



The Journal of the Barbados Museum & Historical Society

VOLUME LXX : DECEMBER 2024

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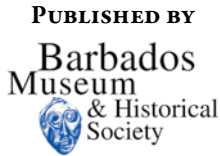


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Pedro Welch

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Editorial

One of the striking features of the history of the various social groups in the Caribbean, is the extent to which many descendants of the enslaved, and of the indentured immigrants who entered the region in the last years of enslavement, were able to rise up the social ladders of their respective societies. In some cases, this upward social mobility is all the more remarkable, because the expectations of their erstwhile enslavers included restricting emancipation to mere token action. Their considerable impact on the larger communities outside their nations is also worthy of note, as this relates to both the hemisphere and the broader international sphere. In this section of our Journal, then, I invite our readers to consider the successful rise up that social ladder of two eminent Caribbean activists. These two Caribbean personalities have just ended their earthly sojourn and are duly celebrated by the people of the nation states in which they resided, and, indeed, by people throughout the region and the wider world. I refer to Sir Shridath Surendranath Ramphal GCMG AC ONZ OEOCC NIIV OM KC FRSA, and Dame Maizie Irene Barker-Welch DBE CHB BCH LLD (HONS). I have selected these two persons, the first because as a former senior administrator of the University of the West Indies (Cave Hill), I have been privileged to have observed Sir Shridath, the former Chancellor of the University in

a number of formal roles. I have been struck by the almost visible and palpable aura of a respect both deserved and earned, that exuded from this erudite, learned and accomplished legal luminary. In the second case, I admit to a very personal interest in sharing my knowledge of the social activist and leader who happens to be my mother. There are some amazing similarities in both their ages, and their life trajectory, the latter impacting respectively different geographical areas and foci of the global community. Coincidentally, the years of their respective births, September 17, 1927, in the case of Dame Maizie, and October 03, 1928 in the case of Sir Shridath, and the year of their death, both in August 2024, Dame Maizie on August 28, 2024, and Sir Shridath on August 30, 2024, as well as their different racial backgrounds, in the context of the Caribbean, brings them together in a fascinating time capsule of history. In a sense, then, what I offer here is somewhat akin to an obituary of both of these Caribbean stalwarts. I trust that readers will be as inspired as I am, in following this outline of their achievements.

Sir Shridath Surendranath Ramphal

Shridath Ramphal, more popularly known as “Sonny Ramphal” was born in 1928 in the district of New Amsterdam in British Guiana (hereinafter given its post-independent name of Guyana). His Guyanese ancestors were indentured immigrants from India. One of his grandmothers is reported to have rejected the custom of “sati” in which widows in some Hindu communities traditionally committed suicide by sitting on the funeral pyre which cremated the remains of their husband. It is not intended here to delve into the religious philosophy which was followed by Ramphal. However, as did many other East Indian migrants, his father James (Jimmy) I. Ramphal and most likely his mother, Grace, were converts to the brand of Christianity promulgated by Presbyterian Missions in the Caribbean colonies. Indeed, the adoption of westernized (or Christian) names by his parents, provides some clues as to this background.

By the age of twenty, James Ramphal had been appointed as Principal of the Helena Canadian Mission School. In later years, he co-founded the so-styled Modern High School in the capital at Georgetown, and led a vigorous campaign to have the authorities repeal the so-named

1902 Swettenham Circular, which effectively barred particularly East Indian girls, from accessing secondary education. He was successful in his efforts and on July 15, 1923 the Circular was repealed. This was followed by a veritable quantum leap in the enrolments of East Indian girls. Some of these later entered the teachers' training college in the capital and became the first students from that racial background to graduate from an institution of higher learning. In addition to his exploits in the field of education, James Ramphal became one of the first East Indian Guyanese to be appointed to a civil service post, that of Commissioner of Labour, in 1939. There can be little doubt that the young Shridath Ramphal was heavily influenced by his activist father. Indeed, we are informed that he attended the school founded by his father. Shridath showed early educational promise and eventually won a scholarship to Kings College, London. He graduated with the LL.B. and LL.M. degrees from that institution and later won a fellowship to Harvard University. His subsequent legal, professional and administrative career marked him as one of the most brilliant scholars to be produced under the educational system of colonial Guyana.

The professional profile of this Guyanese prodigy demonstrates an ascent that was meteoric in scope. After his call to the bar, he spent a short time in Britain developing his legal skills, before his return to Guyana in 1951. After his return, he began to climb the professional ladder, acquiring postings with ever increasing increments of responsibility. One of his first official positions in Guyana was as Counsel in the office of the Attorney General. This was a precursor to his later appointment as Assistant Attorney General of the West Indies Federation. There can be little doubt that his professional experience in this post added significantly to his acquisition of skills that would later be applied at the regional and international level. In 1965, after a stint in legal practice in Jamaica, he was appointed as Attorney General of Guyana. Thereafter, he served as a Minister in the Foreign Affairs Ministry and followed that with a period as Minister of Justice. In 1975 Sir Shridath was appointed as Secretary General of the British Commonwealth. He was to serve with distinction in that office for two terms. In addition to this posting, he was diligent in his representation of his nation in various international fora. It is in that context that the President of Guyana, in commenting on his illustrious career

noted that "... His efforts before the International Court of Justice and the Tribunal of the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) were not just a service to the nation (Guyana); they were acts of supreme and selfless devotion to the land that nurtured him..." Indeed, Sir Shridath's international connections underlie his reputation as an advocate for small states. His bold advocacy not only against the apartheid of South Africa, but also against the attempts of the then Rhodesian government to suppress the rights of its black citizens, represent but a small sample of his highly meritorious service in the international sphere.

Following his terms as Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, Sir Shridath also served as Chancellor of the University of Warwick (1989-2002), The University of the West Indies (1989-2003), and The University of Guyana (1990-1992). He was the recipient of numerous awards, including three knighthoods, the most prestigious of which was his appointment to the Knight Grand Cross of the Order of St. Michael and St. George (CCMG) in 1990. He received several honours including New Zealand's highest civil honour, the Companion of the Order of Australia, and the Order of the Caribbean Community. Sir Shridath's death on August 30, 2024 has marked the passing of a true Caribbean colossus. His wife Lady Lois Winifred King who he had married in 1951, pre-deceased him in 2019. The couple's four children have all demonstrated the legacy of this remarkable family in their various professional spheres. On behalf of our Museum readership, we salute a true hero of our Caribbean civilization and offer our sincerest condolences to his family. *Requiescant in pace.*

Dame Maizie Barker-Welch

Dame Maizie was born to Frank H Barker and his wife Athalie Aurora Barker nee Padmore on September 17, 1927, in the parish of St. Michael, Barbados. She was the eldest of 13 children. Her father, an illustrious graduate of the Barbados pupil-teacher system, was posted to the Clifton Hill Moravian School (later the Southborough School) in St. Thomas as Head-Teacher, later to become a lay-minister of the Clifton Hill Moravian Church. Even later, he was appointed as the first Principal of the West St. Joseph Secondary School (now the Grantley Adams Memorial School). Entering the Moravian

Theological Seminary as Principal after his retirement, he became an ordained minister of the Moravian Church. Dame Maizie, thus, spent her early life in the ambit of the Moravian Church, and attended the elementary school at Clifton Hill, transferring to the St. Bernard's School elementary school in the parish of St. Joseph until her transition to Secondary School. She was a precocious and eager reader and learner. In 1939 a notice came out in the newspaper that there were going to be ten full scholarships and twenty half scholarships, a total of 30 scholarships, in the first bursary exams for the St. Michael's Girls' School. She earned first place out of the over 570 candidates in both the semi-finals and the finals of that exam. There she and her life-long best friend Ada Gollop nee Straughn excelled in their studies and at age 16 Dame Maizie successfully passed the Cambridge School Certificate examination in 6 subjects. Dame Maizie has made the most of every opportunity to sing the praises of the St. Michael's School. On leaving school she took up her first teaching job at the St. Bernards School.

