

The Road to Success - A New Approach to the Management of Historic Towns

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS



The HerO Partner City Valletta in Malta (© Thomas Hardy Karpáti)



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The Historic Docks of Liverpool (© English Heritage)

‘Heritage needs to be seen as a strategic opportunity; locally, nationally and at the European level. This requires a new integrated approach to the sustainable management of historic towns - one that is policy led with a clear focus on access to resources and effective project delivery.’

The Untapped Potential of Urban Cultural Heritage in Europe

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 part historic or heritage cities whose character derives substantially from the quality of their historic urban landscapes.

These 'historic' towns and cities are the context within which much of Europe's most important physical cultural heritage is experienced and enjoyed by citizens and visitors. It is this unique character that encourages Europe's citizens and businesses to identify and engage with 'their' city and underlines the importance of cultural heritage as a key resource capable of developing participative, integrative and sustainable urban strategies; a resource whose untapped potential can act as catalyst for sustainable urban development and an internationally competitive Europe.

Yet to date historic towns have been largely overlooked by the European Commission at the strategic policy level and as such have not been seen as a priority when EU structural funds have been allocated from either the ERDF or ESF funding programmes. If historic towns are to successfully access these funds - currently approximately 350million euros - then a new approach is needed.

In this context a strategy paper has been submitted to the EU (1)

The HerO project has developed such an approach and tested its effectiveness through 19 pilot projects with a total volume of more than 100million Euros. This methodology is explained below with clear steps as to how historic towns can fully realise the potential of their cultural heritage.

A New Approach to the Management of Historic Towns

The HerO project has developed a new management approach designed to enable cultural heritage to act as a catalyst for sustainable development through the preparation of 'Integrated Cultural Heritage Management Plans'.

Detailed information on the methodology developed is set out in the HerO Guidebook (2)

A Cultural Heritage Management Plan is an innovative policy led approach to planning historic areas which will help decision makers effectively manage historic urban areas as attractive, competitive and multifunctional places. This integrated approach aims to balance and coordinate cultural heritage needs with the needs of the 'users' of the historic urban area as well as the interests of governmental bodies.

Cultural Heritage interacts in particular with a wide range of local authority functions and responsibilities, most obviously urban planning including economic development and infrastructure renewal as well as preservation, tourism, culture and museums. An integrated approach is therefore needed to avoid the problems and conflicts that commonly are the result of more traditional and narrow sectoral approaches.

To be successful Cultural Heritage Management Plans need to set out a clear integrated strategy with tangible

objectives and deliverable actions as well as put in place inter-disciplinary and inter-agency structures with the technical and management skills and capacity needed to both safeguard the cultural heritage and fully realise its wider potential as a community and development asset.

Successful integrated approaches have been implemented for example in the cities of Graz, Liverpool and Regensburg. From these case studies and the overall work of the HerO project we have identified the key ingredients that lead to realising benefits on the ground.

More information on case studies can be found in the Good-Practice-Compilation (3)

The Road to Success

1. Make Cultural Heritage a Top Political Priority

Local and regional authorities need to 'value' their heritage if its potential to deliver sustainable regeneration is to be realised. This means firstly understanding the character and identity of their town, city or region and then ensuring a heritage policy central to the corporate policy of the authority.

Leadership is a critical determinant of success especially political leadership - ensuring stakeholders are brought together, resources allocated and a clear vision sustained over the long term. Investment by the local and regional authorities - only possible where cultural heritage is a top political priority - can act as an important catalyst for further investment from the private sector and from other public funds including EU structural funds.

2. Develop an 'Integrated' Approach

It is only through a high level 'visible' commitment to integrated approaches that cross sectoral objectives, actions and policies within the Cultural Heritage Management Plan can be achieved in practice. This requires not only political leadership but the engagement of senior management within the municipality committed to overcoming sectoral or departmental self interest. A 'champion' from the senior management team is therefore crucial to driving forward the corporate vision as an integral part of the management plan with cultural heritage as a central priority.

In this way the successful valorisation of cultural heritage can be achieved as has been shown for example in the City of Liverpool.



The Old Town of Graz (© Stadtvermessung Graz / Bildflug 2010)

3. Engage with Stakeholders

It is important that the differing needs of the wide range of stakeholders that have a legitimate interest in using, protecting and investing in cultural heritage are fully recognised and integrated into the Cultural Heritage Management Plan decision making process.

In practice this means developing a vision, objectives and actions that are supported by the inhabitants and users of the historic urban area and designed to address their needs. By engaging with stakeholders in this way a coordinated and balanced approach can be developed that is sustainable over time, reinforces local identity and as such is capable of delivering tangible benefits to the local community.



