

Track 12 - Culture, Heritage and Spatial Planning

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Culture and heritage play an essential role in European spatial planning due to two challenges for planners and decision-makers at all five tiers of government and governance in Europe. On one side, growing globalisation calls for strengthening local and regional identity, and planners are exploring how the cultural heritage of cities and regions, the main feature of such identities can be protected. On the other side, as the territorial capital of a region has become a starting point for strategic spatial planning in the context of EU territorial cohesion policies, planners have to develop strategies of how to benefit from culture and urban heritage as a significant territorial potential for spatial and economic development.

Consequently, the conservation of the historic environment is a central feature of spatial planning systems across most of Europe. Conservation policies achieved legitimacy and public support in the 1970s through professional and public reaction to the loss of familiar townscapes and their replacement with unloved modern environments in the post-war period. Throughout the last 30 years of the 20th century conservation policy and practice became synonymous with the notion that 'old is good'. However, despite the continuing importance of the cultural heritage referred to above, the central unchallenged role of conservation policies in spatial planning practice is facing new challenges.

On the one hand in city centres across Europe a new wave of confidence in city-building has been evident, in both the scale of redevelopment and in terms of the self-consciously contemporary architectural expressions this is taking, which seem to be eroding established strong regulatory regimes of protection. However, on the other hand, while architects and developers, inspired by unconstrained building opportunities in China and Dubai, are promoting the modern metropolis with free standing designer buildings, value driven movements of conservative local communities have become so strong that the historic "decoration" (packaging) of modern functional consumer architecture or suburban residential communities is receiving more and more support. Thus there is a wave of new historicism flooding over Europe causing much public discourse and controversy. In this value driven context, new urbanism, re-imported from North America to Europe, is seen a panacea for eco-cities and town expansion schemes. Further issues include major challenges such as climate change. In many European cities, energy saving measures have become a new challenge for the conservation community, making the preservation and re-use of historic building more and more difficult and costly.

The track **Culture, Heritage and Spatial Planning** will address such planning and policy challenges. Thereby appropriate ways and means will have to be discussed about how the right balance between protection, historicizing city development policies and the promotion of future-oriented modern urban environments can be achieved.