



BUILT HERITAGE AND URBAN PLANNING

OVERALL AIM:

***Gaining knowledge of the main approaches
for preserving built heritage in cities***



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Built heritage and urban planning: different approaches

- In several countries urbanisation and urban planning resulted in vast destruction of built cultural heritage in order to create a 'tabula rasa' and restructure the city
- In recent years a more conservative approach has emerged through two different approaches:
 - Conservation that wants to preserve buildings to keep their information values;
 - Revitalisation that wants to preserve the sense of place that is created by the old buildings (through using historicised design in new buildings rather than constructing the new buildings in a contemporary style)

Built heritage and urban regeneration

- Cultural heritage is an important part of societal and community well-being.
- National governments and pan-European institutions increasingly recognise the value of cultural heritage.
- Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (CoE, 2005) sanctioned importance of cultural heritage to sustainable development
- the built environment carries important meanings from one generation to the next, and serves as a one repository of cultural meanings.

Built heritage and urban regeneration

- In literature built cultural heritage in an urban context often focus on issues such as ‘tourism’, ‘sustainability’, ‘gentrification’, ‘adaptive re-use’ or ‘regeneration’.
- urban heritage can be used as a mechanism to achieve urban regeneration.
- The instrumental use of heritage in regeneration is a global phenomenon, often linked into both strategies seeking to develop so-called cultural industries and a process of ‘place-making’,

How to plan the historic city centres?

- In the course of an initial stage – the second half of the 19th century and the early decades of the 20th century – the ancient city was essentially perceived as an obstacle to modernity
- City planners had to face the problem of how to remodel the forms of the city inherited from the past to be consistent with the needs of the modern city: how to adapt the old city to the new.
- The interventions envisaged proposed an in-depth redefinition of the urban organisation (e.g. Haussmann's planning in Paris), a restructuring of the pre-existing urban fabric to fit the newly added parts.
- Open space – the road network – constituted the focus of the city planning intervention, while historic built-up space was perceived as a malleable material, ready to undergo the transformations imposed by the new setup.

How to plan the historic city centres ?

- The years that followed the second world war saw a drastic change in the urban planning approach for the pre-existing city.
- The city of the past – identified with the notion of ‘historic centre’ – was now viewed as a legacy to be preserved: a ‘unitary monument’ to be retained in its integrity
- Urban planners started working for protecting the historic city structures from the aggression of the modern city.
- The urban plan for the historic centre tends to turn into a special plan where technical-design guidelines have been set up.
- Built-up space is no longer perceived as something that can be freely manipulated and, to some extent, sacrificed, conversely it had to be preserved in its totality and integrity.

Built heritage and urban regeneration: The Italian experience

- The Italian approach to plan for the historic city centres has been recognized as peculiar, in particular if compared with the replacement policies of urban renewal
- In the period that went from the unification of the country through WWII, in Italy, the urban plan was primarily focused on reconciling the historic parts of a city with the new districts and to adapt the ancient urban fabrics to the necessities of 'contemporary life'.
- The interventions on existing buildings and materials (throughout the 19th century and the early decades of the 20th century) were largely characterised by restructuring the urban layout, by demolishing and, possibly, rebuilding pieces of the historic built-up space.
- At the turn of the 19th century, rectifications and alignments seen in the previous period began to be flanked, and contaminated, by techniques arising from the historic-artistic culture as city planning gradually came to be acknowledged as a discipline in its own right
- The notion that the historic city was a heritage to be preserved translated, first of all, into the concept of monument and the technique of isolation as the procedure to be used to underscore the value thereof

Built heritage and urban regeneration: The Italian experience

- The aim to preserve and enhance the value of elements of architectural significance found expression through interventions whereby minor constructions were removed from all around the monument, thereby creating a 'free' perimeter around elements that were perceived as nodes in the spatial organisation of the city and/or as landmarks in the new urban landscape.
- At the beginning of the 20th century, a gradual awareness that historic sites are relevant not only for the artistic significance of monuments and main buildings but also for their historic value as a whole led to a new perspective that was critic against demolitions and isolations
- new techniques based on punctual interventions that minimised the scale of the demolition have been applied to the existing built-up space, shifting from preservation approaches reserved only for a few monumental artworks to a preservation of entire historical blocks and neighbourhoods

Built heritage and urban regeneration: The Italian experience

- an understanding of the historic centre as a ‘unitary monument’ to be preserved in its entirety prevailed over the position of preserving only few Min buildings
- The post-WWII period and the 1960s in particular are identified by many authors as a turning point in the principles of urban planning for the existing city. That period has seen as the time when “Historic centres were born.”
- the disputes between the advocates of different reconstruction styles – whether in style, modern or defined according to a more interesting theory of blending into the environment and pre-existing elements – now over, the notion of ‘historic centre’ came to the fore.

