HerO Heritage as Opportunity

The Untapped Potential of Cultural Heritage
STRATEGY PAPER

EUROPEAN association Historic Towns & Regions

AN URBACT II PROJECT

FAST TRACK NETWORK

For the HerO Network: Matthias Ripp, Norbert Deitelhoff and Nils Scheffler
For the European Association of Historic Towns & Regions: Brian Smith

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URBACT is a European exchange and learning pro-
gramme promoting sustainable urban development.
It enables cities to work together to develop solutions
to major urban challenges, reaffirming the key role
they play in facing increasingly complex societal
challenges. It helps them to develop pragmatic solu-
tions that are new and sustainable, and that
integrate economic, social and environmental
dimensions. It enables cities to share good practices
and lessons learned with all professionals involved
in urban policy throughout Europe. URBACT is 181
cities, 29 countries, and 5,000 active participants.
URBACT is co-financed by the ERDF Funds and the
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European Union
European Regional Development Fund

The URBACT II Network HerO - Heritage as Opportunity

The URBACT II thematic network HerO aims to develop integrated and innovative management strategies for historic urban landscapes. The main objective is facilitating the right balance between the preservation of built cultural heritage and the sustainable, future-proof socio-economic development of historic towns in order to strengthen their attractiveness and competitiveness. Emphasis is placed on managing conflicting usage interests and capitalising the potential of cultural heritage assets for economic, social and cultural activities (Heritage as Opportunity).

The HerO partner cities are Regensburg (Germany, Lead Partner), Graz (Austria), Naples (Italy), Vilnius (Lithuania), Sighişoara (Romania), Liverpool (United Kingdom), Lublin (Poland), Poitiers (France) and Valletta (Malta).

The Old Town of Regensburg, Germany (Photograph: City of Regensburg)

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The European Association of Historic Towns & Regions

The HerO network cooperates closely with the European Association of Historic Towns and Regions (EAHTR), an organization formed by the Council of Europe in 1999 that represents almost one thousand historic towns in Europe. EAHTR aims to promote the interests of Europe's historic cities through international cooperation between heritage organisations and historic towns, sharing experience and good practice between historic towns and promoting vitality, viability and sustainable management of historic towns and cities. Amongst others, EAHTR organises international symposia, leads and participates in European projects, establishes guidelines on topics relevant for historic urban areas and organises study visits to European historic towns.

The fruitful cooperation between EAHTR and the HerO network stimulates the project work of HerO, and allows the HerO partners to capitalize on the experiences of other historic towns in Europe. Furthermore it facilitates a wide dissemination of the HerO project's results among the EAHTR member cities.

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Albert Dock, Liverpool (Photograph: Liverpool City Council)
Liverpool is partner in the HerO network and EAHTR member city

THE UNTAPPED POTENTIAL OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

A CATALYST FOR SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND AN INTERNATIONALLY COMPETITIVE EUROPE

This paper makes the case for a strong urban dimension as part of EU Cohesion Policy with a special focus on cultural heritage and historic urban landscapes. It calls for support for and investment in integrated and sustainable urban development to ensure Europe's historic towns and cities are attractive places to live, work and invest in, fully able to respond to the global challenges of the 21st century and beyond.

Approximately 80% of both the European Union's population and its economic activity are concentrated in its towns and cities. These urban areas have invariably existed for centuries, often fulfilling a wide range of inter related functions and roles - drivers of economic development, centres of knowledge and innovation, focal points of creativity and culture as well as places of social inclusion and integration. While these towns and cities are where Europe's most complex and common problems are concentrated they are also crucially where its future potential on the world stage will be realised.

In this respect the importance of Europe's towns and cities needs to remain firmly embedded in EU policy as having a central role to play in achieving the revised Lisbon and Gothenburg objectives. This however requires the EU exploiting these opportunities at the local level through support for towns and cities - based on an in depth understanding of how all urban areas can and do contribute to realising Europe's full potential economically, socially and environmentally.

However what has been largely overlooked to date is that the towns and cities that give Europe its international identity, economic vitality and social cohesion - whether they be national capitals, regional centres or cultural hubs - are all, inter alia, in large part historic or heritage cities whose character derives substantially from the urban quality of their historic urban landscapes. It is this unique character that encourages Europe's citizens and businesses to identify and engage with "their" city and offers "ideal" conditions to develop participative, integrative and sustainable strategies. Yet despite this vital contribution to achieving the aims of the European Sustainable Development Strategy and the renewed Lisbon Strategy the cultural heritage dimension is not explicitly recognised at the strategic level in current community policies on urban areas set out for the period 2007-2013.

Title: Regensburg, Germany (Photograph: Nürnberg Luftbild, Hajo Dietz)

This page: Street in Valletta, Malta (Photograph: Thomas Karpati)

At the same time these historic cities are facing unprecedented challenges as a consequence of globalisation and technological change and will increasingly need support if their untapped potential is to be realised. We therefore submit that there is an overwhelming case for urban cultural heritage to be recognised as a thematic field in EU policy development beyond 2013. Specifically we would urge the EU to adopt the following recommendations.

Recommendation 1:
Priority should be given to securing integrated urban development with urban cultural heritage at its heart.

