

## PRESERVATION OR CHANGE: LEARNING FROM THE INHERITED CITY

### EVALUATION OF PART I PAST: THE INHERITED CITY

- The viewpoints of the City of Wrocław, together with those of UN Habitat, AESOP and the Wrocław University of Technology, as well as site visits, presentations by tutors and, most importantly, the work of young professionals on six selected sites contributed to the understanding of the 'inherited city', and animated the debate on the balance between heritage and development.
- Predictably, the findings were diverse but they established some common ground, if not of solutions then of pressing outstanding questions. Inevitably the original Athens Charter came under critique, but it was recognised that at the time modernism was built on needs of health, daylight, hygiene and safety, in reaction to bad urban conditions.
- Despite some post modern dissent and tutor inputs from many different standpoints, heritage was not discarded as redundant and was not considered to stand in the way of progress. Quite the reverse, in a turbulent world with massive migration and displaced people, uncertainty due to rapid change in the global economy and political landscapes, heritage had value and formed an important part of identities of cities and those who live in them.
- Cities presented opportunities for change, for remedies against existing deficiencies such as traffic congestion, dilapidated industrial areas, poor housing or social exclusion, but also for expansion and structural innovation. However, transformation faced inertia in physical and mental terms, linked to urban patterns and influenced by value attribution. Consensus

existed on the need of diverse approaches to change, ranging from incremental interventions to broad scale conceptual perspectives as basis for public debate. Criteria of intervention may vary as well, depending on political priorities, economic urgency, social pressures or poor conditions of the physical fabric.

Regeneration of heritage did not only apply to buildings but also to mentalities. Loss of value is in the eye of the beholder, just like beauty, and change can be initiated by responding to contextual necessity, as well as by proactive political processes. Heritage can take many different forms in urban change. It can preserve, revitalise or reinvent and generate new values, mental as well as economic, all of them contributing to a new city structure. However, regeneration has often partial and conflicting effects within the city structure. When values are attributed to physical heritage, they are often displacing vulnerable groups while newcomers are the beneficiaries of gentrification. With what certainty would regeneration realise its planned effects, and how and who would deal with unforeseen (adverse) effects?

The debates showed that two trends of urban change tend to manifest themselves alongside each other. One is creative destruction often by speculative forces, at a large scale, in a short time, with economic values changing hands frequently and rapidly. The other is slow negotiated change which builds on consensus, sense of belonging, at a small scale over longer time, aiming to build values of excellence and humanism. Such contradictory trends have always shaped urban structures in which many conflicting value systems cohabit, together with witnesses from many different historic periods whose values vary over time.

## SALIENT POINTS FROM THE OUTSIDE

### LESSON LEARNT FROM TUTOR PAPERS PRESENTED IN PART I

- An interesting finding is that neither die-hard sceptic nor fundamental conservationist views were expressed about heritage. A consensus emerged about the need of balancing heritage with development and urban change.
- One paper was addressing the relevance of history to contemporary use. In a declining inner city interventions aimed to reintroduce value by restoring substance while preserving the existing population. A long timeframe is needed for such a participatory refurbishment process. It raises the key question of whether gentrification is an unavoidable consequence of regeneration (TF).
- Several papers were proposing ideas and techniques to integrate existing features while directing urban transformation towards a more sustainable city structure. One dealt with sustainable construction techniques, including retrofitting the existing urban fabric (SL). Another considered urban design as a suitable tool to identify the role of history and heritage and to enhance legacy spatially and materially in a sustainable manner while adding new values to declining or unfashionable places. (MV). Another proposed specific tools to secure successful urban change which depends on clear development concepts, known actors, financial and institutional arrangements and responsibilities. Heritage needed to be bound into the legal system to secure effective and equitable change. (PE). A model was proposed to uncover the relation between past and future urban patterns in terms of rules and regularities to explain urban transformation. A study based on this model identified arrangements which led to the most efficient layout of new urban requirements (WZ).

Two papers dealt with new appropriation of space by unexpected uses. One was observing heritage areas by focusing on borderlines which were considered favourable for processes of negotiation and reconciliation between different areas with declining values (DI). The other was promoting proactive intervention and fostering participation in informal uses of redundant buildings by existing inhabitants, casual newcomers, artists or participants in the grey economy which were looking for intermediary spaces for both utilitarian and creative uses. Such actions were expected to change attitudes towards heritage and to generate more democratic urban conditions (DJ).

## SUMMARY OF YOUNG PLANNERS' FINDINGS

### FROM PROJECTS ON SIX SELECTED SITES IN PART I – PAST: THE INHERITED CITY

From the young planners' work it seemed easier to deal with places which have lost their value, especially non residential areas, because they provided an opportunity to adopt a scenario approach using the heritage assets. Integrating these sites into the urban fabric posed a challenge, and especially the proposals for the industrial site with working premises was original and daring. Design spectacles were less feasible for the three selected, very diverse housing estates which required a socio-cultural approach to existing inhabitants. The proposal to consider the fifties system - built quarter which reintroduced residents to the very city centre after the war as a heritage asset, despite the poor quality of the housing was a challenging way to improve the area for the existing residents and to connect it to the regenerated city core for wider use.

