

JOINT STATEMENT

We, participants of the 4th Baltic Sea Region Cultural Heritage Forum “Cultural Heritage – Contemporary Challenge”, having assembled in Riga on 9 and 10 September 2010, state that:

1. Cultural heritage can contribute to sustainability as built resources, tested examples of enduring solutions as well as experienced excellences and best practices of well-being. Cultural heritage plays an important and decisive role in a person’s inter-action with the environment; it attributes a person his identity and provides the understanding of authenticity in all aspects.

2. The conservation of cultural heritage and new development are equally important to the quality of human life. Even the historic environment needs good-quality contemporary architecture and design; however, it must not be based on the destruction of heritage. Today, development principles should strive to the protection of natural and cultural heritage values, encouraging sustainable development as well as viewing each new high-quality contribution as potential future cultural heritage.

3. It is important to note that heritage includes both tangible and intangible elements and qualities above the earth and underwater. In order to ensure the long-term quality of human life, protection of individual heritage objects should be extended to sustainable management of places, sites and the environment as a whole. Thus, in the protection of cultural heritage, not only the visual aspect of a place and its aesthetic understanding is important, but all factors which form the place, such as the relations between humans and their environment are as important as rational and intelligent use of resources. The contemporary understanding of the integrated concept of cultural heritage needs to be promoted and encouraged in all countries of our region.

4. Heritage is a non-renewable asset whose authenticity is one of the most important values. An authentic object provides reliable information and is specific to its own atmosphere of a place. This cannot be achieved by imitating historical expressions. The quality of layers left by all periods including natural erosion and deterioration of the asset serve as witnesses of the era and can be of heritage value. At the urban level integrity is an important tool for safeguarding and preserving historic wholeness and legibility. Together integrity and authenticity contain the historic significance of cities, towns and urban areas.

5. In the ongoing process of fast global transformation and economic ups and downs, we shall use all existing means to preserve and strengthen regional identity and cultural assets for future generations. Heritage values should be taken into careful consideration when in response to actual development challenges such as reducing emission, energy saving and other approaches towards an ecologic balance in our societies. Existing cooperative legislation and the promotion of new ones aimed at protection of cultural heritage, need strengthening within the Baltic Sea region in order to provide stability and guarantee well-considered actions in the long term.

6. The quality of the spatial environment always reflects development of the society – culture, science, economy, democracy and social life. We encourage national governments to be more involved in safeguarding cultural heritage so that in the end their actions will strengthen the ambience and attractiveness of the place and ensure the prudent development of the region.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SESSION ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Framework

Historic buildings and towns represent invested resources in addition to economic and cultural values. Buildings influence the environment in their life time by energy consumption and environmental impact during construction, use, maintenance, demolition and waste. The resources invested in buildings should be administered in the best way for as long a time as possible. Major pressures today for changes in our cities and built environments are climate, sustainability and energy conservation. These forces may be a threat to cultural heritage, by a one-sided focus on technical efficiency, in particular for energy.

Historic buildings may thus be either torn down, or renovated badly, in the rush to reduce carbon emissions; assisted by short term economic calculations.

Theses

There is a large potential for energy efficiency of old buildings. Improvements must be made with respect to both the physical aspects and the cultural values. For listed buildings and national monuments there is a limited potential for energy improvements, but passive house standard is possible to achieve for a substantial part of the building stock.

Original and traditional windows can be easily improved. By adding a new inner frame, they become nearly as good as modern windows regarding energy loss and noise reduction. As renovated windows will have a service life 3-6 times longer than normally used replacement windows, this will cause a considerable environmental and economic advantage for society and for heritage.

The heritage sector offers an important, indeed essential, counterweight in the debate about sustainability. Tools like the Sustainability Value Map create a real understanding of the full meaning and value of heritage for sustainable development. Standardized methods for assessments and measures for energy efficiency in historical buildings should consider life-cycle reviews and take embodied energy into account. Research on historical buildings is looking into the future, not only the past.

Provocative questions

Why are we not doing complete life cycle assessments on rehabilitation of existing buildings versus demolishing and building new ones?

Energy cost will be decisive in Environmental Accounts. Can energy/climate experts prove that demolition and building new low energy buildings is better in a complete life cycle perspective than preserving and improving existing ones?

Cultural heritage has recognised advantages in the fields of society and culture. How can we bring forth and communicate better the ecological advantages?

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SESSION RESTORATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE AND AUTHENTICITY

Authenticity is the most **important aspects** when measuring the quality of cultural heritage objects. An authentic cultural heritage property has a high **social and economic value** for the owner and is of great importance to society. Authenticity is a quality **for everyone** involved, the property owner, the neighbourhood, the businesses and the tourists. An authentic architectural object contains fundamental and unique information and is a **positive trade mark** which stimulates as well as enriches the surrounding urban or rural area!