Dame Maizie's genealogical origins run deep into the tortuous history of our Afro-Barbadian peoples. Her maternal great-great grandmother, Mary Delia was a listed slave on the Haynesfield Plantation, owned by Edmund Haynes, in the parish of St. John. Mary Delia's husband, John Henry, Dame Maizie's great-great grandfather had also been enslaved on the same plantation. They both were admitted to membership of the Mount Tabor Moravian Church in 1843. Thus, Dame Maizie's Moravian roots run deep. On the paternal side of her family tree there was also an enslaved ancestor: her father's great grandfather and, therefore, Dame Maizie's great-great grandfather was an enslaved worker in St. Andrew. It is equally clear that her paternal great-great grandmother had also been previously enslaved, possibly on Lears Plantation. These genealogical facts are very important as they bring into sharp perspective, the remarkable achievements of this descendant (Dame Maizie).

One of the telling marks of this bloodline is that on all sides of her family there was evidence of an ambition to chart an upward social path for all members. In Dame Maizie's household, her mother, a teacher who, following the then practice, had to abandon her teaching career on her marriage to Frank Barker, took charge of her education

alongside her father. In the house there was a piano and music formed a major part of her curriculum. That early beginning underlines her reputation as a highly skilled pianist, and a lover of all genres of music, especially classical music. She was also taught sewing and needlecraft. This background in the domestic skills was the foundation for her dressmaking skills. Much later in her fifties, she established a boutique at her home, called "Clothes and Things" and offered ready-made dresses for sale. She outfitted many men and women with items of her own creation. These acquired skills were used in teaching craft-making and dress-making to many a person in St. Joseph, in her neighbourhood, and elsewhere. In later years she wore the creations of designers like Pauline Bellamy, whose work became the foundation of her wardrobe in her later years. In later years the stylish and sometimes outrageous hats of this "fashionista" became her trademark.

In 1950, Dame Maizie married Pedro McCartney Welch, a civil servant. Incidentally, they shared the same birthday, September 17, he being born in 1926, the year before her. Of equal importance is that he, too, could trace his ancestry to an enslaved man, Brewster, who had worked on Thomas Ruck's estate in Enterprise, Christ Church. The couple had four children, all of whom achieved significant success in their chosen professional careers.

In 1961 when she and her husband travelled to Canada, she enrolled at Carleton University, where she took an advanced course in Spanish, a language that she had never done before. She had already acquired some competency in French during her schooling in her homeland. On her return to Barbados, she threw herself into sharing her love of Spanish with any willing students. As an example of her versatility, an Italian migrant, Valentino Capaldi came to Barbados and sought assistance in learning English. Dame Maizie did not know how to speak Italian but because of the similarities between Spanish and Italian, she used Spanish to teach him. Within a year, he had acquired enough proficiency in English to integrate into the Barbadian society. He then established a firm importing ceramic tiles from Italy. His success as a businessman in Barbados is owed in a large part to Dame Maizie's creativity. She taught at St. Gabriel's, St. Ursula's, Codrington High School, Girls Foundation School, Christ Church High School and at several other institutions.

Dame Maizie's time at Carleton University in Canada, in 1961, while accompanying her husband, stimulated her further intellectual development and she followed that by enrolling in some of the first classes in French and Spanish at the newly established Cave Hill campus of the UWI. A bout of illness curtailed that particular effort, but did not stop her intellectual inquisitiveness. Indeed, the decision of the UWI to award her the Hon Doctor of Laws *Honoris Causa* in 2014 was in full recognition of her never-ending pursuit of intellectual development. We also note that she was awarded a fellowship by the Cadbury Foundation to the famed Selly Oaks College of Britain in 1982.

Her next venture would be the field of politics. In 1986, this intrepid lady, supported by the late Rt. Excellent Errol Walton Barrow, at the age of 59, successfully ran in the constituency of St. Joseph on a Democratic Labour party ticket, making history in the process as the seat had been held first by the late Rt. Excellent Sir Grantley Adams, and for all the years up to then (a total of 40 years) by the Barbados Labour Party. By this time, she had become a household name for her acting talents, and especially through playing the part of Mabel in the Jeanette Layne-Clarke-authored radio series "Okras in the Stew". A political cartoon in the Barbados Nation Newspaper pictured the then incumbent, the Hon Lindsay Bolden, lifting out an okra from a bowl of stew. She would run again in the elections of 1989-90, but lost because the National Democratic candidate split the vote, enabling the BLP candidate to win a minority vote. She then entered the Senate, where she made a lasting contribution to debates in that chamber.

Dame Maizie was a community activist from a tender age, and, at the leadership level, was a founding member of the National Organization of Women (NOW), serving as President of the Democratic League of Women, Chair of the National Committee on Ageing, President of the Soroptimist International of Jamestown, and as President of the Business and Professional Women's Club. She was an active member of CARIWA, the Caribbean Women's Association. She was also Barbados' representative to the InterAmerican Commission of Women (CIM), an arm of the Organization of American States (OAS), where she served as Vice-President, and as President, ensuring that the **Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment,**

and Eradication of Violence against Women made the necessary strides leading to its adoption in the hemisphere. From that position she interacted with several Presidents and leaders of Latin American countries on her visits to promote the proposed Convention as well as with women of the entire hemisphere (including the Caribbean and the USA). Her ability to converse in Spanish was an invaluable asset. For her outstanding service in that organization, the Permanent Council of the OAS honoured her contribution with a Special Session in 2022 under the theme: *Best Practices for Advancing Gender Equality and Preventing Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in the Americas*. Dame Maizie also served as a member of the Soroptimists International of Jamestown, Barbados Horticultural Society and as a past Chairman of the Royal Commonwealth Society, Barbados branch. It was surely for all of these achievements, and more, that she received national recognition on two occasions. She received the Barbados Centennial Honour in 2000, followed in 2008 by the designation of Companion of Honour in the nation's Independence awards. Finally, in 2014, she was made a Dame. For all of this, to her children, she was simply "Mum". In honour of her prodigious skills and, in particular, her ability to communicate in Spanish, we declare: *descanse en paz*.

