of transcripts taken from interviews conducted with individuals who have expertise in the built environment. The data suggests that although there were potential conflicts revealed within the literature regarding at least some common indicators of social sustainability and the general practice of heritage conservation, the perceptions of these topics by the participants revealed commonalities along major themes, and the relevance of these topics and their intersectionality is a shared value, regardless of professional expertise. Participants showed varying degrees of understanding of the topics of social sustainability and/or heritage conservation as they relate to Bath specifically, yet they all attempted to operationalise their understanding in response to their perceptions of how to best serve the well-being of the historic city and the social relationships therein.

It remains a challenge for academics to concur on the definition of social sustainability (Stubbs 2004), and so it is a predictable result that the participants in this research offered a variety of perceptions of its definition and its achievability in Bath. Yet the data shows consensus similar to that of the literature in the shared

perception that the city is burdened by modern pressures to a greater degree than it otherwise might be due to the formal restrictions of its heritage conservation (Rodwell 2006). In particular, the perceived pressure of affordability as a result of both the popularity of the historic architecture as an investment opportunity and the resulting escalating costs of real estate within the city of Bath reflects a growing body of research suggesting this trend (Pendlebury, Townshend et al. 2004, Albert 2015). Additionally, the shared perception of the elevated quality of life that Bath offers suggests that, while the city may indeed face societal challenges resulting from its extensive amount of highly protected heritage, it manages to succeed in this experiential aspect of a more comprehensive framework for social sustainability (Forrest and Kearns 2001, Brandon and Lombardi 2005, Colantonio and Dixon 2011). Bath offers an extraordinary sense of place, which is directly facilitated by its unique historic urbanism and both the social relationships it produces as well as the societal actors that produce it. As Brenner and Schmid describe, the multidimensionality of the urban reveals the interrelationship between people and place and time, and Bath is perceived by participants of this research to be a model example of this concept (Brenner and Schmid 2015).

As an historic city, Bath offers outstanding universal value, both explicitly, as identified in the details of its World Heritage Site inscription, and implicitly, as experienced by those who feel a sense of place there, whether they live in or work in or simply visit the city. And so, with that offer comes both obligations and opportunities. The carefully conserved city of Bath is a living museum of its own rich

history. Nevertheless, as the *Buchanan Report* warned in 1968 and as this research demonstrates as remains a concern today, the risk for Bath is in becoming an urban museum within which the importance of protecting the past city supersedes the commitment to supporting the present and future city (Colin Buchanan and Partners, Great Britain Ministry of Housing and Local Government et al. 1968). As this research suggests, social sustainability issues such as affordability, transportation, equity, and social inclusion, while not uncommon in most cities, face distinct challenges within the context of heritage urbanism. It is possible, however, that while significant social burdens may necessarily be associated with urban preservation, likewise it is urban preservation that can offer opportunities for improved sustainability when the two priorities are balanced successfully (Labadi and Logan 2015).



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## APPENDIX

### Research Interview Questions:

- What is your profession?
- Are you familiar with the city of Bath, UK?
- What professional work have you done in Bath?
- What are the year(s), what are the location(s)/what is the context of that work?
- How would you define “social sustainability”?
- Would you consider the broad category of “social sustainability” to include any of the following: housing security, transport access, participatory planning, cultural and natural heritage protection, disaster resiliency, urban health quality, open space accessibility, systemic urban-to-rural connectivity, climate impact risk management, and sustainable and resilient culture of building?
- What aspects of the built environment specifically do you feel support “social sustainability”?
- Do you perceive Bath to be socially sustainable? Why or why not?
- Which of the previously listed indicators do you feel most directly pertain to Bath? In what ways?
- Do you incorporate “social sustainability” into your professional practice?
- In what ways do you operationalise “social sustainability” within the context of your work on the built environment? Within your work in Bath, specifically?
- What aspects of the built environment of Bath do you feel could specifically respond to the “social sustainability” needs of the city? What aspects of the built environment do you feel already do so?
- What aspects of your professional work in the city of Bath do you feel have responded to the “social sustainability” needs of the city, if any?
- Are you familiar with the requirements associated with the status of Bath as a World Heritage city?
- Do you feel that its World Heritage status impacts the “social sustainability” of Bath? In what ways?

- Are you familiar with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, specifically Goal 11 (“Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.”)?
- Do you feel that Bath meets the intent of Goal 11? Why or why not?
- What other regulations are you familiar with, specific to Bath, that you perceive to have an impact on the “social sustainability” of the city?
- What other thoughts or concerns do you have about the “social sustainability” of the city?



### Codification and Sample of Interview Excerpt:

THEME	KEY WORDS/PHRASES	COLOR
Value of Cultural Heritage	culture, heritage, historic, built environment, buildings, housing, live, value, cost, invest, affordability, equity, inequality, income, monoculture, attraction, protection, preservation, conservation, etc.	
Importance of Quality of Life	social sustainability, quality of life, socioeconomic, use, population, residents, family, friends, nature, leisure, transportation, employment, health, benefit, wealth, service, connectivity, experience, etc.	
Perception and Sense of Place	perception, sense of place, genius loci, space, awareness, layers, Roman, Georgian, Victorian, modern, landscape, setting, fabric, connection, inherent, intuitive, feeling, vitality, life, love, etc.	
Authorship of the Built Environment	author, architect, heritage, conservation, preservation, council, developer, development, built, designed, approved, authorized, decision, agent, public, partnership, private, vision etc.	
Multidimensionality of the Urban	change, evolution, adaptation, processes, time, history, future, stages, phases, generations, eras, century, populations, people, society, community, city, urbanism, urban, engagement, etc.	