

Cultural heritage and sustainable development in SUIT

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The paper is composed of 18 thesis, which are presented in four groups:

- Cultural heritage
- Monuments and public space
- Active conservation
- Sustainable development

Cultural heritage

1. Risks and threats for urban historical areas

Risks and threats for urban historical areas, urban spaces and structures do generally not concern outstanding objects. In most cases these objects are legally protected and they are often more threatened by the intensive over-use due to their exclusivity. The main risks arise from the loss of density, historic nature, complexity and quality of urban historical areas as such. Speculative developments, driven by short term interests, menace the substance and identity of European towns by trying to take advantage of their historic nature as "context" or as "background".

2. From cultural heritage to architectural heritage

The issue of the cultural value of buildings has been associated mainly with the conservation of individual monuments and historic urban fragments. Developments over the last 20 years

have shown that significant urban qualities, which are independent of monument and site protection issues, are disappearing. The notion of cultural heritage has been extended gradually from individual buildings to the architectural heritage and the building stock (patrimoine).

3. Architectural heritage is the long-term memory of a society

Protected monuments amount only to 1-2 % of all buildings. Our perception of the urban environment is determined by the built heritage in its totality. Buildings and cultural landscapes shape the sense of belonging somewhere, of social traditions, of cultural identity of a history spanning centuries. Buildings are material witnesses, which can be questioned and analysed over and over again.

4. The Invisible and the Immaterial

The qualities of many objects and structures cannot be defined through the visible urban appearance (facades, places etc.). It is therefore difficult to take into account the "invisible" when procedures on aesthetics, form and "images" are applied. This is the case of archaeological structures, which have been covered and of infrastructures in general which constitute the "invisible town". One solution might be to include historic cadastres as well as building research

analysis of objects and their construction, which cannot be integrated directly into quantitative evaluations.

5. Cultural tradition is regional

The cultural capital of the European tradition has been based on exchange and international contact since the antique. Despite of that, up to the twentieth century national and above all regional forms of culture have been developed in the built environment in the form of regional building traditions and cultural landscapes. Through modernism the ideal of the international becomes predominant, architecture at the end of the 20th century becomes mass culture, the media world creates an "international Region-folklore" whose products replace, at least in the public understanding, monuments.

Monuments and public space

6. The evolving role of (monument) conservation and economy of resources

The traditional preservation of cultural heritage through the protection of historical monuments must be integrated in a larger strategy of sustainable management of the building stock, which in turn must be considered as an integrated part of the cultural heritage. This does not take away any of the traditional obligations of monument preservation. It does only avoid that monument conservation is used in an opportunistic way to prevent undesirable urban developments. Many developments cannot be rationally discussed because there is no clear urban strategy and no integrated value system for the management of building stocks and urban fragments. In a differentiated strategy of the management of the built environment, monument conservation will continue to assure that particularly important buildings survive in their

present (or maybe past) form. Other parts of the building stock will be managed by taking into account their long-term quality of use as well as their economic, ecological and social value. In practice, monument conservation techniques, which make possible a long-term preservation, can be of use to other parts of the stock if they can be adapted to present constructive needs and professional qualifications.

7. Outstanding monuments attract developers

Cultural objects are leading objects for societal and political consensus ("world cultural heritage"). Through the privatisation of public cultural goods, monuments are endangered through commercialisation, depreciation through overuse (in particular through the tourism industry). Life Style and Event Marketing create and use cultural myths and cult-objects. Historical town centres are endangered through projects that use the historical aura and the familiar images. By doing so they destroy the historic substance which is transformed into publicity.

8. The market of the post-industrial world will be culture

Cultural production will become one of the leading sectors in the post-industrial economy. Products will be more and more transformed into "experiences". Tourism has become more and more commercial entertainment reducing monuments and urban settings to decoration. The commercialisation of the access to cultural resources risks to lead to an over exploitation and destruction of cultural resources, comparable to the exploitation of natural resources.

9. Public space is privatised

Public space has been community property for hundreds of years. It was the place where the

creation of market capital was secondary to the creation of social capital. Public space is the arena where all social classes could develop and reproduce culture in all its forms. The ongoing privatisation of public space takes different forms (car-traffic, shopping centres, entertainment districts etc.) and continues the erosion of neighbourhood and community that defines the urban culture. It adds to the disintegration and flattening of place. Everywhere becomes the same as everywhere else. Community becomes commodity.

10. The traditional instruments of public policy fail - the long-term perspective disappears

The reduced margins of public budgets are compensated through "public private partnerships". Deregulation of public action is supposed to solve the problems of the shrinking revenue of the public administration. The result in both cases is negative for the architectural heritage. The long term perspective (and responsibility) of the public service, in particular through his administrative body, progressively disappears. The growing social (external) costs are hidden. Traditional planing procedures are abandoned and replaced by short term, ad hoc mechanisms with diminishing public (democratic) control.

Active conservation

11. Traditional conservation policy

A weak point of the traditional conservation policies of the built heritage is its incapacity to protect heritage buildings from damages caused by inappropriate developments in their close surrounding. The extension of the protection zone through a buffer risks transforming the zone in a historic open-air museum with subsequent risks of social segregation through gentrification. The

alternative would be to take into consideration the architectural heritage in itself and to develop strategies to foster an appropriate long-term development of the urban fabric, integrating ecological as well as economic, social and cultural aspects. "Active conservation" will allow the protection of urban areas by protecting the vital social and economic mechanism of towns through history, which have been and can be again the origin and matrix of all monuments.

