

An Odyssey to Heritage Education: The Inspiring Example of Bergama and Its Communities

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Abstract

Heritage education constitutes an agenda that has an increasing influence and priority within the current conservation discourse. It is mostly because the notion of this specific type of education itself is not merely a provider of expertise anymore. On the contrary, it is a potential future-making tool whose target audience spreads to all segments of society, emerging generations in particular. By systematic theoretical foundation and applied practices, goal-oriented and innovative educational strategies may easily develop new methods of dialogue and inclusion that generate place-based bonds by propagating more sources of information. In the case of Bergama, or Pergamon and Its Multi-Layered Cultural Landscape as inscribed in the World Heritage List in 2014, the above-mentioned possibility is particularly relevant. As heritage education has become a widely recognized priority for the city, many studies have been carried out by local communities and institutions in line with a common vision. A systematic framework and the main principles of heritage education have been structured in a participatory manner. The heritage of the city, in this regard, has aimed to be transformed into an educational actor itself. This study aims to present the case of Bergama with regards to its pioneering potential in heritage education and communities, in connection with academia, whose guidance starts with the inventory of the urban cultural heritage and progresses with the nomination and inscription on the World Heritage List, and the subsequent capacity building process. Vernacular architecture, as the most fragile heritage with its tangible and intangible values, is also discussed in this holistic context. Following the traces of good practices and sharing broadening experiences provide a general understanding in a relatively new field while demonstrating an inspiring example in the wider context.

Keywords: heritage education; heritage communities; Bergama.

1. Introduction: Positioning Heritage Education in the Current Discourse

Education, either formal or informal, is a process by which one develops abilities, attitudes, and other forms of behaviour that have value in society (UNESCO&IBE, 2007). As a transformative tool that equips people with the necessary skills, education can take place in different places, conditions, and times.

Heritage education, on the other hand, is a specialized form of education in the field of conservation. Con Aguilar (2020) argues that definitions of heritage education examine the phenomenon under two main dimensions: content and teaching-learning strategy. However, it can be asserted that in many cases, the educational potential and the knowledge obtained by the heritage are closely intertwined. The inclusion of heritage at all levels of

education, not necessarily as a subject of study in its own right, but as a fertile source for studies in other subjects becomes more meaningful in this sense (CoE, 2005).

This process may generally refer to acquiring knowledge and attitudes, developing the reasoning and judgment skills with regards to conservation (ICOMOS CIF, 2018). This education is fundamentally necessary for the search for one's full and comprehensive development with regards to all his/her capabilities and dimensions (Fontal Merillas and Marín Cepeda, 2016). Related capabilities, either existing or potential, can be realized and/or enhanced by directly experiencing, examining, analysing, and evaluating cultural heritage (Sciacchitano, 2018). Hence, while traditionally referred to as academic-based specialist knowledge, heritage education as we understand it today has a much broader connotation. This connotation takes advantage of the possibilities offered by lifelong learning as well as the evolving communication tools and is of interest to many actors at different levels. In this framework, Mendoza, Baldiris, and Fabregat (2015) argue that four heritage education models can actually be mentioned: teacher-centered, learner-centered, content-centered, and context-centered. Cody and Fong (2007), on the other hand, point to the necessity of fieldwork, collaborations/ partnerships, multi/interdisciplinarity, global-local dichotomy, and community participation in association with heritage education. Likewise, shared historical knowledge, national identity and social cohesion, and active citizenship (Şimşek et al.,

2013), as well as values, bonds, and memory as social and heritage-based ownership (Rivero et al., 2018), are among many of the concepts that can be linked to heritage education. As a result, the concept becomes one of the most central and weighty issues of current conservation discourse.

This paper thus aims to shed light on heritage education through the case of Bergama. This interesting example marks an odyssey that led to a systematic heritage education approach that has been gradually structured with various local actors. The study, therefore, addresses the exemplary aspects of a distinct and place-specific journey while researching what the fundamental and primary heritage education principles can be.

2. Bergama and the Role of Communities within the Context of Heritage Education

The city of Bergama is a multi-layered heritage area that assembles the traces of the Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman, and the Republican Era of Turkey. These layers intertwine uniquely to constitute today's built environment and epitomize a rare physical and cultural integrity, where various elements formed under the prominent topography of the city. It has not only welcomed different religions, cultures, arts, and traditions but has been one of the leading cities of civilization throughout its history. In this remarkable environment, daily life and, accordingly, heritage-community relations continue to be actively shaped. Therefore, the area was included in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2014 with its outstanding universal values.