The concept of authenticity can be defined as **originality or genuineness**. It involves overall landscape and urban context, architecture, interiors and details. The quality of authenticity is dependent on the reliability and **credibility** of the messages conveyed by the object.

Original materials, shapes, colours and construction methods are of utmost importance but the original use and function are also of great importance. The original design has a great value but **changes or additions** throughout the life of the object are equally important, if they are of adequate quality.

In order to respect or achieve authenticity, a **good documentation** is necessary, including the architectural and structural design as well as the historic technical and functional development of the object. Every architectural object and relevant archives should be surveyed in view of future maintenance and restorations.

When cultural heritage is subject to **interventions**, the aspect of authenticity should be a major consideration for the decisions by property owner, expert and the authorities. Insensitive changes, additions or reductions of the design or function of an architectural object reduces the value.

Authenticity can be preserved and even strengthened in a well-planned intervention. The owner and experts have to preserve and respect the original design of the cultural heritage object as well as the successive historic alterations. In the renovation or restoration project, original materials, shapes and colours should be used; any addition or new function has to coincide with, and not damage, the authentic qualities of material, structure and design.

These principles apply to the object or landscape of high cultural historical value as well as to the **normal urban and rural buildings and interiors**.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SESSION CULTURAL HERITAGE AND CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE

The discussion has taken place gathering 107 specialists (architects, planners, art historians, entrepreneurs etc.) and the recommendations were elaborated for the promotion of the dialogue and cooperation between cultural heritage field and contemporary architecture.

1. Growing challenges of globalization urges us to establish mutually strong strategies to bridge the contemporary architecture and cultural heritage so to preserve and maintain the common identity of the Baltic Sea region and to promote sustainable and quality development of society and space where it is living.

2. Contemporary understanding of the preservation of cultural heritage includes the development of quality architecture within historic environments; quality architecture can complement heritage values. Quality and excellence in contemporary architecture adds value and is the cultural heritage for the future.

3. Each site needs a concise, clear, philosophically comprehensive and strong analysis of its cultural values, well-defined and culturally sensitive and specific policy for economic development and clear and viable spatial vision.

4. In order to develop architectural spaces in harmony and without creating conflicts, contemporary architecture must respect existing dominant qualities of the place, acknowledge the spatial specificities, building volume and character of the place and regard the traditional materials and historically created sense of place, yet recognizing/ allowing also the use of new innovative materials and forms which contribute to the value of the place.

5. The original is the highest value within the historical environment, despite its age. By destroying, the original society loses part of its heritage, which cannot be recreated. Sense of place cannot be developed by reconstruction. To build a copy means to give a preference to a certain period or architectural style and to neglect the value of continued development of the humanity and cultural diversity.

6. Each period in architecture has its specific characteristics; these periods correspond to each other. Only continuous and quality synergies between these developments secure sustainable and well thought-out development of the society and the place – heritage and memories inspire emerging new qualities, which later on become the heritage itself. Society is defined by the sense of its heritage and sense of the place it is living in. This sense is characterized by the contemporary architecture and developments, which therefore mirror the self-respect of the culture.

7. It is necessary to continue and strengthen professional cooperation within the Baltic Sea region in order to facilitate discussions, which improve the development of comprehensive and relevant national policy documents on the development of architecture and architectural space.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SESSION

CULTURAL HERITAGE AS A PUBLIC GOOD AND AN ASSET FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Cultural Heritage functions as a special attraction, as a generator of economic activities and development, and as a source of local pride and identity. Heritage has an intrinsic value for human culture, and it produces both public and private benefits. It is even an asset in the market. One of the key questions concerning the preservation of Built and Maritime Heritage is: What can be done to develop the sustainable utilization of these assets?

Baltic Sea Region Cultural Heritage Forum recommends that public and private actors, representing varied fields of expertise, work together to advance the public discussion on the multiple values of heritage, from various actors' perspectives, so that both actualized and potential values of heritage can be fully taken into account in policy and decision making.

The Forum also recommends that all stakeholders working with sites and other material or immaterial issues of cultural importance – including Heritage professionals, planners and other public authorities, as well as NGOs and private sector – work on developing and advancing new co-operation models in the management, utilization and maintenance of Built and Maritime Heritage.

The Forum emphasizes the importance of exchanging know-how and information on good Heritage management practices in the Baltic Sea Region. Sharing the knowledge and experiences of successful practices between all stakeholders and experts, both nationally and internationally, is essential for developing and elaborating the current practices further, and for strengthening the local and regional co-operation.