Against the recognition of achievement in the lives of the two outstanding Caribbean citizens presented above, we now turn our attention to the contributions to the 2024 Journal.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE 2024 JOURNAL

As is the case for the several preceding Journals, we have tried to ensure that our readers are exposed to a wide cross-section of material. The listing provided by our various contributors runs the full range from the presentations of the seasoned professional historian, to those of the writer with a simple interest in unearthing facts that might preserve some historical knowledge, that might otherwise be consigned to obscure archives.

Our first contribution comes from the distinguished scholar, **Professor Woodville Marshall**, whose pioneering work on free

villages in Barbados has opened the question of residential locations in this small island to an enquiring readership. In the contribution to this year's Journal, he takes us further into the past and mines the historical records to identify village development in pre-emancipation Barbados. As he tells us, "... The point of this paper is simple. It is an attempt to identify the pre-Emancipation villages (or "districts" in Barbadian parlance) by, if possible, the precise geographical location and the names of the places of residence of those free people who did not live on plantations, places or in the towns ...". In this brief introduction then, he pushes the reader to consider that while pre-emancipation Barbados was inundated by plantations, there were communities on the island that were not located on these estates. Additionally, he reminds us that while there were urban centres on the island where there was some residential location, there were yet other locations that must be considered in investigating village and residential location in this Caribbean location.

The second contribution, offered to us by **Christina Welch and Niall Finneran** provides an interesting commentary on the work of an eighteenth-century Scottish botanist, Alexander Anderson who authored a manuscript covering such themes as the geography and natural history of Barbados. The authors of this article, offer a fairly detailed commentary on Anderson's early life and education and in an annotated summary explain important aspects of his descriptive commentary on Barbados. Anderson is clearly not as thorough as the celebrated Griffith Hughes, in describing several aspects of the natural history of the island, but the authors are to be commended for bringing this hitherto relatively unknown work to our attention. Readers will no doubt be encouraged to see if they can recognize in Anderson's manuscript, some of the flora, fauna, and the geography, of Barbados for which we have many more updated modern works.

The third contribution this year comes to us from **Maaike S de Waal et al.** It represents a work in progress and presents to our readership the results of a survey workshop on Caribbean World Heritage Cities in the context of major global challenges. Bridgetown, the capital of Barbados, inscribed as a World Heritage site within relatively recent times, represents a central focus of the workshop. The goals of the workshop were summarized as follows:

1. To create a common background and a relevant network for holistic and synergetic study of the Bridgetown World Heritage Site;
2. To define urgencies, opportunities and challenges;
3. To set a research agenda;
4. To stimulate new (co-authored) publications;
5. To provide a concrete basis for a grant proposal to allow further academic study of the topic.

By the end of the workshop, the central concluding findings surrounded the “liveability” of the city as a core issue. In that context, particularly when the matters of conservation, maintenance, and sustainable tourism were considered, “liveability” was closely tied to issues of heritage and well-being. Readers will find this an intriguing presentation, exposing to view the craft of the researcher at its very best.

Throughout the New World, archaeological investigations of the sites of the burials of the enslaved are relatively few. In Barbados, the burial site of the Newton Plantation has provided historians and archaeologists with new insights into the interment of the enslaved. Since Professor Jerome Handler’s pioneering work at Newton in the early 1970s, one surprising fact is that few other similar sites have been unearthed on the island. **Brian Whiting’s** fascinating survey of “rab lands” as burial sites in Barbados is our fourth submission. Here he introduces readers to the highly technical world in which modern archaeologists work. He refers to the use of Ground penetrating radar (GPR) and electro-magnetic induction in identifying suitable grave-sites for investigation. Using such modern technology enables him to make the following prescription: “Evidence presented here strongly suggests that not only was soft, thicker soil used for burials but limestone rock was evidently dug out for burials. The small size of the ground available for enslaved people to make their burials, combined with demographic considerations, mean that using the limestone was likely a necessity, not a choice”. That little vignette, extracted from his article, should encourage our readers to read this very informative and intellectually stimulating presentation.

Our fifth submission, by **Diane R. V. Campbell**, takes a look at the establishment of the main prison in Barbados, Glandairy Prison. She begins by looking at a calypso, “Glandairy” penned by a former

inmate in the early 20th century and uses this as a folkloric background to a location of the prison in the social history of the island. She leads the reader into an overview of the post-emancipation history of the country, demonstrating that in much the same way as the other social institutions, the prison was part of an oppressive socio-economic matrix that sought to “circumscribe the ambitions of the black labouring class for economic and social mobility.” Moreover, in addition to its penal restrictions, the “adult penal system came to represent a medium through which the black population could be held in confined spaces for daring” to challenge the hegemony of the white minority. Enshrined within the penal code, Campbell observes that the colonial authorities benefitted from a system of free labour provided by prisoners. This article takes the reader beyond the boundaries of the criminal justice system and places the prison within an analysis of a post-emancipation institution which seems to be designed to prolong the pre-emancipation oppression that preceded it.

Our sixth contribution is provided by **Cameron McCarthy**, a Barbadian graduate of the University of the West Indies, and a recognized authority on the educational systems of the British colonial world. Here, the author situates his study in the high school histories of three former British colonial sites, Barbados, Singapore, and India, looking at elite schools in these nation-states as they navigate “new transnational educational markets built around the cultural involution and investment in the educational and cultural capital of youngsters from the Global South”. Written from the perspective of a scholar well-grounded in the relevant literature on educational development in post-colonial contexts, and against the background of a former pupil of the very institutions that he covers, this article offers the reader new ways of reading the history of our island and region.

The seventh submission clearly fits neatly into the multi-disciplinary focus of the Journal. In this case, we introduce the article penned by **Winston Kellman**, who focuses his attention on the creation of artistic representation in the Caribbean context. The author observes that in general classifications of Caribbean art tend to follow a Eurocentric format “as the only significant frame of reference for art history in the region...” In this context, the author attempts to put the case for a Caribbean genre which foregrounds the locale and its

associated social matrix in any appreciation of Caribbean artistic form. To quote the author, we must move towards a model of artistic appreciation in which “the ideas of place and locale should be seen by virtue of the lived experience not as a limitation or impediment but an area for expansion, an advantage in the production of artistic endeavour.” Our readers will find in this submission, therefore, an important commentary on the status of Caribbean art and will find in Kellman’s provocative musing a fertile ground for their own imagining of Caribbean/Barbadian artistic endeavour.

An eighth submission to the Journal is penned by **Marie-Claire Lyder**. In this case, our readers are introduced to a brief summary of the life and times of Joseph Lyder who was, apparently, an ancestor of the author, and the patriarch of a family that included some mixed-race offspring. Ms. Lyder follows the bequest of this ancestor, attempting to trace the arrangements for the administration of small portions of land that were to be administered in trust for the poor of St. John’s parish. At first this bequest was to be managed for the benefit of poor whites only, but later this was expanded to cover all racial groups. Readers, particularly those whose connections run deep in St. John will be intrigued by this narrative and will no doubt be curious as to what was finally the fate of this bequest.

