

# **THE HISTORIC CITY**

**A REFERENCE MODEL  
FOR URBAN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

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# INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development and the concern for the environment became an issue particularly in the 1970s and the 1980s.

The idea of “*sustainable development*” introduced by the Report of Brundtland Commission (1987) and the idea of “*integrated conservation*” of heritage buildings and sites introduced by the declaration of Amsterdam in 1975 have many common goals.

**Sustainability** has three main components: **environmental, social and economic**- of which the environmental takes precedence as it underscores the survival of all life forms in our planet. In the development process the human community and social, cultural and economic aspects, are seen as part of the global environment.

**Historic cities** start with two essential capitals: **first their built and natural environment and second their socio – cultural values** and the role that they perform in defining a sense of place, community belonging, and social cohesion.

The two movements meet in the city but have not yet become properly integrated. They approached the problem from different angles and they have moved along parallel paths until today, without significant interaction, though both disciplines are working towards **common aims** and each in its own way substantiates **the goal of long – term viability of the built and natural environment.** *(Robert Young 2004)*

**Sustainable development** and the concern for the environment have been introduced as a recommended strategy to combine what has been regarded as conflicting goals. It stresses the need for the carrying capacity of natural systems and integrates **environmental and social concerns into all development processes**. The issue is to monitor resources in relation to their uses and transformations with the purpose to maintain a steady state over an extended period of time. Numerous other definitions have been developed to define basic principles in the directions of **urban-planning protection**.

**Urban Conservation** has as its main aim to keep the past as part of the future of the built environment through the recognition of the social and economic values offered by the cultural past to the future societal viability. It adopts the principle of a **controlled-growth development while protecting the natural and cultural environment** and maintaining the historic character of each place.

Theoretical texts and guidelines analyze the basic principles of urban-planning protection, which always include **the concept of development in combination with the protection of the environment**.

## **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

The basic principles

- Improving the quality of life,
- Maintenance and improvement of ecological systems
- Avoidance of noise,
- Preventing atmospheric pollution,
- Developing of local resources,
- Reinforcement of the local economy, and economic self reliance
- Maximizing conservation
- Citizen participation

## **URBAN CONSERVATION**

The basic principles

- Improving the quality of life,
- Conservation of natural and man made environment.
- Avoidance of traffic pollution
- Maintenance of the local resources,
- Reinforcement of the local economy,
- Conservation and reuse
- Citizen participation

# COINCIDENCE BETWEEN CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

## A. THE TOURISM

The financial and social mutations, having at their core the issue of the repercussions of tourism on the social composition and on the cultural features of a region, are **a common problem** for the confrontation of both approaches

The natural and cultural landscape's capacity to accommodate the local effects of tourism, the typology thereof and its implications for the economy and the society constitute very important study objectives.

**A sustainable tourism development policy** aims at finding ways to protect the natural and cultural landscape through the development of new solutions which minimise the adverse effects of tourism.

**International texts on protection**, point out that the development of tourism in historic towns should be based on their spatial, functional and cultural capacity. Tourism should respect and support their identity, culture and local activities. Training and employment opportunities in traditional crafts, local material, should be very useful.

# COINCIDENCE BETWEEN CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

## B. TRANSPORT SYSTEMS

Transport systems constitute a **central issue for all parties** implicated in the design of the city, given that it has been proven that they can produce significant environmental impacts and enhance or degrade the quality of life

The creation of transport systems related to environmental and social concerns and non motorized modes of transport and circulation that minimize any ecological and environmental impact, and help to improve the socio-economic fabric of the city is a topic of the utmost importance for **an urban sustainable policy** all over the world.

Respectively, **from the side of urban conservation**, the issue of minimizing movement by car and encouraging alternative means of transportation is stressed in all theoretical texts.

# COINCIDENCE BETWEEN CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

## C. REUSE AND CONSERVATION

The principle of reuse and minimum intervention is shared by conservation and sustainability

## D. PARTICIPATION

Broad public participation in decision making is a fundamental prerequisite for achieving **sustainable development policies**.

This participation is all the more important because it is a matter not only of restoring a few privileged buildings but of rehabilitating whole areas. (**Declaration of Amsterdam**)

The participation and the involvement of the residents are essential for the success of the conservation programme and should be encouraged. The conservation of historic towns and urban areas concerns their residents first of all. (**Charter of Washington**)



# CONCLUSION

- As shown above the field of **sustainable development** originated from an overall general philosophy and is currently striving to become specific at a regional level, while the field of **heritage protection** is moving from a special place towards broader environmental challenges.
- **The combination** of the aforementioned policies and targets has a great number of **advantages**, mainly the broad acceptance, the great sensitization and the participation and mobilization of citizens, who are interested in the environment and realize more the danger for its destruction than the risks of the loss of cultural values.
- **Conservation and Sustainability** in historic cities are two key issues that should be related to each other and brought together in a common philosophy and practice.
- **The theoretical background of urban conservation** can be extended to wider agendas of sustainability and cultural identity
- The opportunity that now arises is to redefine conservation to make it relevant to sustainability and to address the **urban conservation as a determining factor in sustainable development**.