

PAST: THE INHERITED CITY PRESERVATION OR CHANGE?

INTRODUCTION
TO PART I

> In Europe, cities tend to have a long history. Many cities are ancient, but they have undergone waves of change throughout their existence, through dereliction and replacement, modernisation, regeneration, change of use and function, sometimes violent destruction by humans or nature, sometimes creative destruction by market forces, sometimes by political will. They have also been changed or protected by citizens themselves who care for the places where they live, work or enjoy themselves, places that shape their identity, they may own, and where they feel they belong. Not only their environment but also the meaning and value they attribute to it form part of urban heritage.

HOW TO UNDERSTAND HERITAGE?

> It is necessary to define 'heritage' when deciding how to establish a sustainable balance between heritage and development in cities. In this context heritage is a socio-cultural construct. It acquires meaning in many different ways, by those who receive heritage collectively or individually, or those who attribute meaning to heritage by interacting with existing expressions of the past, by cloning concepts of value from the past, by reinventing values of the past from a present perspective, or by anticipating future values when preserving heritage for future generations in the name of sustainability.

< Heritage in cities consists of material manifestations and meaning, their socially constructed interpretation, and evaluation of how they relate to the notion of heritage. This includes sets of beliefs of professionals, as well as intellectual conventions of dealing with heritage. For example, *Viollet-de-Duc's* interpretation of the Middle Ages in his *'Dictionnaire raisonne de l'architecture'* has greatly influenced the regeneration of medieval buildings for a time.

< Cities may be conceived as heritage as a whole, including past and present dynamic change. However, more commonly heritage tends to relate to specific artefacts or quarters of the city to which different values are attributed over time. For example, the Royal Palace in Warsaw, entirely reconstructed after the Second World War, but according to the then understanding of 'history', acquired a new symbolic value of resistance while losing its function of seat of power held by the monarchy, and in modern Warsaw it constitutes a new determinant element of the city structure. Similarly, the Brandenburg Gate which was erected in 1791 in the west of Berlin's fiscal excise wall containing the city's extension in the 1730s played many different roles. During the Second World War the Nazis used the Gate as a party symbol. It constituted a border gate between the two parts of divided Berlin during the cold war and became a symbolic passage during the fall of the wall. Now heavily renovated it stands for the new status of Berlin as capital of united Germany.

WHOSE HERITAGE ON WHOSE BEHALF?

< The political and ethic issues of heritage are the use of heritage and whom it should benefit. What are the reasons to preserve buildings or urban spaces which have lost their material value or functional uses? Why do cities establish conservation areas and protect individual buildings corroborated by legal frameworks? Current trends may attribute new aesthetic values or landmark qualities to heritage, but attitudes towards heritage are neither universal nor ever lasting.

- In European understanding of cities the worth of preserving cities and architectural heritage has become part of socio-cultural values. However, it is not possible to restore authenticity of the past, because lifestyles have changed and functions have become redundant, which leaves artefacts physically preserved but transformed in terms of use and meaning. Who decides between heritage and development, and what type of regeneration has become a mute point. Market economies focus on commercial values of the historic fabric, such as their contribution to cultural tourism. Regarding long range history, authenticity is an issue as regeneration cannot be literal; for example it is not possible to reinstate slaughter functions in ancient slaughterhouses situated near markets in city centres. Perhaps the most pressing heritage issue of more recent times is the ensuing displacement of those who lived and worked in historic areas and their gentrification when they are earmarked for regeneration. Is this the unavoidable price of preserving historic buildings and cultural values? Or is there a more equitable means to redistribute the benefits of heritage?
- Heritage is not confined to buildings and has a much broader meaning than artefacts. It forms part of the built environment, it encompasses landscapes as well as memory and culture embedded in them, it includes tradition, social and cultural assets, collective memory, and manifestations of acts of creation. Often regeneration is undertaken on behalf of the common good, in contradiction with local groups who claim the right to relate to their spaces and preserve their perceived values. Heritage affects the local economy and the livelihood of those affected by it.
- As values attached to heritage are not universal either in social terms or over time, there will always be a debate about heritage and its merits, as well as about who is exposed to its negative or positive effects which raises an issue of compensation. A case will have to be made for preserving heritage with public funds whose value is declining. Examples are cities created near primary resources, such as

mining towns which are losing their *raison d'être* when raw materials run out and extraction is halted. Some mining towns have been transformed into places of industrial archaeology, but is it possible to preserve every defunct mining town? Other cities in Europe with a mono-functional industrial economy are facing the consequences of structural transformation, such as car manufacturing towns which have lost production to cheaper locations in the developing world. How can or should heritage be treated in such cities and how would it cohabit with development and physical structural change which is needed to revitalise the livelihood of such cities?

TASKS FOR YOUNG PLANNERS PART I

The first task dealt with understanding heritage and how to use or re-use it. This required an understanding of change within the city structure and the role of heritage as one of its important components. The selected study sites in Wrocław have all lost, or are losing their previous value. They require different types of change, related to conflicting land uses, technical problems, physical as well as social deterioration of quality of life, symbolic issues such as the use of the city core and its historic market square. All these aspects were raising a debate about the meaning and usefulness of heritage.

After a study tour through the city showing sites in need of transformation, each team was able to select a site, define its own perception of its problems, its relation to its surroundings and wider implications of its transformation, which could be embedded in a design, an action plan or a development policy. Lectures about conceptual models, and case studies of transformations and good practices enabled the students to discuss the relationship between local interventions and their contribution to the regeneration of the overall city structure.