Integrated approaches - in comparison to sectoral approaches - serve to link, balance and coordinate the economic, social, ecological and cultural needs of Europe's towns and cities with the needs of its citizens and users to achieve sustainable, livable, attractive and competitive cities.

Within this integrated approach cultural heritage should be recognised as a cross cutting and integrating theme for achieving social, economic, but also environmentally sustainable urban development. Liverpool is a good example of a large city which based its contemporary urban development strategy on its historic cultural heritage as a main driver to overcome the impacts of structural change due to industrial decline. Today it can be seen as an attractive, innovative and competitive city for its citizens, local businesses and investors. Integrated cultural heritage management strategies could be considered as prime examples for sustainable urban development as mentioned in Art. 8 ERDF regulations.
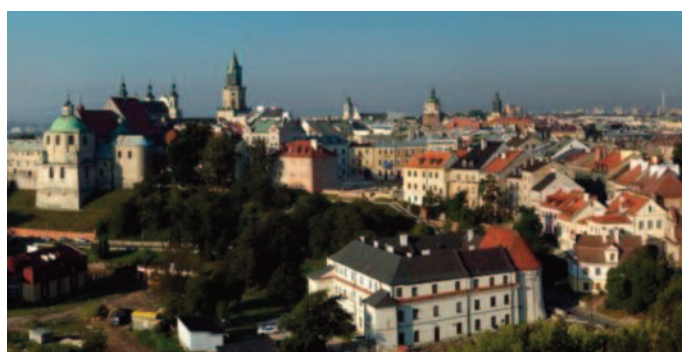
We therefore call on the European commission to promote integrated urban development approaches as a central requirement of all EU and national policy for urban areas.

Liverpool ONE, a shopping, residential and leisure centre in Liverpool city centre, opened in 2008 (Photograph: Nils Scheffler)

Recommendation 2:
Urban cultural heritage should be an integral part of the European Cohesion Policy and programs as well of the national and regional operational programs.

A coherent European Cultural Heritage strategy within the European Cohesion Policy is needed to provide effective guidance to EU institutions and member states on realising the potential wide ranging benefits from investing in heritage. The development of integrated cultural heritage management strategies could be considered for example as prime examples for sustainable urban development. Evidence and case study examples of the benefits of investing in heritage can also be found in the Interreg funded project INHERIT.

The Old Town of Lublin, Poland (Photograph: City of Lublin)

We therefore call on the European Commission to develop a cultural heritage strategy as part of the development of wider European policies for competitiveness, growth and social cohesion. The strategy should be based primarily on cities as proven engines for improved national and European growth and competitiveness.

The strategy should form the basis and inform the design of EU, national and regional (operational) programs in which cultural heritage policies and projects as proposed in Recommendation 1 are incorporated. These programs should in particular encourage cities, regions and states
- to include culture heritage as a part of their urban strategies for growth and competitiveness
- to incorporate cultural heritage assets in integrated urban development approaches and programs as it is done for example through the HerO Cultural Heritage Integrated Management Plans (CHIMPs),
- to support national and transnational cooperation, networking and capacity-building for sharing and disseminating experiences, knowledge and good practices, improving performances in integrated cultural heritage led urban development for attractive and competitive cities. One good example for it is the URBACT program, which amongst others finances the HerO network.

Recommendation 3:
Priority should be given to the integration of European Funding Schemes and National Funding Programs.

EU funding schemes support the development of strategies and concepts on local level, but the implementation of these is not necessarily supported by national and regional funding schemes. For example through the HerO project the partners develop actions plans to capitalise on their cultural heritage for urban development. But, in particular in Eastern European countries, for example, there is an absense of policies and funding schemes within the operational programs to support the implementation of these actions. As good example, where the link between the EU and national/regional funding scheme is provided, is the city of Naples, where the ERDF funds are available for the implementation of integrated concepts for the regeneration of historic centres.

We therefore call on the Euroopean Commission, in supporting integrated urban development based on urban heritage assets, to also ensure the integration of European Funding Programs and National Funding Programs. In doing so complementary use of different funding schemes should be made possible for urban cultural heritage.

Pilies Street in Vilnius, Lithuania (Photograph: Jurate Raugaliene)

Recommendation 4:
Stronger participation and involvement of historic cities in policy development and evaluation of programs addressing cultural heritage.

The stakeholders addressed by EU and national policies and programs need to be involved in their development as they are responsible for the implementation of it. One good example for such is the involvement of the stakeholders in the development process of the European cultural heritage label, in which HerO cities participate.

We therefore call on the European Commission to ensure that historic towns are involved in the decision making process of integrated urban cultural heritage policies and programs and their implementation at EU and national levels.

This should include a coherent set of principles connected to long term programs and funding schemes. These policies and programs should reflect a shift from sectoral urban regeneration concepts towards integrated urban development approaches based on cultural heritage. We understand the challenge this represents in practice and would encourage the European Commission to utilise the European Association of Historic Towns which currently represents 1000 historic cities as a practical way of facilitating one conversation on the needs of European historic cities.

The Citadel of Sighişoara, Romania
(Photograph: Municipality of Sighişoara)