The ninth submission this year comes to us from a contributor who is self-described as an unconventional historian. In this case, the submission by **S. Christopher Thornhill**, uncovers aspects of the history of Pelican Island, prior to its amalgamation into the rest of the Barbadian landmass, after the construction of the Deep Water Harbour. Relatively few Barbadians will recall the sight of this small island which had served as a quarantine station and, reportedly, was the habitat of some resident pelicans. Using modern geo-location techniques, the author takes the reader into the relatively unknown history of Pelican Island and reminds us of an important aspect of the past history of its mother-island, Barbados.

A tenth submission is written by **Benjamin John Hoyos**. It is largely an exploratory piece, and it is expected that as he deepens his reading of Caribbean history, he will be enabled also, to deepen his research on the Irish presence in the Anglophone Caribbean and, particularly, on that presence in historic Barbados. In this contribution, he pursues an

exploratory historiographical journey, identifying some of the sources that discuss the question of indentured servitude in Barbados. From this initial contact with the source material, he identifies some key legacies of the Irish presence in the island, noting that the survival of Catholicism was largely due to an Irish influence. This presentation should interest many of our readers, particularly those who can still trace their Irish antecedents.

The eleventh and final submission is written by **Joseph H. Howard**. He has been researching the Bulkeley family of Barbados for some time, and offers us several genealogical details of this family which is listed among the most prominent slave-owning and plantation owners of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries history of Barbados. His is a fairly comprehensive genealogical survey and lays the foundation for a detailed history of this family.

Professor Pedro L V Welch, PhD | December 2024

The World Heritage Site of Historic Bridgetown and Its Garrison and Today's Challenges: Engaging with Heritage Specialists, Researchers, Students, and Stakeholders

*Maaïke S. de Waal¹, Ilja Simons, Janice Cumberbatch,
Casey D. Allen, Rhianna Smith, Ariel Hinkson,
Amanda Haynes, Alissandra Cummins, and Gordon Ashby*

Abstract:

This paper presents insights obtained during a workshop about the Historic Bridgetown and Its Garrison World Heritage Site (February 2024). This workshop focused on a bottom-up approach to collect information by different specialists, researchers, students, and stakeholders on which topics they consider most relevant and urgent to investigate. By having Open Space Technology sessions and group discussions the participants formulated seven topics for further research: 1) Sustainable tourism & Preventing over tourism; 2) Strategic plan / Master plan; 3) Narrative, interpretation and impact; 4) Conservation: how?; 5) 10 years of WHS: failures and successes; and 6) Resilience of Barbados heritage. In this paper these topics will be discussed and contextualised.

Keywords: World Heritage City, Historic Bridgetown and its Garrison, Living Heritage Cities, UNESCO

Introduction

In 2022 the edited volume 'Living (World) Heritage Cities. Opportunities, challenges, and future perspectives of people-centred

¹ Corresponding author (m.s.de.waal@arch.leidenuniv.nl).

approaches in dynamic historic urban landscapes' was published.² In this book, specialists from different disciplines and geographical and cultural backgrounds explored how (World) Heritage Cities preserve their living heritage and what challenges they face. One of the contributions focused on the World Heritage Site of Historic Bridgetown and Its Garrison.³ This contribution partially focused on the fact that World Heritage Status nominations often go preceded by positive expectations with regards to heritage conservation, stimulation of the cultural sector, sustainable development of the area, increased local awareness, participation and ownership, job creation and economic growth, and increased tourist numbers.⁴ These expectations are not always tested, and holistic and synergetic studies are almost non-existent. However, the fact that World Heritage Cities are living cities that are experiencing the effects of today's social, political, economic and natural challenges on a daily basis, makes it relevant to conduct research focusing on these topics in order to investigate what the effects are for people living in or close to such cities.

These topics are particularly relevant for Caribbean World Heritage Cities. Considering that many of these are in vulnerable coastal locations, filled with colonial heritage, in Small Island Development States (SIDS) and heavily dependent on the tourism industry, the challenges to be countered by these cities are many, and local support and upholding, both by financial, societal, and political means, are not automatically generated. Taking this as a starting-point, Maaïke de Waal planned to design a larger research project focusing on Caribbean World Heritage Cities in the light of today's global challenges. As a pilot preparation phase, she organised a (hybrid) workshop focusing on the Bridgetown World Heritage Site at The University of the West Indies (UWI), Barbados, on February 5-8 2024 in order to inventorise with local heritage specialists, researchers, students, and stakeholders which research topics should be focussed on first.

The present insight paper presents the outcomes of this workshop, entitled 'Caribbean World Heritage Sites in the light of today's global

2 De Waal et al. (2022).

3 De Waal (2022).

4 De Waal (2024: pp. 127-8).

challenges: the case of Historic Bridgetown and Its Garrison'. This workshop had five goals:

1. To create a common background and a relevant network for holistic and synergetic study of the Bridgetown World Heritage Site;
2. To define urgent issues, opportunities and challenges;
3. To set a research agenda;
4. To stimulate new (co-authored) publications;
5. To provide a concrete basis for a grant proposal to allow further academic study of this topic.

The workshop was designed to connect with Barbados heritage specialists, researchers, students, and stakeholders⁵ in an informal setting, to freely and openly discuss the Bridgetown World Heritage Site in the light of today's challenges.

Methods

At the start of the workshop, a common background was created by four keynote-lectures. The first presentations focused on visions of revitalisation of Bridgetown, or Town as it is locally affectionately called, through pedestrianisation, recreation and habitation, arts and culture, and history and education,⁶ and the need and options to have society reimagine Bridgetown, and the initiatives already undertaken to investigate this by FutureBARBADOS.⁷ The latter includes the interactive "hello futureCITY" experience,⁸ in which residents and visitors can share their ideas and dreams about Bridgetown. Next, the natural impacts affecting Caribbean World Heritage Sites in general and Barbados heritage in particular were presented, focusing on natural hazards, disasters, and risks, on resilience and on Disaster

5 Institutions represented by the participants include (in alphabetical order) architect firms, the Barbados Tourism Marketing Inc., the Barbados Museum & Historical Society, Barbados National Art Gallery, Barbados National Commission for UNESCO, Barbados National Register of Historic Places, Barbados National Trust, Barbados Public Workers Cooperative Credit Union, Breda University of Applied Sciences, FutureBARBADOS, Heritage First Barbados, International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, Leiden University, The Division of Culture in the Prime Minister's Office and University of the West Indies Cave Hill Campus.

6 Callender (2024).

7 Gibbons (2024).

8 <https://fix2y5gqh01.typeform.com/futurecity> (last visited on May 31 2024).

Risk Reduction and Disaster Risk Management.^{9,10} The last keynote-lecture focused on stories, narratives, heritage, and tourism, stating that stories are fundamental to shaping and reshaping identities, to making sense of the world around us, and to communication, and on storytelling as a means to make sense of heritage.¹¹ We used these presentations and the subsequent discussions to identify the natural and cultural challenges that affect the Bridgetown World Heritage Site, to ascertain which ones were considered most urgent by the workshop participants, and to start outlining potential research and solution directions.

