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# NOTES ON THE 5TH EUSS AND THE PROCEEDINGS

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**PREFACE**

## THE CONCEPT

As time seems to fly faster every day, human beings feel the necessity to preserve, develop and even showcase cultural heritage so as to conserve points of reference of our identities and evidence of our individualities.

At the same time, this fast developing - and decaying - world imposes another necessity: to develop and preserve our social, economic and ecological environment, to achieve what is commonly called 'sustainable development'. This means that in all our historic cities, heritage concerns and sustainable development are two essentials to take into account whilst conceiving any spatial development project, but they are not always obviously compatible. The essential and challenging difficulty to conciliate the two was the basic concept of the 5th European Urban Summer School (EUSS). This edition of the EUSS aimed to set a platform to discuss issues where heritage conservation and sustainable development can meet.

Has heritage conservation to be strictly framed? Do we have to choose between places to admire and places to experience? What does the application of sustainable development pillars imply in spatial planning and especially in urban design?

The EUSS, with a series of seminars and workshops, aimed to bring together young planners and academics so as to benefit from international creativity. The goal was to create a platform where each participant could experience combining theoretical approaches and operational urban design. At the basis of the EUSS programme was the intention of showing participants as many sides of a **complex stakeholders' environment** as possible. That's why the many lecturers invited to speak were firstly specialists of heritage conservation (so as to structure the framework, a-spatially) and secondly from all possible categories of users and decision-makers (specifically related to the project site): politicians, technicians, professionals, architects/planners, associations, shopkeepers, inhabitants, individuals etc.

## THE SITE

France is a country renown worldwide for its historical cultural heritage; in 2015, it had more than 600 urban historical heritage protected areas at different levels. The historical centre of Tours is safeguarded by one of the more than 100 'Secteurs Sauvegardés', the highest level of protection and constraint. The site chosen is a **complex spatial context**:

- inside a heritage protected area, but most of its buildings belong to the post World War II period;
- inside the core perimeter of the UNESCO's world heritage list site of The Loire Valley between Sully-sur-Loire and Chalonnes, a very delicate and vulnerable site along the banks of the Loire river;
- already dense in 'culture' (museums, historic church and mansion, Fine Arts school);
- in a strategic location for contemporary developments (geographically very central, gateway of the historic centre, unexpectedly not densely built);

- at the heart of most of the regeneration projects implemented by the City Council of Tours and the urban community Tour(s) Plus (tramway, tangible and intangible heritage centres, new touristic and commercial developments);
- also the perfect site for soft, ephemeral and culture-led projects;
- providing an amazing and rare overview over the river through the city centre;
- a possible future landmark for a new image of the town.

## **THE WORKSHOP(S)**

The intensive week dedicated to the 5th EUSS in Tours allowed the participants to discover a site and its challenges through visits and various lectures, and to handle some innovative planning concepts through the workshops. The 12 participants were divided into three groups and they were asked to suggest relevant projects for the requalification of Square Anatole France, adapting their background to the specific environment.

Eight days is a very short time to fulfil the very demanding programme of a EUSS: meet new people and work together on a unfamiliar subject, in an unknown area, context and environment, following some specific procedures. However, six framework presentations, seven site-specific presentations, three thematic workshops, the YPPA award and a very restricted time to work on project propositions did not discourage a very motivated and complementary group of participants!

One of the major and long-lasting goals of this event was also to contribute to creating a culture of connection between young planners and local authorities and to strengthen the links between higher education systems and the operational world. If I trust the enthusiastic bonding of all the contributors and the positive interactions and friendships that were started via the EUSS, I must say that this very international adventure allowed us to break a little bit more into a very local system.

Organizing and running this event was really a great adventure, rich with intellectual challenges and heart-warming encounters. Participants and contributors managed to create a friendly environment in which each individual could discuss and transfer knowledge and relate to one another.

My warmest thanks are addressed to all those that contributed from far and from near to the event, individuals and institutions, people and organisations. A special thanks to Brynhild DRAIN and Kathleen McCARRON who helped me during the EUSS to play the interpreter, to Florence ORILLARD for the visual contents and the poster and to Julie LAUSIN for the booklet.

## **THE BOOK**

This book combines the work produced by the all the participants with some contributions from researchers, professionals, academics and students, who we especially engaged so as to integrate and make more exhaustive the different points of view on the subject.

As the type of exercise, approach and theme proposed during the EUSS fits perfectly in the pedagogic curriculum of the host (EPU-DAE), we collected several students' products at various levels (from master thesis and master internships up to undergraduate reports).

The central question proposed for the book is: **identify contradictions between heritage conservation and sustainability among recent urban developments, analyse the decision-making process and expose a physical or process-related response**. So as to widen the possible approaches and type of answers to this question, we asked various contributors to detail different case studies (the stakes of cultural landscape along water; the possible application of heritage and sustainable development concerns in India; the structure of soft regeneration culture-led projects in Spain) and to provide various material (e.g. from an interview with a local architect often dealing with heritage, so as to add a professional witness to the official institutional point of view and complete the panel of 'expertise' represented).

The theoretical approaches also differ, from mostly descriptive to very critical (and somehow subjective) overviews.

Most of the texts are in English but a few in French, which are nevertheless headed by an English abstract, and I would like to thank the almost all non-English speaking authors for their great efforts in producing an English text one way or another. The whole team has pooled its language skills together - authors, coordinators, Polytech staff - to produce this book.

Finally a very special thanks goes to Julie LAUSIN and Nasos ALEXIS who have been always playing a very helping hand.