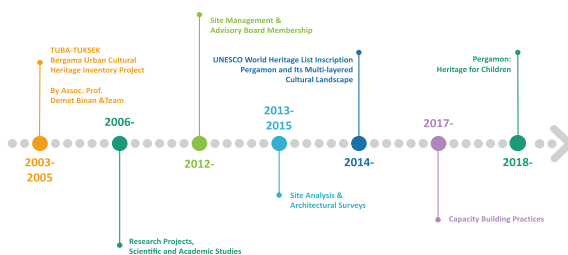


Table 1. Bergama and The Odyssey

It is a less well-recognized fact that the city is also an intriguing example due to the heritage education studies that have been carried out, particularly in recent years. These studies are twofold. First are those brought to life through the efforts of volunteers, local leaders, and community members. For instance, the "Historical Timeline of Bergama" designed with the leadership of a local primary school principal is among the first to come to mind. In addition to making the timeline available for use in all schools, the same principal and volunteer teachers have also made it a common tradition for their students to visit local heritage sites each year. Even more strikingly, the team made a pioneering effort to establish an educational history museum in their school's garden. Bergamalı Kadri Museum of Education History, named after a local linguist from Bergama, is a reuse project of a 19th-century school building restored by the Bergama Municipality. It is also noteworthy that prominent institutions of Bergama supported this project, and it later won an award in the region.

In this sense, the second contribution can be referred to as institutional. There are many well-established institutions that are contributing to the field either individually or in cooperation. In addition to well-respected universities, actors such as the German Archaeological Institute have been conducting ongoing studies in the field. These institutions, along with their direct contribution to the conservation of the area, are involved in comprehensive education and training activities aimed at acquiring professional skills and expertise.

The collaborations of Bergama District Directorate of National Education in recent years in order to expand heritage education at all levels are also remarkable. For example, conferences and projects for school principals, social studies, and history teachers as well as on-site narrations and field trips for teachers in cooperation with the German Archaeological Institute are important activities in terms of the education of educators. Learning sessions at

Bergama Museum, which were implemented for more than 1300 students in cooperation with the Bergama Museum Directorate, is another pillar of these practices. Likewise, site visits and innovative on-site practices for students with the contributions of various actors including academicians and NGOs should also be mentioned in this sense.

In this context, it is also appropriate to focus on Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University Department of Architecture Conservation Division¹, another prominent actor that takes an active and invigorating role. Elaborating ongoing contributions from the institution's perspective may better illustrate how heritage education has become a key focus of the local conservation agenda.

2.1. The Odyssey

"The Odyssey" borrowed from the well-known association of a neighbouring land in the first place, is also quite suitable for describing the works carried out by Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University Department of Architecture Conservation Division in Bergama to date. The journey first started in 2003 with the "TÜBA-TÜKSEK Bergama Urban Cultural Heritage Inventory Project" led by Demet Ulusoy Binan, and continued with the participation of the Conservation Division members and graduate students, in a period spanning nearly twenty years. The institution has been contributing to the area with regular site analyses, inventory of registered or unregistered cultural assets, and preparation of architectural surveys, restitution, restoration projects. The process has been supported by various research projects, publications, exhibitions, and other dissemination activities.

Comprehensive field studies carried out in 2012-2013 and 2015 focused particularly on the fragile traditional fabric of the city. This fabric

¹ Both authors work in this division and have been actively involved in field studies of different scopes carried out in Bergama.

mainly includes two types of vernacular houses based on their different formal and structural characteristics: “traditional houses” that belong both to the Turks and to the non-Muslim minority and “houses with Western influence” generally constructed by the non-Muslims from the second half of the 19th century onwards (Ulusoy Binan, 2016). As shown in Fig. 1, they are of priority conservation, are at risk, have high authenticity but are structurally in poor condition. In this scope, the surveys, restitution, and restoration projects of 30 assets were immediately prepared and submitted to Bergama Municipality for the approval of the Conservation Board².



Fig. 1. Two types of vernacular houses in Pergamon

Additionally, a master's thesis (Karcılı, 2009) was prepared under the consultancy of the author (Ulusoy Binan) on the conservation of traditional houses, where vernacular architecture is most common, and contributed to other studies carried out in this process. Later on, the author also published a Turkish-German book on the issue called “*Bergama Urban Cultural Heritage Inventory and Analysis*” (Ulusoy Binan, 2018), which again was supported by important local institutions.

Two more postgraduate studies can also be mentioned in this regard. The first is a master's thesis (Pekvar, 2018) about Taşhan, one of the prominent monumental structures of the area. The second is a doctoral dissertation titled

² The municipality then applies for funds and grants for the implementation of the approved conservation projects with the cooperation of other relevant institutions.

“*Capacity Building and Participation in the Conservation of Multi-layered Cultural Heritage: The Case of Bergama (Pergamon) City*” by Okyay (2022), one of the authors.

