

Theme 1: Lessons learned and new challenges in the practical implementation of the Valletta Principles

5. BRUGES, WORLD HERITAGE CITY, A RISK ANALYSIS

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The historic city centre of Bruges is one of the largest World Heritage sites of the Benelux: 410 hectares, circa 20.000 inhabitants, numerous businesses and schools and millions of visitors each year. The management of this complex urban organism with thousands of stakeholders requires a thorough understanding of the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value of the site.

As a site manager, the city of Bruges has to translate this document into adequate regulations and urban planning tools. Therefore the SOUV was closely analyzed and dissected in key values and attributes. Conform the Valetta Principles these values and attributes range broadly: the inhabitants and the livability of the city, tangible and intangible elements, setting and skyline, integration of modern architecture,...

Together with the colleagues of the Flemish government we marked out seven key values, each with its specific attributes:

- *identity and continuity of an active, living city*: since medieval times, the city has thousands of inhabitants and a rich variety of urban functions, which are reflected in the architecture and urban structure
- *medieval heritage*: buildings, interiors, archives, collections, but also processions and legends
- *revival*: 19th and early 20th century neo-gothic and neo-Bruges architecture, restoration philosophy, romantic literature and painting
- *architectural ensemble*: a city with a remarkable visual coherence and harmony of changes (materials, building typology, roof structures, hierarchy, ...)
- *morphology*: a very recognizable city structure with radial main streets, squares, canals, ramparts, open spaces, parcels, ...
- *Flemish Primitives*: the birthplace of the school of the Flemish Primitives and medieval centre of patronage and painting development
- *skyline - relationship between the property and its setting*: a very specific skyline of towers and taller civic buildings, clear city borders, historic relationship with the environment

Each of these key values and attributes is confronted with opportunities, challenges and in some cases threats. The accurate identification of all these individual factors enables us as heritage consultants to communicate clearly to all stakeholders: citizens, architects, developers, ... but also the city council and other city or government departments. It is a necessary basis for all future heritage impact assessments (HIA's).