

Rehabilitation – The built environment

Because of increasing similarities between modern cities historical urban structures are becoming an attraction and economic potential. Traditional values can therefore become the basis of future development and culture. However, how do we overcome conflicts between quantitative growth and quality development, how do we integrate built heritage as the motif of urban planning, whereby the goal is to strengthen the historical continuity of the city, how to direct such development in a sustainable manner, are just some of the questions of urban rehabilitation.

Most European cities are facing the same problem of defining the relations between protection and development. As a rule they are conditioned by available resources. In places where public interest is enforced repressively, without stimulation or support, results are poor – heritage remains intact, but is not often used for the adequate purpose and cities expand unto uncontrollable expanses. In other places, where rehabilitation is implemented as investment or a commercial activity, cities are starting to resemble specific European theme parks, Disneylands, where the preserved (renewed) heritage is marketed as a touristic product – development is stopped in an arbitrary time.

Urban renewal doesn't only affect protected monuments. Many living environments, with high recognised quality, in certain cases with iconic value, can be lost as places of memory by inadequate reconstruction, technical renewal, economically (profit) driven projects or individual disregard.

Contemporary urban paradigms speak about directing development inwards. By rehabilitation? Right into those structures that are most varied, delicate and fragile. Therefore such development has to supercede and further develop the recognised urban structure, as a whole and its particular parts, and be driven with a clearly defined design and implementation strategy.