Furthermore, efforts to raise international scientific awareness regarding the definition and holistic conservation of the area as a multi-layered cultural asset should be underlined particularly. It is noteworthy that these studies (Binan and Binan, 2008a; Binan and Binan, 2008b³) systematically started before the nomination process and were presented at the ICOMOS General Assembly and Scientific Symposiums in order to open the multi-layered identity up for international discussion. The studies continued with the publications (Binan et al., 2014) prepared with the same approach in the nomination process.

In the same manner, it was also shared with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism that all layers are indispensable in the context of multi-layeredness of the archaeological, tangible, and intangible values of the area. In addition to the above-mentioned publications, a booklet (2014) has been collaboratively prepared by the members of prominent institutions, again including Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University. This booklet, “*Pergamon and Its Multi-layered Cultural Landscape*”, was presented to the World Heritage Centre in June 2014 by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Turkish UNESCO representatives. As a result, the area has been inscribed on the World Heritage List not only with its archaeological values⁴, but as a multi-layered cultural landscape with all its periods.

As exemplified above, Ulusoy Binan, and Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, have been

³ This presentation was later published as a book (Binan and Binan, 2009) of selected papers.

⁴ At the initial report (ICOMOS, 2014), it was stated that justification of Outstanding Universal Value does not cover the Ottoman period, therefore, the boundary of Component I could be adjusted to represent the Hellenistic and Roman remains, while the Ottoman town was covered by the buffer zone.

actively involved in the World Heritage site management uninterruptedly since 2012. This process, which even began before the inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage List, has required a devoted and consistent contribution to the holistic conservation and management of the site. In direct relation with the action themes regarding research, education, and awareness-raising included in the Site Management Plan (2017), the authors' contribution has needed to focus more on the social dimension of conservation, especially in recent years. The most recent agenda includes coordinating and leading capacity-building practices, developing new strategies, and digitalizing heritage through innovative designs. Holistic capacity building strategies focusing primarily on heritage education will make a direct contribution to site management and awareness raising as well as the interpretation and presentation of the area. For this reason, related studies aiming especially at the emerging generations have been increasingly continued following the inscription.

2.2. Pergamon Heritage For Children: Education in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage and Reaching the Emerging Generations

The search conference, "*Pergamon Heritage For Children: Education in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage and Reaching the Emerging Generations*", is named after the series of capacity building workshops held prior to it. In October 2018, the workshops, "*Pergamon: Heritage for Children*" were organized under the leadership of Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University Department of Architecture Conservation Division, and with the support of collaborating institutions.

The workshops were structured in line with the previously identified capacity needs and aimed to create an interactive knowledge transfer through experiential and creative practices in heritage areas. The event series took place with the participation of more than 150 students from six primary schools in historic neighborhoods.

The artworks produced by the participant children later reached wider audiences through the namesake exhibition. This had been an important step towards contributing to the understanding of the outstanding universal value and importance of the area by future generations. This experience, which attracted a great deal of attention throughout the city, once again revealed the need for developing intergenerational education processes and new strategies on 'Cultural Heritage and Education in Bergama'. Consequently, in November 2019, the search conference was held by Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University Department of Architecture Conservation Division, Bergama Municipality, and Bergama District Directorate of National Education.



Fig. 2. Pergamon Heritage For Children: Education in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage and Reaching the Emerging Generations

The all-day event consisted of three sessions, including a conference, participatory group workshops, and a final collective assessment where all groups declared and discussed their findings. More than 100 participants, most of whom were teachers and institution representatives, actively took part in this event. At the end of the conference, all workshop groups shared reports that include their collective recommendations with organizing bodies.

Through this conference, it is aimed to increase the effective coordination of prominent actors that contribute in the field of cultural heritage and education, and to establish a cooperation

network between these actors in order to further improve the prevalent capacity building processes (Fig.1). More importantly, it was targeted to create a shared path for ongoing practices by structuring a systematic framework in a holistic manner. Experts shared their experiences in addition to examining local dynamics and innovative practices in the context of cultural heritage and education. By this means, it is desired to reveal the possible scenarios that can be successfully adapted to Bergama through good examples and identify the differentiating aspects of the city, and develop strategies for the specific characteristics.

3. Lessons Learned and Achievements

The search conference turned out to be an invaluable experience with many future possibilities. One of the substantial lessons learned in the process is that it is possible to ensure effective cooperation among the key actors in the field. In this process, institutions became aware of the studies carried out in the field from a holistic perspective and had the opportunity to evaluate what they could further provide. As a result, the dialogue and cooperation network between these actors, who are traditionally considered decision-making institutions, have been strengthened.