Integrated working group, Regensburg (© Peter Ferstl, City of Regensburg)

4. Focus on Action and Delivery

Whether the valorisation of Cultural Heritage is viewed as successful or not will be mainly judged in practice by the quality of the implemented actions and outcomes on the ground, rather than simply the availability of a well produced Cultural Heritage Management Plan. To help guarantee successful implementation it is therefore important to ensure, for example, that the Cultural Heritage Management Plan has secured political and community support; that a project delivery structure is in place with clearly allocated responsibilities and, crucially, that project funding has been identified and is in place when needed. A useful mechanism has been found to be the preparation of a local action plan which sets out detailed actions proposed and how they will be delivered.

On the issue of funding, close liaison with Managing Authorities will be a key part of developing projects in the right way and in sufficient detail, to secure financial support from the EU structural funds. The HerO case studies offer an important guide as to how to achieve this in practice.

See the List of HerO
Flagship Projects funded
by structural funds (4)



ERDF-funded museum 'document Schnupftabakfabrik' (Snuff Tobacco Factory) in Regensburg (© Peter Ferstl, City of Regensburg)

Lastly it is inevitable that circumstances will change over time yet few approaches to cultural heritage-led development monitor progress, evaluate lessons learned or adapt the management strategy to ensure delivery stays on track. A key aspect of focusing on action and delivery is the establishment early in the process of a monitoring and indicator scheme designed to provide timely information on progress, allowing the plan to adapt to change as necessary.

Recognise Heritage as an Opportunity

Cultural Heritage can be perceived as a constraint to regeneration; a limiting or burdensome preoccupation with the past that stifles innovation and progress. Nothing could be further from the truth - to the contrary cultural heritage, as the HerO project has demonstrated offers Europe's historic towns a unique competitive advantage. Heritage should be recognised as an important opportunity whose full potential in social, environmental and economic terms has yet to be fully realised.

It has been recognised at the historic town level as well as at national and European levels that a new approach to the management of historic towns is needed if this untapped potential of cultural heritage is to be widely translated into tangible benefits on the ground. The HerO project has risen to that challenge providing invaluable evidence based case studies as well as practical recommendations that have been shown to work in practice. By identifying the key elements that can lead to success these recommendations will hopefully help provide practical guidance and advice to inspire leaders of historic towns to invest in their heritage and adopt the integrated cultural heritage management plan approach. Heritage needs to be seen as a strategic opportunity; locally, nationally and at the European level. This requires a new integrated approach to the sustainable management of historic towns - one that is policy led with a clear focus on access to resources and effective project delivery.

HerO Recommendations

We commend this new approach to all Europe's Mayors of historic towns and ask you to adopt the following 4 key HerO recommendations:

1. Make cultural heritage a top political priority ensuring local and regional authorities value their heritage providing leadership to local stakeholders within their communities and helping secure the right environment to attract investment.
2. Develop a Cultural Heritage Management Plan using the integrated HerO methodology ensuring senior management drive forward corporate policy on cultural heritage and are committed to overcoming sectoral or departmental resistance to an integrated approach.
3. Engage politically and managerially with stakeholders and the local community to ensure public support for the cultural heritage strategy and management plan and thereby develop a coordinated and balanced approach that is sustainable over time.
4. Focus on action and project delivery ensuring consistent political and managerial support and commitment; work with managing authorities to secure EU and other funding is in place and develop monitoring and evaluation processes that enable the management plan to adapt to changing circumstances.

Remember: use your cultural heritage as an opportunity and build on the lessons learned from the HerO Project!

The Old Town of Regensburg (© Nürnberg Luftbild, Hajo Dietz)

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(1) Smith, Brian; Scheffler, Nils; Deitelhoff, Norbert; Ripp, Matthias / City of Regensburg (2010): The Untapped Potential of Cultural Heritage - Strategy Paper. Urbact II Project HerO - Heritage as Opportunity. Regensburg

(2) City of Regensburg (Editor) (2011): Scheffler, Nils: The Road to success - A New Approach to the Management of Historic Towns. Urbact II Project HerO - Heritage as Opportunity. Regensburg

(3) Scheffler, Nils (2009): Good-Practice-Compilation. Urbact II Project HerO - Heritage as Opportunity. Regensburg

(4) List of HerO Flagship Projects, February 2010

All documents can be found on the HerO Website: www.urbact.eu/hero.

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AN URBACT II PROJECT

URBACT is a European exchange and learning programme 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 solutions 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 300 cities, 29 countries, and 5,000 active participants. URBACT is co-financed by the ERDF Funds and the Member States.

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