The workshop subsequently included Open Space Technology (OST)^{12,13} sessions and group debates, to more concretely define key issues (urgencies, opportunities and challenges) with respect to the Bridgetown World Heritage Site. OST was selected as a method because it has the advantage that the participants determine what is on the agenda, and therefore automatically focus on what they think is relevant and urgent. For each agenda topic a report was to be written, including a short outline and the background of the topic, as well as a short summary of the discussion. The idea was originally to have the participants prioritise the topics, but as the group of participants was quite dynamic and slightly changed in composition over the days, it was decided to skip this phase of the OST sessions.

The last day of the workshop included a guided city walk by Dr. Karl Watson, emeritus senior history lecturer at The UWI Cave Hill and former president of the Barbados National Trust).

After the workshop was finished, Ilja Simons carried out interviews with several workshop participants. These will be reported on in a forthcoming paper.¹⁴

9 Cumberbatch (2024).

10 Also see UNESCO (2010).

11 Simons (2024).

12 Owen (2008).

13 Also see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XCPZ5iQLlnA> (How to Facilitate an Open Space Session); (last visited on May 31 2024).

14 Simons and De Waal (2024).

Results

During the Open Space Technology sessions, the workshop participants suggested and discussed seven topics. These included: 1) Sustainable tourism & Preventing overtourism; 2) Strategic plan / Master plan; 3) Narrative, interpretation and impact; 4) Conservation: how?; 5) 10 years of WHS: failures and successes; and 6) Resilience of Barbados heritage. Below, the different topics are described as they were discussed during the workshop.

Sustainable Tourism & Preventing Overtourism

One of the expectations during the World Heritage inscription process of Historic Bridgetown and Its Garrison was that as a result of the inscription, tourism would increase.¹⁵ During the workshop, questions were raised whether this has actually happened and whether this has been investigated. Related to this are broader questions about tourism in general, and heritage/cultural tourism specifically: 1) Which types of tourists does Barbados receive and want to receive (e.g. sun/sea, all inclusive, active and adventurous tourists, cultural tourists? 2) To what extent do Barbadians benefit and profit from the different types of tourism? 3) What role does heritage and the World Heritage status play in attracting different types of tourists? 4) Is there a vision for what cultural tourism activities should be developed? 5) How should Historic Bridgetown and its Garrison as a UNESCO World Heritage Site be developed and presented as a tourist attraction?

A lot of information to answer these questions is probably already available (e.g. at the Division of Culture, Tourism Authorities, The UWI, and the Tourism department of the Barbados Community College), but in order for Bridgetown as UNESCO World Heritage to benefit from it, it needs to be shared with other groups (e.g. heritage professionals). Collaboration is essential in order to prevent reinventing the wheel. Moreover, it should be clear who will take direction of the developments (who will maintain oversight, set out the guidelines and provide structure).

15 The Environmental Planning Group Inc. & HLA Consultants (2014a: p. 40). Also see De Waal (2022, p. 128).

The participants of the workshop suggest that given the current branding of Barbados, it is difficult to attract tourists that are purely interested in culture or heritage, as tourists will not be 100% focusing on culture alone in Barbados. Instead it is a matter of offering sufficient and diverse cultural tourism practices and activities, such as heritage tours, music performances, art related events, and food tastings. In order for these practices to take place, it is necessary to create attractive outside spaces (including shade, picnic tables, toilets and so on) where both local Barbadians and tourists like to spend their free time.

These cultural activities can be a way to attract more tourists into Bridgetown, and to allow comfortable contacts between tourists and local inhabitants. This way, tourists can be seen as more than people who bring in money, but also as people who contribute to the atmosphere in the streets of Bridgetown, so it becomes more attractive for everyone.

A development to prevent, however, is visitor increase towards overtourism. Overtourism is defined by the World Tourism Organization (2018, p. 4) as “the impact of tourism on a destination, or parts thereof, that excessively influences perceived quality of life of citizens and/or quality of visitor experiences in a negative way”.

Although Bridgetown does not currently have the number of tourists to be called a destination with overtourism, several issues were raised that should be addressed to prevent negative impacts on Bridgetown as a tourist destination, and to ensure quality of life of both residents and visitors. The workshop participants stressed the importance of balancing developmental tourism interests with the long-term consequences for people in Barbados.

Areas that were mentioned to be crowded at times are bus terminals, fast food restaurants, department stores, and the sea port during peak times in the tourist season (November to April).¹⁶ Moreover, when discussing the prevention of overtourism, and (negative) impacts of tourism on quality of life, it became clear that the workshop participants associated this specifically with cruise tourism and all-inclusive tourism. Points of attention mentioned were (1) the destruction of coral reefs and coastal areas by the cruise ships, (2) privatisation of beaches and overbuilding of hotels, leading to lack

16 Environmental Planning Group Inc.& HLA Consultants (2014a, p. 35).

of access to areas integral to local communities and (3) the relatively short time that cruise tourists spend on the island, which reduces opportunities for local communities to benefit from tourism and to have meaningful interactions. A lack of empathy between tourists and locals was mentioned, where tourists are seen as somewhat ‘aloof’.

In the discussion about preventing overtourism, it became clear that even though this was a concern of the workshop participants, Bridgetown does not suffer from overtourism at this moment in time. On the contrary, according to the participants of the workshop, both locals and tourists use the city mainly for transit, instead of using it as a destination to spend and enjoy time. A similar trend has been identified by the Hello Future City project, interviewing people in Bridgetown. On the question “What is your favourite part of the city and why?” a majority of interviewees answered “nothing in particular” (Gibbons 2024). This is striking because the fact of it being a UNESCO World Heritage Site, would define it as a destination to spend time.¹⁷ The lack of leisure options was mentioned as a cause of this, such as the erasure of waterfront cafes, areas to lounge and relax, and a lack of music in the city. This is felt by more people in Barbados. In the above-mentioned Hello Future City project, a majority of interviewees answered the question “what key space or experiences do you think are most LACKING in the city?” by selecting the Museums/Art/Culture option (Hello Future City; Gibbons 2024). In addition, safety and some issues were brought up. The waterfront cafes, that used to draw (tourist) crowds, have stopped existing as result of city development (Figure 1). The general idea is that by making the city more attractive for locals, this will benefit both the locals and the tourists.

As a way forward several ideas were raised such as fostering the relationships between tourists and locals by creating places from which both can benefit, such as lounging areas within Historic Bridgetown and Its Garrison, including art and music. Cultural tourism and community based tourism can be encouraged by offering more Barbadian themed tours in Bridgetown, and across the island, which would create mutual understanding and pride.¹⁸

17 Environmental Planning Group Inc.& HLA Consultants (2014a, pp. 41, 85; 2014b, p. 134; 2014c, p. 2).

18 Environmental Planning Group Inc.& HLA Consultants (2014c, p. 5) includes a list of



Fig. 1 Desolate and abandoned waterfront cafes and an empty carenage (picture by De Waal, February 8, 2024).