The next level can be considered as the expansion of the cooperation network with community members. Prior to the conference, a 65-person commission consisting of primary, secondary, and high school teachers was established. Compromising volunteer teachers from various branches, this multidisciplinary commission determined the necessities for more effective cultural heritage education in Bergama as preliminary documentation. Issues mentioned in this documentation were then discussed within the scope of the workshops at the conference. Solutions, correlatively, were also developed with wide-ranging participation. In this sense, the process was instrumental in expanding participation in heritage education at the community level.

Later on, a second voluntary commission was established within Bergama Culture and Arts Foundation (BERKSAV) in connection with the renewed cooperation network. This commission, which includes representatives of institutions, experts, and volunteers, focuses on designing wide-ranging educational projects and practices. In addition to building innovative education and digitalization projects, the members contributed to events such as the Bergama Kite Festival, which was held in the city's important heritage sites in 2021 with the participation of many children at the primary school level.

Moreover, reports consisting of assessments for local needs/solutions are among the most significant achievements of the conference. For instance, prioritizing the tangible and intangible values of the city and constructing the course contents in this direction were among the most striking suggestions of the participants. This suggestion emphasized that the uniquely rich resources of the city can and should be accepted as one of the main pillars for heritage education. Thus the whole process can be shaped locally and with knowledge of the place.

Increasing the knowledge and awareness of teachers on the subject and positioning them as heritage ambassadors was also one of the ideas that came to the fore during the conference workshops. The participant teachers as future ambassadors stated that guiding educational materials would be functional and facilitating for them. Alternative tools such as storytelling, gamification, education through on-site experiences, and digitalization were also mentioned in this context.

In this light, general capacity building strategies in conjunction with the main educational principles that shaped as a result of the conference can be summarized as follows: (Okyay, 2022):

- Designing printed/digital guides for cultural heritage education, ensuring the integration of the content with the

Education Information Network (EBA) by the Turkish Ministry of National Education

- Providing regular training for teachers/educators, ensuring that they include relevant knowledge regarding the cultural values and significance of the area in their course content
- Organizing systematic site and museum trips for students, supporting these trips with guide materials and on-site practices while diversifying educational opportunities
- Ensuring the sustainability and systemization of the above-mentioned heritage education activities carried out by volunteers and institutions

Lastly, it is safe to say that the obtained outcomes also became a guide for future practices. The initiation of studies on educational materials and related teacher training, the above-mentioned events like the Bergama Kite Festival, and commission activities can easily prove this claim. The fact that an awareness-raising project was launched for the emerging generations with the cooperation of Bergama District Directorate of National Education and Bergama Municipality UNESCO WH Management Office is an important indicator for the continuation of the studies. This cooperation, which primarily targets students in peripheral neighbourhoods, is also significant in terms of contributing to the conservation of vernacular heritage. Based on these, it is hopefully possible to think that the efforts regarding heritage education in the city will continue in a sustainable manner.

4. Conclusions

Bergama's significant odyssey to heritage education demonstrates an interesting example in many ways. This process, which follows the lens of academia, in a way reflects the evolution of the very notion of conservation itself. The conservation priority was first to ensure the

physical integrity of the area and its cultural assets. Afterward, effective management and the construction of a unique urban identity became prominent junctions. These comprehensive works, which also made it possible for the area to be inscribed in the WHL, revealed a more social dimension of conservation and the need for local communities to embrace their heritage.

Although the importance of heritage education is a widely known fact in terms of modern understanding of conservation, this notion mostly emerged as a result of a distinctive and organic development in the case of Bergama. Further to that, it is possible to argue that the area created its own visionary model in this process. This model aims at strengthening the relationship of the local communities with their heritage, as well as endorsing innovative initiatives for creating knowledge and altering perceptions through significant experiences. It also fosters functional mechanisms and cooperations that enable the local communities to take on responsibility instead of undertaking direct responsibilities for the heritage sites and their communities.

In this perspective, the model also highlights the idea of educating the educators who take an active role in the learning process of children and young people. Through the transfer -and acquisition- of knowledge among new heritage ambassadors, it may easily be possible to grow and expand the impact of the related education exponentially. By this means, it can be ensured that the conservation of heritage, as well as its education, becomes a cherished process shared by all members of the community.

It is a fact that the lessons learned and the experience gained in the case of Bergama are still mostly at the theoretical level. Following the full implementation of the constructed structure, today's vision will evolve and continue to develop with new experiences. However, heritage education based on these principles is more likely to reach a more inclusive meaning by transcending the

boundaries of academic specialization activities and fulfilling its true potential. It will also help related communities develop strong, pluralistic comprehension and commitment to all tangible and intangible elements of the historical environment, and play a transformative role in raising generations who embrace their heritage.

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