

THE
SUBOTICA
DECLARATION
ON
PROTECTING HERITAGE AMIDST
URBAN DEVELOPMENT

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For further information contact:

Ildikó Deák

ildeak@gmail.com

Viktorija Aladžić

aviktorija@hotmail.com

PREAMBLE

Considering that historical cities contribute to a great extent to providing Europe its European character;

Noting that historical cities can also serve as important instruments for implementing the European Union's Danube strategy;

Acknowledging that common heritage calls for common thinking and action;

Recognising that historical towns are continuously being faced with an increasing number of challenges, and that urban development, if not carried out with due care, poses an enormous threat to the survival of the traditional urban fabric and built heritage assets that provide the traditional character and identity of these towns;

Being aware of the meaning and role of built heritage in the process of urban development in Europe;

Taking into consideration the wealth and potential of neglected built heritage in a number of cities in Eastern and Southern Europe;

Respecting all relevant European and world documents on built heritage protection and sustainable development necessity;

We, participants of the seminar "Built Heritage amidst Urban Development," held in Subotica, Serbia, on 27th-28th May 2011, make and pass forward this

SUBOTICA DECLARATION

1. We recognise the following major problems in built heritage protection and its relation to urban development
 - a. The plenitude and diversity of built heritage in Europe is used in different ways, with diverse results, in developed, developing and underdeveloped countries. With many successful restorations, revitalisation and adequate use of built heritage, the aggressiveness of financial capital is threatening to deform the quality of urban structures and consequently the quality of life in many cities and towns. It particularly relates to the cities in transitional countries where financial capital comes with its universal models and all the weaknesses of local governments and their acute need for fresh financial injections make them very much welcome.
 - b. The above result in:
 - i. improper building structures in the recognisable cultural milieu of the most beautiful European cities,

- ii. the jeopardising of the fine historic fabric of many medium-sized cities and towns in the mid-European area,
 - iii. the neglect of the most precious built heritage and monuments in cities and towns with no power or adequate know-how to restore and revitalise it,
 - iv. a large number of precious architectural works being hidden, devastated, abandoned, locked and overlooked.
- c. The development of protected urban cores are inseparable from the socio-economic background and a number of old, often valuable buildings are under attack from new, pretentious investments thereby raising a number of problems such as:
 - i. the endangering of the survival of one-storey houses occupied and owned by impoverished people,
 - ii. inadequate interpolation of new buildings with investors aiming to gain the most profit from the lowest investment,
 - iii. improper conservation or lack of any care for the status of these houses.

We hereby declare that:

1. The preservation of built heritage should be prudently approached in the context of urban development to provide for a harmony of the large, medium and small-scale interests of different stakeholders in the process of urban development.
2. We also declare that these principles and proposals should be followed:
 - a. The built heritage should be treated as one of the basic elements forming and promoting urban identity, crucial for raising urban attractiveness and spurring urban development,
 - b. The built heritage should be harmonised with natural heritage and urban economy, wherever harmonising these three elements can contribute to the sustainability of urban development in general.
 - c. The new attitude in the protection of built heritage, replacing the romantic admiration of the past, follows the idea of its reasonable revitalisation as functional spaces, reused for the benefit of local communities, and basically contributing to the identity of local communities as well as regional, national and wider tiers.
 - d. Built heritage is one of the paramount elements contributing to the quality of urban life, particularly if treated as a resource for sustainable urban development. That is why prudent restoration of urban cores can be

successful only if architectural quality is maintained by the active cooperation of all stakeholders: planners, administrators, civil society, institutions and local citizens.

- e. The shaping, rebuilding, reusing or recycling of the old urban fabric is inevitably connected to all the implications of the urban future. Through revitalisation of urban structures, we can reinvent our future in a more sustainable way. Due to many diverse interests, public-private and public-public partnerships need to be harmonised, particularly in old urban areas.
- f. The stewardship of built heritage in our cities needs to be prudent and used in a way similar to environmental protective measures, not least because it maintains our spirit, our pride, prestige and our personal and group identities, thus contributing to the competitiveness of our towns and cities.
- g. The protection of the built heritage safeguards not only individual buildings, but also the immediate area surrounding the most important buildings in urban centres, and also the careful control and protection of wider areas including the natural surroundings of cities and towns.
- h. The built heritage must be treated as a public and common good where private aspirations and interests should be carefully incorporated and strictly controlled so as to avoid disturbing the role and meaning of public space for all citizens.
- i. The high-ranking built heritage must have priority in urban policies together with other level policies and have task-force action undertaken with civic societies included for the necessary enthusiasm and energy for restoring and revitalising it.