Built heritage and urban regeneration: The Italian experience

- This concept delimited a portion of the city that hosted an ancient building heritage (making it into a specific element in the zoning plan), providing for a widespread restoration and rehabilitation process geared to the preservation of the existing structures, while at the same time subjecting the more ambitious renovation projects to a more stringent control
- This area became the room of preservation for significant historical buildings and city layout, and was preserved from the normal cycle of urban transformation

Built heritage and urban regeneration: The Italian case study

- The technical procedures conceived for the protection of the historic centre were essentially designed:
 - to identify the recursive and characterising aspects of the urban fabric
 - to enhance the role of architectural rules governing the mutual interactions of the different urban materials, according to relationships regarded as qualifying elements in a built up context

Planning the historic city today

- More recent urban plans have challenged the schematic notion of the historic centre as a uniform, indivisible block
- historical significance becomes an instrument through which value is assigned, a discriminant used to recognise those portions of the urban territory that own specific connotative features, with a view to promoting an active improvement in the contemporary organisation of the urban fabric
- within this new framework, the value attributed to the historic centres cannot prescind from identifying a specific role within the contemporary city planning,
- the plan for the historic city should take into account all parts of the existing city
- It means to understand its character as a resource for the entire contemporary city: a potential that may, or may not, help achieving liveability and vitality in the city as a whole

Planning the historic city today

- Therefore talking about historic centres, especially as Italian historic centres are concerned, means to consider parts that are not reproducible, but at the same time are a typical presence in the urban palimpsest
- The traditional approach to the planning of historic city centres, essentially shaped around planning regulations, has been met with general dissatisfaction.
- traditional planning tools have shown low operativeness and lack of integration, due to a 'passive' regime of urban planning tools which are unable to trigger an actual transformation

Planning the historic city today

- The range of problems to be addressed in the historic centres are:
 - depopulation,
 - exodus of inhabitants and businesses,
 - disuse of and deterioration of facilities,
 - marginalisation (through concentration of elderly, poor and/or immigrant population groups),
 - combined with gentrification and expulsion of weak people,
 - replacement, specialisation and functional (tertiary and commercial) homogenisation
- These problems require the use of a different and broader range of instruments.

Planning the historic city today

- In this framework, the “Urban” EC Programme has been a structured innovation experiment
- By integrating physical, social and economic measures affecting the target contexts, these complex programmes revealed their innovative character precisely on account of “their capacity to activate human energies and financial resources, alongside original physical transformation methods and techniques, in contrast with the interventions implemented during the previous century, whose innovative content relied on (and sometimes solely on) the latter aspect

Planning the historic city today

- in Italy, the most emblematic recent historic centre regeneration experience conducted according to a 'strategic' and 'integrated' perspective was that of Genoa.
- The programme for the historic centre set out within the framework of the plan for the city, where it constitutes its explicit core, has been collected in a specific document, referred to as the "Operational Plan for the Historic Centre"
- The action for the historic centre was characterised by the capacity to coordinate different funding channels, especially those relating to the 'major events'
- The regeneration of the historic centre of Genoa is reflected in a parallel increase in property values: while this may be viewed as a positive factor and a success indicator for the urban policies adopted, on the other hand, it outlines the boundaries of a gentrification phenomenon, which, albeit non homogeneous, will inevitably usher in new problems (social polarisation, conflicts between provisional population groups and resident 'gentrifiers' regarding the utilisation of the historic centre, in terms of time and space)

Heritage and Regeneration in practice

- The European Council of Town Planners has developed an overview of practical recommendations for planners on how to contribute to sustainable development in spatial planning in day-to-day practice
- ECTP-CEU. Try This Way. Sustainable Development at the Local Level
- The guide addresses different aspects of sustainable development in relation to spatial planning. These aspects are: water, air and noise, soil and land, nature and ecology, transport and accessibility, energy, waste, **heritage and regeneration**, risk and hazard, and social quality.

Heritage and Regeneration in practice

- Urban development is a continuous process of transformation from the past to the future.
- Cultural heritage embodying the beliefs and values of inhabitants, focuses on the maintaining of artefacts, structures and patterns.
- Urban regeneration regards the rehabilitation of existing structures, redevelopment of existing buildings and sites, or the re-use of urban land; it often concerns derelict or contaminated land.
- Spatial development offers opportunities for - as well as threats to - cultural heritage. Both cultural heritage and urban regeneration are at the heart of planners' activity.

Heritage and Regeneration in practice

- How to deal with **historic patterns**
 - Consider characteristic existing patterns and structures as essential components of local heritage and cultural identity.
 - Restore landscape patterns such as old roads, paths, water flows and areas of ecological value in urban regeneration plans.
 - Create a relation between new expansion and existing urban structures, thus fostering continuity.

Heritage and Regeneration in practice

- How to deal with **Existing elements**
 - Collect information and study specific architecture, urban traditional local features, archaeological and cultural historic elements (old buildings, mills) in urban and rural neighbourhood areas.
 - Take care of existing historical elements when planning new functions and try to maintain old buildings.
 - Integrate existing monuments and important trees in the plans.
 - Promote the use of ecological principles in relation to water, waste and energy when redesigning old buildings for new uses.
 - Prolong the life of structures by multi-functional and flexible design.

Heritage and Regeneration in practice

- How to deal with **Spatial quality of public spaces**
- Consider historic remnants as an essential element for urban design.
- Apply urban design guidelines considering issues such as street and plot layouts, mix of land-uses, landmarks and skylines, open spaces and images and associations or shared memories (history) of the place.
- Consider, if possible, local social and cultural traditions when planning the transformation of a site.
- Maintain or re-use existing pavements (stones, cubes, slabs, etc.) especially to pave squares and pedestrian streets.
- Plan ponds within built up areas; they constitute a mirror surface to reflect architectural structures surrounding and spanning them



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