# PRESENT: PROCESS OF URBAN CHANGE AND REGENERATION

INTRODUCTION  
TO PART 2

embedded in the urban fabric. Street patterns in inner cities can be traced back to the middle ages, and more recent historic city layouts persist, owing to fixed assets such as utilities and transportation infrastructure. The natural features of cities, rivers, waterfronts or protective landscapes, which were the reason for cities to locate there originally continue to shape cities while being transformed by urban metamorphosis. Change can be spatial-geographic, sectoral and functional, or cultural due to changing lifestyles. All change is relative as its meaning is bound to differ, depending on the part of the city where it occurs and on those who use the city.

Change defines itself in relation to what remains unchanged. Flows tend to be more dynamic than nodes; movements are more prone to change than built artefacts. All parts of a city are changing due to organic processes, albeit at a very different pace. Well built structures will wear slowly while change of their uses may accelerate their redundancy. Change of flows due to new technologies, new origins and destinations may be hampered by the inertia of existing infrastructures which accommodate flows, such as roads or rail. Catering for potential flows requires significant interventions in the existing urban fabric. Spatial strategies may enhance or hinder flows. Moreover, local adaptations are often having much wider repercussions, as the urban fabric forms an interdependent whole, despite being composed of many, sometimes incompatible parts.

Except in case of wars and natural disasters current urban change has a very different dynamic in European cities than, for example, in rapidly growing mega-cities and city regions in the developing world. It also happens at a different scale. European cities have evolved slowly over time, most of their fabric exists, additions are rather marginal and change tends to occur just as much from within than at their edge.

Urban change has a place on a timescale. When it occurs, either spontaneously or planned, it affects present arrangements and is often forward

- > Heritage cannot be separated from urban change and it influences the pace and size of change of cities at any moment in time. Therefore, it was necessary to examine the interface between heritage and urban change which was considered at various urban scales and over different timeframes, going back and forth in relative and absolute time. Cities are in constant flux. They are undergoing a continuous process of degradation and regeneration, of shrinking and expansion, of stagnation, conservation and transformation. These processes are often taking place in parallel and in contradiction with each other.
- > No city stands still. Cities change constantly but not as a whole. Some parts evolve rapidly due to changing use or development pressures; other parts change more slowly hampered by inertia

looking. Yet, when does urban change, or more precisely, the outcome of urban change, which has happened in the past become heritage? Which material and mental urban witnesses are worth preserving, when should new urban change be displacing traces of past urban change, and on what grounds?

- Unlike heritage which (re-)creates value when it is regenerated, urban change may create as well as destroy value, or it may have to destroy value first to create more value afterwards, a free market process known as creative destruction.
- The process of urban regeneration was examined at various scales and pace in Wrocław to understand its repercussions on city structure. This included the impact of the preservation of single buildings with historic significance and their current and potential future meaning, such as the Wertheim department store in the city core which became the Renoma, the Centennial Hall earmarked to fulfil supra-regional functions, or the redundant Świebodzki railway station. Each one commands its own use of heritage as driver of regeneration, its own choice between conservation, transformation or creative destruction. Each one presents opportunities, problems and

potential outcomes which need to be weighed against wider implications for the city.

Higher levels of resolution are neighbourhoods, such as historic garden cities, outer villages and more recently built large estates. They form entities in physical as well as community terms, but they may be subjected to urban change, due to higher order objectives regarding their role within the city as a whole, which may compete with their heritage value. At this meta-level of urban change, two ring roads were chosen for reappraisal, one within the inner core and the other on the edge of the inner city proposed to alleviate traffic problems in Wrocław.

## TASKS FOR YOUNG PLANNERS PART 2

The background question to the second task is how to plan and/or design urban transformation. Urban change is happening all the time and those who are mandated to intervene in the urban fabric need to know to what degree they can control and change spatial order, either through public or private sector intervention, and which urban dynamic remains outside their control.

These questions are explored in two concrete places which are deemed to have lost their 'public' values and where spatial intervention has to deal with complex ownerships, needs and expectations to transform such spaces and create new public values. Different models of taking over this public space, rethinking its function and transforming it are explored. One site is the planned southern ring road to relieve traffic within the urban core. The transportation company has produced a proposal which needs to be critically assessed. Possible alternative solutions are imagined for an urban transformation which creates new public values. The other site is a ring road within the city core following the trace of a historic moat which divides the urban fabric while providing access to it. Based on site visits, lectures and debates, students were asked to propose concepts, designs and action plans.