

What is an integrated approach? The role of cities and the value of Historic Urban Landscape

Historic towns make up a special category of our heritage, where the past determines present-day development. It is no coincidence that almost half of the cultural places on the UNESCO World Heritage List are urban sites. The city is not only an idea and form, but also a function and process.

A fundamental issue, at once a controversial one in city management, is the conflict between form and function. The city is primarily a living organism. A measure of urban development is the speed and complexity of the changes that affect it. Today's urbanization is characterized by an unprecedented dynamism and scale of growth. Today, as much as 80 percent of city dwellers have come into the city from outside, which makes them place rather than people integrated. This poses a particular challenge to the city's cumulative heritage, and raises questions about its protection.

The rapid transformation of our cities cultural landscape often leads to its degradation: the consequences of market liberalization and decentralization, rapidly progressing since the seventies of the twentieth century. The transition from a passive, static thinking about heritage, understood as a pious approach to relics of the past, to a new urban conservation approach, required to protect heritage in the current realities - inescapable processes of privatisation and the commercialisation of public spaces - requires fundamental changes in the management of heritage potential, especially as it applies to the cultural landscape conservation of historic towns.

The essence of a new philosophy of protecting historical cities should be the harmonious deployment of heritage as a development potential. There is today no doubt, not only that the essence of culture is development, but also that culture is a driver of development.

Cultural heritage is an important part of the urban environment, and should play an important role in the sustainable development of our cities. Every time we consider heritage issues in the urban context, we must identify their particular values and define the rules of sustainable development, in which the needs of the specific historic resources should be taken into account.

Contemporary discourse on the conservation of historic cities is based on the concept of the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL). This is not a new category of protection, but a tool for managing the urban historic resources, in a time of rapid civilizational change. The 2005 Vienna Memorandum was the catalyst of international dialogue on HUL protection; 2005 also marked the beginning of UNESCO's official interest in the issue.

The idea of Historic Urban Landscape does not only imply a revision of the so-called Washington Charter of 1987, but provokes reflection on the complex issue of the conservation of historic cities, in times of rapid civilisational change. The management of heritage potential in historic towns today, requires an interdisciplinary approach, not only from decision-makers, but also from town inhabitants.

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