The participants consider it important to not keep the history stale but refreshing and highlight the lesser known stories. A central role is seen for the Barbados National Register of Historic Places in the Division of Culture and Barbados Tourism Marketing Inc. The Environmental Planning Group Inc.& HLA Consultants presented a listing of potential Barbados narratives by theme, focusing on the questions “What stories must we tell about Barbados” and “What stories would we be delightfully surprised to hear about Barbados?”. The resulting themes listed include Freedom & Resilience Stories, Laying the Foundations, Locals & Legends, Eat, Drink and Be Merry, Ten Fathoms & Maritime Exploits, The Story of Sugar, Nature’s Treasures, Sports in Bim, and Cultural & Creative Arts.¹⁹ This list could be consulted as a starting point.

18 actions that were brought up in 2014 to revitalise the city, including (amongst others) maintaining the UNESCO World Heritage Designation, enhancing and developing particular areas and attractions, to developing educational kits and a mobile exhibition, developing transportation for visitors (trams, river boats, historic bus), and promoting heritage tours by night.

19 (2014c, p. 65, table 7).

Strategic Plan/Master Plan

During the workshop the need for cooperation between different parties involved in Bridgetown was stressed several times, including the need for a strategic plan or a master plan, in order to be able to sustain the city's heritage. As one of the participants put it: "Town is a living organism, and all elements need to be healthy to sustain the city". The importance of an overall plan, which clearly outlines the national identity and what Barbados wants the World Heritage Site to represent, and which also includes tourism impacts, was emphasised. Focus should be on life in the city for people who live, work and commute there, by making the city sustainable and to bring it to life again.

Such a plan it turned out did exist, however, as part of the Physical Development Plan (chapter 7).²⁰ This plan was developed by the Town and Country planning department, with the involvement of members of the World Heritage Committee.²¹ In 2023 the plan was updated by an amendment.²²

Although this plan is very thorough and extensive, and some elements are in operation indeed, many parts of the plan still need to be operationalised. For example, there is a lack of clarity about the responsibilities and the resources, for example for the site manager of the World Heritage Site. In order to operationalise the plan, more clarity is needed on these aspects, and it is vital that ownership is taken. The workshop participants felt that the authorities should really take action here. They can instigate heritage management and conservation by making this one of their priorities.

The workshop participants feel that people in power should embrace the conservation of the World heritage site, while not all people in power are equally enthusiastic about this. The position of heritage and the importance of heritage in relation to national identity is not obvious to everyone. Some see culture and heritage only as entertainment or

20 Planning and Development Department (2017).

21 The World Heritage Committee, which includes the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Tourism, the Town and Country Planning Department, and the Site Manager, is appointed by the Cabinet for three or four years. Committee members are not appointed in their personal capacity, but they represent parties. The Site Manager is the chairperson of the Barbados World Heritage Committee.

22 Planning and Development Department (2023).

as a way to attract tourists. The idea that conservation of heritage is linked to national identity is not recognised by everyone.

Narrative, Interpretation and Impact

This topic was originally brought in under the title “What is the PR for Bridgetown?”. This title was borrowed from a recent blog, in which Georgina Callender wonders what is the Caribbean’s PR, when looking at a history of representation. She ponders questions such as “Do we have any places and spaces that speak to who we are?” and “From a PR perspective are we actually telling the world anything?” and concludes that a legacy should be built “beyond colonialism and tourism”.²³

During the discussion, we changed the topic focus to “Narrative, interpretation and impact”, as the participants agreed that what is important is that local people need to like or even love Bridgetown in order to be interested in conservation and management, as community support is crucial for necessary conservation measures to take place. The basic idea here is that if people do not care for the city, regulations will not be accepted, let alone followed, and people will be against spending money on the conservation and management of historic buildings. The topic redirected to the question “What is needed to get Bajans enthusiastic about town”?

We started by exploring what attracts the workshop participants in Bridgetown. The answers varied from the town lay-out and cosiness, and the opportunities to stroll around, to the characters that belong to the city. It was stressed that the town is defined by the atmosphere (“feeling”) and the historic buildings, of which it was remarked that many have such beautiful details. It was also mentioned that there is an emotional connection to town: everyone has a story about town, and people either hate it or love it. What is needed is an opportunity to codify what that feeling is, to create more tangible symbols of a collective story, and to create an identity. As an example, the event of the Rio de Janeiro carnival was mentioned. Vendors, snow cone vendors, Chamberlain bridge, Queens Park, and the Fairchild bus terminal were mentioned as town elements that will be recognized as a symbol. It is important to emphasise those elements that speak to and attract Barbadians. (Public) education and interpretation can play a central

23 Callender (2023).

role in this, as they did in the early years of the WHS inscription, when the Ministry of Family, Culture, Sports and Youth and the Barbados World Heritage Committee launched informative campaigns, and the Barbados Museum and Historical Society (BMHS) and The UWI organised presentations, workshops, and tours in Bridgetown.²⁴ Such efforts should continue. If the standards must be obtained, the programs should be maintained, including the history curriculum in schools. The Environmental Planning Group Inc.& HLA Consultants²⁵ also mentions that “many of the sites within Historic Bridgetown and its Garrison are relatively unknown to Barbadians in general. Although hundreds have been introduced to key highlights through heritage walks and local television showcases, many sites remain unexplored, minimised, or are taken for granted as part of the enduring landscape”. They have listed valuable recommendations to continue introducing Barbadians to Bridgetown’s heritage values. These include stimulating and demonstrating reuse of heritage sites and viability of heritage tourism enterprises, developing a travelling photo exhibition, restoring the Carnegie Free Library, creating educational materials, and installing a yearly celebratory moment.

During the discussion of this topic, the idea “Maybe the parts of the World Heritage Site are too different from one another” came to the table. Reasons mentioned for bringing this up were “The Garrison is not the historic inner city”, “The Garrison is quite far from town”, “The Garrison brings up negative feelings relating to British military history”. As an example, one of the participants asked: “The changing of the guard: why are we celebrating that?”. She also stressed that it is important to focus on the narrative, the impact, and the re-imagination of space, and that is also how the colonial aspect fits in, as it’s part of it. The essence is meaning (meaning-making) and interpretation.

As essential key-players tourism concept developers were mentioned, even though hiring them is costly and it can also be questioned whether this is really needed, as the city must be vibrant and lively for and appreciated by Barbadians first. An indisputable role was seen for the Ministry of Education, with respect to national history education, the Ministry of Tourism, with regards to

²⁴ Inniss (2012, pp. 73-75).

²⁵ (2014c, p. 103)

official Tour Guiding programs, and the Barbados World Heritage Committee which is an advisory committee.

On the question “how to get Barbadians enthusiastic about Bridgetown?” workshop participants also mentioned potentially positive effects from street music, as a form of story-telling and to add livelihood and ambiance to town, social media, with influencers promoting town life and user/inhabitant generated content on TikTok, and creating a creative space, where Barbadians can benefit. The session ended with a warning to be careful not to add too many artificial incentives.

Conservation: How?