For such serious and sensitive tasks we deem that:

- 1. Reliable and expert-based strategies should be defined and adopted comprising built heritage protection amidst urban development at the national, regional and local tiers. The strategies have to be coordinated with other relevant strategies and also with established European standards.
- 2. Urban and regional institutions for built heritage protection and sustainable use must follow the given strategies and precisely contribute to their implementation.

3. Vertical coordination with other levels and horizontal coordination with relevant sectors, e.g. nature protection, economic development, education, tourism and infrastructure, should be permanent.
4. A bottom-up principle is necessary, incorporating all the needs and aspirations of local people with present energy and concentration of civil society and forums organised for this purpose.
5. The active participation of all stakeholders and a transparency in policy and decision-making processes related to urban development in protected urban areas, are a must for urban governance and administration.
6. Connecting and networking between towns and cities on common problems, interests and issues regarding built heritage protection is the most reliable way to contribute to regional, cross-border and inter-regional cooperation and identification.
7. Education and awareness-raising are crucial tasks for civic society, with an indispensable role being played by universities, specialist institutions and experts involved in the process of urban development, planning and cultural heritage protection.
8. Educating craftsmen with specialized skills is inevitable for ensuring the skilled workforce needed for the authentic restoration of historic buildings therefore it should be given high priority.
9. It is imperative that a new valorisation of built heritage is carried out with due regard to the latest results of researches conducted into the architectural and urban history of a historic town and in compliance with the relevant international instruments for the protection of built heritage.
10. Maintaining the authenticity of built heritage and the traditional character of historic towns is crucial for ensuring the sustainability of urban identity.

Considering the above, we, signatories of the present document, recommend that concrete actions, as put forward below, be taken with regard to Subotica for safeguarding the town's traditional historic fabric and character of outstanding value:

1. Take measures in order that the historic fabric as well as the traditional market-town character of the town with its historic buildings, land plots and identity is preserved.
2. Ensure that valuable one-storey buildings, the broader infrastructure and the natural environment are also protected.

To this end:

- a. conduct a thorough survey for identifying and inventorising all built heritage sites in the entire historic area established in the 19th century and early 20th century, which contribute to the distinctive historic character of the town,
 - b. revise the existing regulation plans according to the value-based inventory thus compiled to guarantee the maintenance of all elements identified as valuable for the traditional character of the town,
 - c. until the value-based inventory is compiled implement existing plans only in close consultation and in accordance with the local civic body set up as defined under section 4 below,
 - d. reconstruction, restructuring or demolition of any of the historic elements thus identified cannot in any event be approved,
 - e. much prudence should be exercised when new structures are planned to be added to the protected zones in order to ensure that the traditional historic character of the area is respected in the utmost manner,
3. Pre-eminence should be given to raising awareness about Subotica's cultural heritage among school children and local communities, therefore educational kits should be compiled on issues related to the protection of monuments to be introduced in school trainings.
 4. A civic body should also be set up, with the participation of all civil sector organisations (CSO) promoting the preservation of Subotica's heritage, to represent local interests, act as a partner to authorities in matters concerning Subotica's heritage, as well as to monitor and periodically report on the implementation of the recommendations put forward in this document.
 5. The text of the Declaration should be distributed to all relevant local, national institutions and organisations, and also be made widely available and open for public signature.
 6. Signatories to this Declaration volunteer to serve as an advisory body to the above civic body in matters related to the protection of Subotica's built heritage, as well as to ensure that the text of the present Declaration and the periodic reports are distributed to relevant international organisations concerned with the protection of built heritage and, concurrently, are given broad international publicity.