12. Public participation and experts

A number of European cities and communes have decided to develop individual measures to further approach a sustainable development within cities. Public participation is vital, as the inhabitants are those best acquainted to the problems of the environment surrounding them. It is generally acknowledged that towns are 'living' systems, involving social dynamics, technical and building networks and the presence of people living there. Historical evidence suggests that for their sound conservation they must be kept within sustainable development activity cycles. Concerning cultural heritage there has often been a time lag between expert judgements and public acceptance. The task of monument conservation bodies in the last half of the 20th century has been to defend also the unwanted and unliked part of the cultural heritage against elimination and disappearance. To day "Active conservation" has to express and take into account both the historical, long perspective, judgements of experts and public participation as well as powerful economic interests in exploiting the cultural heritage.

13. Urban form and historical meaning

In the 70 ties of the 20 Th. century the fracture of modernism has led to the abandon of the vision of the heroic modern which sacrificed the grown historical town structure for a car based, low

density sprawl like town. The reestablishment of the acceptance of historical urban structures has often been communicated through an aesthetic discourse on urban form beside references to historical events. As long as the appreciation of urban morphological phenomena cannot be related to historical meaning, immaterial qualities, authenticity and resource conservation (in a large sense) it cannot be integrated in long term, active conservation efforts.

Sustainable development

14. Cultural diversity and bio-diversity

Traditional approaches of the protection of the environment were concentrated on limiting the impacts on the natural and to a certain degree social and cultural environment. The perspective was essentially repair and short-term oriented. In the longer (intergenerational) time frames of sustainable development, resource and diversity issues become predominant. The protection of environmental, economic, social and cultural resources is linked and can draw on common definitions of resources. The conservation of diversity in its different forms becomes a central long-term objective which must be based on a dynamic integration. Through their historic diversity, quality and continuity the building stock and the urban continuity constitute non-renewable resources. Urban culture is intrinsically sustainable and has a high stability. It is the result of the accumulated investments of generations in the urban environment. The better we understand how to administer and develop these investments, the stronger the urban environment will become.

15. The speed of transformation

The speed of transformation is certainly one of the key parameters of sustainable urban development. Towns, cities, urban contexts have historically

evolved with a certain speed. There have been faster and slower developments, but the overall relatively low speed allowed at the same time a conservation of resources and a cultural continuity, which could be understood by the inhabitants and allowed an identification or created it. There has always been a difference between the time constants of the establishment of basic infrastructure (decades and centuries) and of their use (decades). The underlying physical transformation of the built environment (as expressed by different energy and mass-flow levels as well as by the overall appearance, stays within limits even if these limits evolve slowly over time. Recent developments show that when those limits are passed urban historical areas either become unstable and enigmatic when the speed of transformation is too high - or they perish by dereliction when the speed of transformation is too low.

16. Solution corridor instead of optimisation

Towns, cities and urban contexts have historically evolved with a certain speed that allowed a cultural continuity which is understood by the inhabitants and which allows identification or creates identification. The physical transformation of towns (as expressed by different flows - energy, massflow, biotope transformation, monetary flows, transport flows etc.) can be described as taking place within a time corridor. Beyond the limits of this corridor, urban historical areas either become unstable and enigmatic or they perish (dereliction). Acceptable solutions can be situated within such a corridor composed of a past, historic, a present and a future (simulation, scenario) part. "Active conservation" can be defined as a set of methods, tools and heuristics that allow us to keep the urban development within a corridor of sustainable development.

17. Cultural and material parameters

The generic difficulty to take into consideration cultural dimensions within economic, social and ecological evaluation frameworks and participation structures, resides in the difficulty that only some cultural aspects can be characterised through material parameters. The objective cannot be to "integrate" cultural values inside such frameworks, but to enlarge the scope of the evaluation in such a way that cultural and historic dimensions can be recognised. This can be achieved through the recognition of additional properties:

- time (age, history, historical dynamic)
- complexity (complexity of different historical dimensions)
- quality (of the parts, materials, architecture and construction)
- signification (including immaterial dimensions)

- resource value (material, use value, bequest value)

18. The evolution of EIA and SEA

The urban historical areas or urban fragments are considered in their temporal and spatial continuity as complex resources. This understanding and appreciation needs new instruments. They go further than classical Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) i.e. assessment of the effects of a proposed new activity or development on the environment and its strategic extension, (SEA). The urban historical area is not only to be considered as an environment (in a large sense) which is to be protected against impacts, but as a starting point, a complex resource which evolves over a long time frame. The objective is not only to minimise the impacts over a short period but to maximise the value of the resource in a long-term (historical, cultural) perspective.

Acknowledgments

This position paper has been prepared in the framework of the SUIT project - Sustainable development of Urban historical areas through an active Integration within Towns. The SUIT project is supported by the EU Program "Environment and Sustainable Development", Key Action 4: The City of Tomorrow and Cultural Heritage, Theme 4.2.3: Foster Integration of Cultural Heritage in the Urban Setting. The SUIT contract number is EVK4-CT-2000-00017.