This topic was suggested to be discussed during the OST sessions by one of the participants, who also wrote a short report about this, but none of the other participants selected this topic as urgent. This topic revolves around the challenge that the historic buildings and areas in the Bridgetown World Heritage Site need constant care and active conservation and management. Unfortunately, today, the maintenance and conservation of many buildings and areas are being neglected and there is a risk that they might develop into such a state that they cannot be maintained anymore. As key challenges to the conservation issue, the following questions were listed:

- So many buildings need restoration. Where to start? And who decides?
- Who is responsible for restoration works?
- Who pays for the restoration works?
- Who has the knowledge, skills, and materials for the necessary repairs?
- How can buildings be modernised and made apt for re-use without losing their historic character?
- Is there legislation/regulations? And do contractors, developers, and real-estate owners know about these?

As a positive start to deal with the issue of conservation, it was brought forward that it is needed to clearly define and propagated who is in charge of conservation of the World Heritage Site, to provide inhabitants, building owners, and craftspeople with the

necessary information of what is needed in terms of conservation and management, to select where to start and define why conservation efforts should first be concentrated on the buildings or in the areas selected, and find funding to guarantee solid and regular conservation activities. It was felt that none of these aspects is currently in place for the Bridgetown World Heritage Site, and considering the state of many historic buildings in town, this is urgent (Figures 2-3). That said, to potentially move the conservation agenda forward, it was noted that one participant from The UWI has a background in stone deterioration research, and discussions regarding the application of a non-invasive, inexpensive assessment method, the Cultural Stone Stability Index (CSSI)²⁶ took place in the context of a mutually benefitting cooperation between The UWI and the BMHS. Such efforts would utilise on-island expertise already available, further reducing costs, while also training local people in the CSSI, perhaps acting as a springboard for future local involvement with and in continued conservation plans.

Also mentioned was the need to document the rapidly disappearing knowledge and skills with respect to local building materials and building traditions, amongst traditional masons and carpenters in Barbados.

During the workshop we also discussed the threat posed to low lying coastal cities like Bridgetown from the effects of climate change, such as storm surge, flooding and hurricanes, and the fact that significant investment is required to build resilience through coastal infrastructure such as boardwalks, jetties, groynes, revetments, or breakwaters.²⁷ This was confirmed by Mycoo et al. in their research on Human Adaptation to Coastal Hazards in Greater Bridgetown, Barbados, where they concluded that “it might not be likely for a city’s capacity for coastal/urban resilience to be maximized without institutional prioritization of vulnerability, increased stakeholder “buy-in” and participation, along with significant investment in adaptation and the protection of valuable coastal infrastructure.”²⁸

26 <https://www.shralliance.com/>.

27 Also see Banerjee et al., (2018), Coastal Zone Management Unit (2020), UNEP (2014).

28 Mycoo et al. (2021, p. 16).



Fig. 2 One of the oldest brick buildings in Bridgetown (17th century), with a poorly thought out roof repair that has made the historic Dutch gable disappear from view (picture by De Waal, February 8, 2024).



Fig. 3 Left above: One of the last remaining slave huts in Barbados (Hutson Alley, seen towards the west). Right above: Historic buildings in Suttle street (seen towards the west). Left below: Historic buildings in Pierhead Lane, with a direction sign towards the historic, and now inaccessible, screw dock area. Right below: 18th century Spirit Bond building at The Wharf Road (pictures by De Waal, February 8, 2024).

10 Years of WHS: Failures and Successes & Resilience of Barbados Heritage

The topics of discussing the failures and successes of 10 years of the World Heritage Site of Historic Bridgetown and Its Garrison and Resilience of Barbados heritage were each brought up for discussion by one of the participants, but none of the other participants selected this topic as urgent and no report was created either.

Guided City Walk

The last day of the workshop included a guided city walk²⁹ by historian and Bridgetown expert Dr. Karl Watson, which allowed opportunities for on-the-spot group discussions of challenges and successes in Historic Bridgetown.³⁰ By presenting the earliest town lay-out and many of the city's historic buildings, as well as visiting the newest monuments and town developments, today's issues and challenges were made very much alive. An incidental find of pre-contact material as well, in the form of a prehistoric pottery sherd found at St Mary's Church cemetery, even provided us with a glimpse of the Indigenous people who originally lived here.

The city walk gave good insight into different aspects that had been discussed during the OST sessions at The UWI, especially with regards to the challenges and successes with regards to conservation and management of the Bridgetown World Heritage Site. First of all, it was remarkably quiet in the historic city centre, even though we spent a good part of the day (9:30 am - 3 pm), in the high season, in this area. Few tourists seemed to be visiting town that day, and there certainly were no crowds. Another aspect that was clearly visible is the absence of inviting public and commercial areas where Barbadians and tourists can sit down and relax. The historic Pierhead area that currently is awaiting redevelopment was completely closed off to the public. Apart from the foreseen redevelopment, this is a pity, as there

29 The city tour started at Independence Arch, and went via Pierhead Lane to Pierhead beach, then via Chamberlain Bridge and the newly designed National Heroes Square to The Wharf Road. From there, we walked via Prince Albert street to Jubilee Gardens, then to St Mary's Church, via Hutson Alley to Suttle Street, via James Street towards the Historic Jewish District, and from there via Prince William Henry Street to Swan Street.

30 The Garrison was not visited on this occasion.

is no more access to the historic screw dock, and, as mentioned above, the formerly active and attractive tourist location with waterfront cafes and moored boats is now deserted (Figure 1).

Also uninviting is the poor state of conservation of many historic buildings. Figure 3 displays some examples, including one of the last remaining slave huts in Barbados at Hutson Alley, historic buildings in Suttle street that go back to the 17th century, and parts of the Pierhead area. The Figure right below shows a historic building that is actually well maintained, but of which the traditional plastering has been removed which makes it more vulnerable from influences from the natural elements. These are in great contrast with magnificently restored buildings, for example the Mutual Life Assurance Society building (Prince Alfred Street) and many historic buildings at The Wharf Road and in the Jewish Historic District. Identification of specific areas of concern on poorly conserved historic buildings could be quickly assessed, for little to no cost, via the CSSI, in cooperation with The UWI, as noted previously. This would help conservators, investors, and other stakeholders to decide which conservation locations and actions are most efficient.

Some other challenges were observed in adapting the historic city to modern day demands with respect to vehicles. Parking in Bridgetown is problematic, as it is in most historic city centres, as the original street and city layout designs are not suited for having large numbers of cars.³¹ Fortunately, in the central part of the historic centre there are areas without or with only a limited number of cars, which greatly enhances the experience for walking through the city, but the City Central Mall car park does visually dominate an important part of the city centre (Figure 4).

Apart from the fact that conservation and management of historic buildings is a challenge, information panels and displayed archaeological values are also prone to the devastating effects of constant exposure to the natural elements, as well as vandalism (Figure 5).

31 The Environmental Planning Group Inc.& HLA Consultants (2014a: p. 39) indicates that traffic congestion is most serious on cruise ship days and during the Christmas season.



Fig. 4 Left: The City Central Mall car park towering over the traditional buildings in Suttle Street (seen from Reed Street, looking south). Right: The City Central Mall car park, dominating the view from St Mary's Church towards the east (pictures by De Waal, February 8, 2024).



