

The continuity and results of the BRHC work is reflected in the Baltic Sea Region Cultural Heritage Forums, organized by the decision of the BRHC and involving all acting working groups. Since 2003 the Baltic Region Heritage forums are organized with the aim to create a meeting place for stakeholders, to address crucial issues of regional interest and share with the latest developments.

I Baltic Sea Region Cultural Heritage Forum 2003

### **Baltic Sea Identity Common Sea – Common identity**

Gdańsk, Poland, 3 – 6 April, 2003

#### ***SUMMARY OF THE PANEL DEBATE BY KATE NEWLAND CULTURE***

The four working groups - Underwater Cultural Heritage; Maritime Heritage and Coastal Culture; Sustainable Historic Towns; Building Preservation and Maintenance in Practice - have achieved a great deal and still have many issues to address within their fields. In addition, the Forum has brought everyone together giving the opportunity for discussion and further ideas for future cooperation.

#### *Common Sea – Diverse Culture – Common Heritage*

Although the cultures along the shores of the Baltic Sea are clearly defined there are three major language groups as well as nine different nations (including Norway). These areas have experienced widely different histories in ancient, medieval and modern times, but there are also important periods of shared heritage. The Hanseatic League is an example where many of these areas were brought together under a common interest. There were also other periods in history where there were attempts to impose a common administration or common identity on this area. These attempts have left their marks on the material culture from the past. The castles built by Erik of Pomerania for example are found all over the Baltic. In this sense there may be a common cultural inheritance that we share as residents of the Baltic region, although we may not agree that we share the same culture.

#### *Common sea – common problems*

In a positive sense we have been presented with so many good solutions at the Forum. The problems tend to be the same and in many ways the solutions are the same. This is one of the strengths of Baltic cooperation. At the beginning the expression common culture and the richness of common culture was suggested as a starting point. Perhaps next we need to look at the inherent differences, maybe something for a 2nd Forum?

#### *Floating Cultural Heritage*

Here there are common problems. Norway is a good example of how to deal with this issue and perhaps something similar could be set up in the Baltic. This would mean that not every country has to specialise in both wooden and steel ships thereby creating a Baltic solution to these problems.

#### *Military Cultural Heritage*

Problems are being encountered as fortifications become obsolete and surplus to requirements e.g. problems concerning a naval base in Sweden are in the process of being addressed. These sites are part of the cultural heritage of the Baltic.

In the Nordic and Scandinavian countries there is already a network of experts responsible for the conservation of fortifications, their restoration and maintenance. A bilateral project between Russia and Finland is in the process of formulating ideas for future projects, to include perhaps a cultural tourist route and networks.

#### *Replica, copy, regionality*

It is important to be aware of these definitions when discussing common cultural heritage e.g. Warsaw is a member of the World Heritage List although the city has been largely reconstructed.

#### *Strategic physical planning*

Moving towards sustainable development is important for all the Baltic Sea Region countries in the future. It should form the overriding principle for future work, and other conservation and maintenance projects. It is important to create a working group for this topic in the future.

#### *Public interest*

This needs to be taken into consideration, perhaps in the form of an exhibition on Baltic archaeology or the Mare Balticum. Engage the public's interest to obtain ministerial interest and support. Earlier plans for an exhibition travelling around the Baltic by ship had to be postponed for financial reasons. However, it would be relatively straightforward to bring it together again. The main requirement is a sponsor. It would be feasible to prepare such an exhibition for the Second Cultural Heritage Forum.

#### *Highlighting shipwrecks*

...in the international waters of the Baltic Sea. Technical diving is increasingly becoming more commonplace and increasing potential dangers to wrecks. A video taken by Swedes shows an almost intact wreck, which still has paint on the figurehead, the rigging and much more. This needs protection. Perhaps it could be considered by the BUCH project?

#### *Manor houses, Parks and Gardens*

Few things engage the public's interest more than these topics. Another subject may be churches in rural areas.

#### *Educational cooperation*

In particular, cultural heritage concerning young people through for e.g. student exchanges, and the exchange of research within cultural heritage needs to be considered.

#### *Closing Remarks*

The number of future suggestions and ideas certainly points to a need for a Second Forum. Perhaps the Monitoring Group, instead of being an overseeing body, could become a type of clearing house for combining and coordinating actions between different ideas and activities.

With regard to identity, common culture, common sea, authenticity, ethics etc; whether we work with boats, underwater archaeology, or buildings; it all has to do with remembering the past. How we introduce it, how we explain it and how we pass it on for future generations. The Minister's original statement recognised every individual's right to have access to their heritage and history. In fact, this is what we have been discussing. Not only how we work with this as professionals but how we can be more inclusive of people in general at a grass roots level. From the Minister's point of view, the public's awareness of cultural heritage is essential for the development of democracy. If we do not know what history has given us, we will not be able to fight for a democratic society in the future. This is a responsibility that we have to take on.

There are different ways of looking at our heritage and our common or diverse identity. Of course there is a common culture in this part of Europe, but it also depends from where you are looking at it. So whilst diverse cultures do exist within the Baltic Sea region, there is at the same time, a common heritage.

An important purpose for this First Forum meeting is that there is a possible area here that is big enough to be a diverse cultural area, but importantly is also small enough to grasp and develop as part of a widening Europe.

