

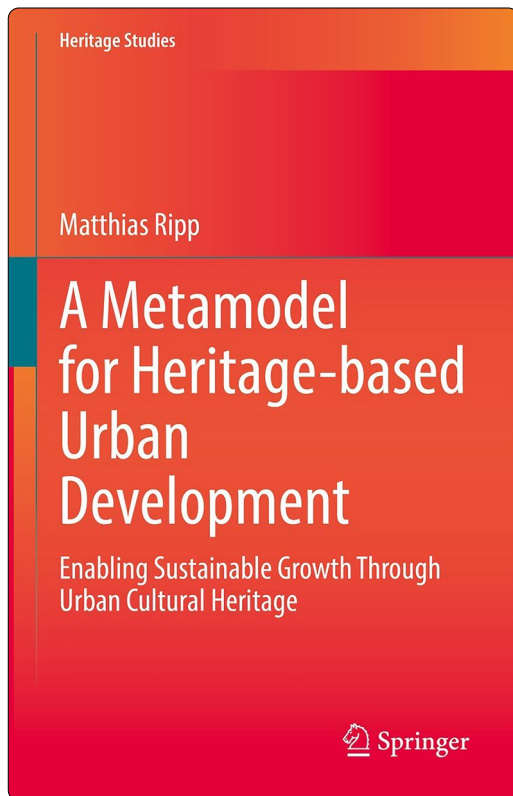
BOOK, CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION REVIEW

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# A metamodel for heritage-based urban development: enabling sustainable growth through urban cultural heritage, by Matthias Ripp. Springer Cham, 2022. 209pp. ISBN9783031082375

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## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 What is the book about?

This article provides a review on the new publication of Matthias Ripp titled Meta-model for Heritage-based Urban Development: Enabling Sustainable Growth through Urban Cultural Heritage released by Springer in 2022. The subtitle is an inspirational, hope-giving, new perspective to heritage studies, if one puts aside the growth-based world economic systems towards development.

Matthias Ripp is one of the recognised scholars in the field of urban conservation. His publications over the years have contributed greatly to the development of the field. His recent book is one of the few theoretical approaches that enable a complex understanding of the city using a systemic approach, as well as a good demonstration of a methodological study. By using various theories (urban morphology, governance, and metamodeling theory) and the observations and examinations of earlier heritage-based development processes Ripp proposed the use of a Metamodel and overcome the shortages of the individual models. To develop the elements of the Metamodel, determination of what entities are involved (domain), how decisions have been taken (control levels of logic), and which processes and interactions took place (rationalities and organisational levels) is deemed necessary. For the systemic approach of the Metamodel, the common ground is a systemic view of the real world which tries to take reality and all its complexity into account. Ripp mentions that though the high level of abstraction is primarily a strength of the Metamodel, it can also be a weakness; users must have a deep level

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of understanding and openness to transfer and apply a Metamodel with such a high level of abstraction to other situations.

The book is well organised in three parts. Part one focuses on the contextual background, identification of the problem, theories, methods and research design; part two talks about the application of research methods; part three reveals the description, application and demonstration of the Metamodel in Regensburg, Germany. After testing the model in Regensburg, revisions to the Metamodel have been made. The book demonstrates how the Metamodel can be used, and presented as a key to solving many problems concerning heritage planning (designing heritage-based urban development processes, improving ongoing ones, to evaluating them). It is argued that the model is also useful for teaching and training, curriculum development, coaching of staff involved in heritage-based development, and scientific studies and set as example for developing other models.

## 1.2 What is the relevance of this book for urban conservation studies?

Conservation studies since the 1964 Venice Charter have been regulated by international agendas and mostly by the dominance of ICOMOS as an expert organisation. This, however, resulted in a scientific discipline that lacked distinct theories and approaches. Rather, as advised by Gustavo Giovannoni, each case was treated individually, which diminished the necessity for a theory or a method (1913). In recent years, there has been an attempt to fill this void, by borrowing concepts and theories from other disciplines into conservation studies. Ripp's Metamodel seems to be a positive effort in this direction.

The study criticises that "there is no universal method to use heritage as a resource for urban development". The author concluding that this was not realistic, suggests that a Metamodel, combining successful models, was developed as a solution for universal usage. In Ripp's words, "The Metamodel is on a higher level of abstraction than a model and is therefore independent of the specific environments of the models". Using the Metamodeling theory of John P. Van Gigch (1991), the model approaches heritage as a system. Ripp used three model case studies HerO (Heritage as Opportunity), the COMUS (Community-Based Urban Development Project) and the Halland Project to develop the Metamodel. Abstract elements of the Metamodel were developed with the Design Research Methodology. The Metamodel was then tested in Regensburg Germany to understand heritage-based urban growth in the area. It is presented as a golden key to solving many problems concerning heritage planning (designing heritage-based urban development processes,

improving ongoing ones, evaluating them and also for developing curricular and capacity-building activities on the topic).

Ripp used three types of sources: scientific literature (to formulate the key concepts and expand on theories to develop the Metamodel); policy documents (to analyse what strategies and regulations are derived from these theories and integrate those that are relevant into the Metamodel); practical experience (either his own work experience or from colleagues, to bridge the gap between international conventions and local actions).