Fig. 5 Left and right above: historic elements and information panels in the park between The Wharf Road and the car park south of Princess Alice Highway. Left and right below: a preserved and displayed part of one of Bridgetown's late 17th century cobblestones streets at Jubilee Gardens (pictures by De Waal, February 8, 2024).

Synthesis and Discussion

At the start of the workshop, it was expected that topics brought forward by the participants would strongly focus on climate hazards for Barbados (World) heritage, on political and economic aspects relating to Barbados being a Small Island Development State (SIDS), on the Sustainable Development Goals, on colonial and painful heritage, and participation, ownership and well-being. Surprisingly, only the last topic was discussed, even though not as a topic in itself, but relevant elements were brought to the table while discussing the topics that participants brought in for the workshop discussions.

During several discussions, the topic became centred on the challenge that both residents and businesses have moved out of Bridgetown. For Bridgetown to flourish, it needs to be an attractive place to live, work and play. This is also deemed essential to create sustainable tourism options in the city, and to create support for management and maintenance of buildings and areas in town. So an important side question that was raised several times during the workshop was: how can residents and businesses be persuaded to return to Bridgetown? This importance was also recognised by Environmental Planning Group Inc. & HLA Consultants, listing the responsibility “to create a “Bridgetown Brand” (a must see, must do by visitors) that also attracts new businesses and investment”.³²

Three reasons for moving out of Bridgetown were identified. Firstly, during COVID, many small businesses that had shops in Bridgetown moved and started working from their homes. After COVID most of them did not return to Bridgetown, because they could avoid paying rent. Many who did return share stores, a practice that was already omnipresent before 2020.

Secondly, government and larger businesses, such as banks, have moved their offices out of Bridgetown as well. At the moment many financial institutions still consider Main Street and Broad Street as the main locations, which indicates that there is still a presence and a level of prestige, even though this is decreasing

Thirdly, the rents in Bridgetown are extremely high, which has prevented start-ups from opening stores. A possible reason behind

32 (2014b: p. 161, table 3.7).

these high rents is that proprietors consider Bridgetown to be a prime location, since it is the capital city. As a result of the high rents many properties are unoccupied as well. Typically, when houses are not occupied in a city, students and artists can move in at low rents to keep the area lively and to turn around the downward spiral of the towns liveability. However, in Bridgetown, rents have not gone down yet, and even student dorms are considered expensive. Prices seem to be kept artificially high. This lack of residents also has an effect on the viability of amenities like restaurants and cafes, which can lead to the city becoming less and less attractive, both for inhabitants as well as tourists, and turn into a ghost town.

Several solutions were mentioned to make Bridgetown more liveable. These include 1) creating affordable student housing in Bridgetown, maybe even a University campus, to encourage people come to town; 2) exploring living above shops, which increases safety, especially at night; 3) providing financial incentives for people who are attracted to the city centre, such as start-ups and young professionals; 4) creating a more pedestrian friendly city; and 5) convincing property owners to lower rents to artists and students, in order to lessen the existing waiting list for artists wishing to rent studio space, and to enliven town. There are buildings in Bridgetown which are rented out to artists to have their studios there, and there is a long waiting list. This shows that there is a great interest and potential to make the city more lively. It was felt that property owners play a key role in the topic of town liveability, a topic that also resonates in heritage management and conservation. It seems important to investigate what the perspective of property owners on the World Heritage inscription is. Are they willing to contribute to conservation, or do they prefer to continue replacing historic buildings with modern ones?

Considering the fact that there was a strong focus on the liveability of Bridgetown (or the lack thereof), it is remarkable that the topic of conservation was not discussed during the workshop, not only considering how urgent conservation and maintenance challenges are,³³ but also considering how much this affects the appearance and atmosphere of the city, and the attractiveness for both Barbadians and tourists. The city's appearance is greatly determined by the

33 See De Waal (2022).

conservation of its historic buildings, and by the addition of unfitting modern-life elements such as highly elevated car parks. The same goes for the topic of “10 years of WHS: failures and successes”. The lack of interest in this topic might be partially explained by the fact that this topic would only provide a general overview and that participants probably did not have the feeling that discussion of this matter would actually help solving the negative effects of issues they face today.

The focus on the effects of overtourism, even though by definition Barbados does not have overtourism and the city did not really seem crowded by tourists during the workshop city tour, can probably also be seen in the light of the urgency to create positive and attractive areas in Bridgetown for Barbadians.

Another remarkable aspect was the fact that Bridgetown’s World Heritage consists of colonial, painful heritage was not a topic that participants chose to discuss during this workshop. As one of the participants indicated, an important part of the participants are professionals interested in heritage, which makes them look differently at these historic remains, for example by focusing on the aesthetics of architectural elements.

What was also interesting to see, is that some participants seemed first quite negative about Bridgetown,³⁴ but on being asked which elements of town they really like, they described areas that are or were important for them, with obvious love and pride. This is important, because the public support for regulations and budgets for conservation and management of historic buildings and areas starts here.

Some points were mentioned during the discussions of several different topics. First of all, it is not very clear who is in charge and different organisations seem to be working towards similar goals. Linked to this, it is not clear where relevant information (for example on rules and regulations) can be found, and there is a risk that individuals and organisations working in heritage are engaged in activities that have already been carried out. For example, very few of the participants knew of the existence of the Barbados Physical Development Plan. Collaboration is key.

It is also clear that it is the authorities who need to act: The Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Tourism, and Town and Country Planning,

34 As one of the participants mentioned, ‘town is not for me’.

advised by the Barbados World Heritage Committee. If the authorities prioritise positive developments and actions relating to liveability in town and to heritage conservation, it is believed that changes can be made to turn the situation in Historic Bridgetown to the better.

Most issues and potential solutions mentioned by the workshop participants were also listed by The Environmental Planning Group Inc. & HLA Consultants.³⁵ Their listing for Bridgetown, as presented in the Barbados Tourism Master Plan 2014 – 2023, includes crowding/congestion, poor sanitation, harassment/safety, traffic/pedestrian conflict, lack of guest facilities, static/boring [city life], inebriated individuals/poor behaviour. The fact that 10 years after publication these issues are still prevailing demonstrates that these challenges have not yet been sufficiently mitigated.

Conclusions

The workshop at The UWI was organised to bring together Barbadians with different backgrounds involved in all their different capacities in Bridgetown World Heritage, to find out which topics are priorities when continuing investigations of the Bridgetown World Heritage Site seen in the light of today's challenges. It should be acknowledged that all participants have an interest in heritage, whether based on professional or personal ties, which might have biased the outcomes of the workshop. Nonetheless, some ideas discussed during the workshop were confirmed by outcomes by the future CITY project, in which Barbadians living, working and visiting Bridgetown are interviewed on how they see the town.

The workshop made clear that the liveability of the city is an extremely important topic, not only as an aspect of itself, but also when it is regarded for its links with economics, public support for maintenance and conservation, and sustainable tourism. Liveability allows improvement of these aspects, and in turn, these aspects strengthen the liveability. One of the main foci of upcoming research into the topic of Caribbean World Heritage Cities in the light of today's challenges will therefore focus on heritage and well-being.

35 (2014a: pp. 39-40, table 2.7).

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