## 2 THRIVE Metamodel

After a lengthy discussion on the methodology, the actual THRIVE Metamodel is being discussed only towards the end of the book. The Metamodel is designed in five steps, very similar to a linear urban development model. The output of one phase becomes the input of the next, just as it does in the linear model. The graphic representation of the phases of THRIVE Metamodel, hermeneutically does not contribute to a further conceptualisation of heritage-based urban development. The scoping phase is specifically emphasised in this model, yet this step is already acknowledged by many such as RIBA Plan of Work (2020) and other local plan regulations. Furthermore, it forms the essence of UNESCO Historic Urban Landscape Approach (2011), together with civic engagement tool.

Although the Metamodel identified the elements that needs to be analysed, how the analysis should be done, and how the interaction between these components should be evaluated is not clear. Today the biggest challenge is to deal with the big data and to develop an understanding of the interrelations between complex systems forming cities. Heritage components add to this complexity as concepts, people, and processes (also identified in the THRIVE Metamodel) are difficult to measure and quantify, thus the utilisation of this model, may need supplementary work.

According to THRIVE Metamodel the vision is developed at the third phase of the model. The vision statement could come as an output of the analysis phase, and feed into the development. Without a vision, development of a heritage-based urban plan could go in various directions. If the vision comes as an output of the development phase, as in the case of THRIVE Metamodel, it would then be read as a narrative charted suitable for the limitations of the project, post-partum. Whereas if the vision is produced following the analysis phase, it then could act as a driving force, a willpower to shape the heritage-based urban development. To give an example, the analysis could indicate room for economic development using/with heritage assets. Based on different

understandings of vision approaches, this could range from ecological approaches to real-estate-based development. Therefore, it can be argued that a vision statement serves its purpose better if used as an input to the Development Phase and not as an outcome. The development narrative starting from the scoping phase [output] until the development phase [input] seems to stay unchanged, thus it is not clear how this narrative is transformed into the vision statement.

Another point to focus on is the challenges. In THRIVE Metamodel, challenges are obtained as an outcome of the analysis phase, which then serves as an input for the development phase. Through development, the challenges are transformed into vision, strategies and planning, and indicated as outcomes. Here we are missing a step for the identification of the challenges/threats, opportunities and benefits, which comes later as an outcome of the implementation phase. However, challenges/threats, opportunities and benefits inform the planning decisions, before any step is taken into implementation. Although the graphic representation does not imply a cyclic mechanism, at the end of the implementation phase, the development of the narrative appears as an outcome, which indicates that there is a feedback mechanism.

There is a great potential to use the THRIVE Metamodel for performance evaluation of the projects at the end of the evaluation phase. The system is designed to provide feedback to the initial development narrative, yet how it could be done needs to be explained further. The linear process at the end takes the development narrative, opportunities, threats, benefits, as well as effects, concepts, people and context as input and through evaluation transforms them into concepts, principles, context, people and resources as outcome. Further to that, the development phase seems to hinge on the moderator. This aspect, a weak point of the Metamodel, revealed itself in the Regensburg example. On the other hand, selection of Regensburg as a case study to demonstrate the Metamodel may not be ideal because, the existing models already use Western European examples, whereas a model with a universal ambition could have been demonstrated better with an example outside of the West Europe and North America region.

The book should be commended for it tackles a very difficult problem dissecting heritage-based development projects into its basic components. Methodologically, the categorisation is based on a sound approach. For the key questions on defining the common elements of the heritage-based development models, qualitative research was conducted to analyse exemplary case-models and derive common elements that can develop the more abstract

elements in the three categories described by Van Gigch (control levels of logic, domains, and rationalities and organisational levels). Here we see that, the findings are very much related to the inputs, just as in a linear thinking process. Ripp acknowledges that selected projects had different approaches to heritage, therefore commonalities were speculated to be very basic elements, and not the unique elements that enabled their selection in the first place. While the dependency of THRIVE Metamodel on Van Gigch's theory is rather high, morphological studies seen as one of the inspirational fields for the methodological aspects of Metamodel, does not emerge strongly. However, the idea to address the issue with a Metamodel is worthwhile and opens up new avenues in heritage-based urban development studies.

### 3 Conclusions: why is the book valuable and for which audience?

Matthias Ripp's recent publication, *Metamodel for Heritage-Based Urban Development*, is a valuable contribution to urban heritage studies as it offers a new methodology for understanding the complexity of the topic. Existing theoretical approaches to heritage-based urban development are limited and fragmented, forcing practitioners, site managers and decision-makers to confront this complexity by experiencing it, so often each team charts the territory itself. The systemic approach presented in this book responds to this need as it brings together theories, personal experiences and results of case studies on heritage-based urban development. The abstraction that comes with the Metamodel is amenable to interpretation and provides the structure needed to make a good start to an urban development project that aims to prioritise heritage. The approach presented here is equally useful for students of heritage studies focusing on process. The research methodology is inspiring for researchers in the heritage field.

#### Abbreviations

COMUS	Community-Based Urban Development (COE/OWHC) Project
HerO	Heritage as Opportunity (URBACT II Project)
ICOMOS	International Council of Monuments and Sites
RIBA	The Royal Institute of British Architects
THRIVE	Metamodel for Heritage-Based Urban Development (based on meTamodel HeRitage deVElopment)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

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#### Declarations

##### Competing interests

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