

Dear Colleagues, dear participants,

Time flies, and we are already at the close of this one day and a half-day session. It has been an inspiring and thought-provoking gathering, and I would like to begin by sincerely thanking each and every one of you, for your presence, your insights, and your contributions that have made this conference such a meaningful experience.

Over the past days, under the overarching theme **“Living Heritage,”** we have explored strategies for enhancing the resilience of historic cities in the face of disaster and rapid change.

What became immediately clear is that historic towns—whether in Latvia, Norway, Lebanon, or elsewhere—are not just collections of old buildings. They are **living environments.** They evolve, they breathe, and they adapt. And that means our approach to preservation must also evolve and adapt.

We are not simply protecting the past—we are **shaping the future through heritage.**

Preservation must be adaptive.

We have seen how towns like Kuldīga and Hamamönü have adapted over time. We have also seen how wooden settlements in Norway or mudbrick architecture in Lebanon are being revived—not only physically, but socially and economically—by reactivating traditional knowledge.

These stories remind us: **heritage is only alive when people are part of it.**

Which brings us to another central theme: **the power of traditional skills.**

From Norway to French Guiana to the Qaa Heritage Revival Project, we heard how traditional craftsmanship isn't just about materials or methods. It is about **identity, appropriation, resilience, and continuity.**

At the same time, we have seen powerful examples of **community participation**—a critical factor for any successful conservation effort.

Whether in Munich, Oran, Ilūkste, or even in the personal story of restoring a single wooden house in Talsi, we are reminded that real change often starts at the local level, with people who care.

Let's be clear: **community involvement is not optional—it's essential.**

It ensures that heritage is not something done *to* people, but *with* them.

It honors their knowledge, their lived experiences, and their connection to place.

Now, we must also face the reality that climate change is no longer a distant concern. It is already impacting our historic cities and landscapes. From fires and floods in France and Greece, to urban disasters in Japan and Türkiye, the threats are increasing.

But within this challenge lies a powerful opportunity.

Historic urban areas often hold the key to climate adaptation:

- We saw this in the *B_GREEN* project, which uses **nature-based solutions** in Mediterranean cities.
- In the use of **traditional, climate-resilient building techniques**.
- And in the value of **intangible practices** that offer flexible, sustainable ways to reuse and reinterpret heritage.

In other words:

Tradition is not the opposite of innovation—it's the foundation of it.

However, our discussions also highlighted new and urgent threats—not only from natural disasters, but from our own decisions.

Uncontrolled development, excessive tourism, and poorly planned urban policies are now among the greatest risks to heritage resilience.

In Munich, for instance, we saw how high-rise construction can disrupt not only skylines, but the very identity of the city. In Greece, we heard how excessive construction and tourism expansion are eroding the environmental and cultural capacity of sensitive sites.

There is a strong call for **better balance**—for planning that respects **heritage, identity, and environmental values**.

And perhaps one of the most moving threads throughout this conference was the emphasis on **intangible cultural heritage**—the spirit of place, the stories, the memory, the names, the skills, and the meanings that animate our built environment.

These elements are not side notes.

They are **central to resilience**.

They strengthen **social cohesion**, guide **post-crisis recovery**, and help us hold onto identity in times of change.

So, what do we take away from all of this?

Across all the presentations, a **shared call to action** emerged. We need:

- **Training and capacity building**, especially in traditional construction skills.
- **Inclusive, collaborative governance**, involving residents, professionals, and civil society.
- **Modern, adaptable policy tools** for disaster risk management and conservation.
- **Strong scientific research and interdisciplinary models** to guide long-term, sustainable decisions.
- And **Funding for Equity**.

And it is important to note:

Many of these tools already exist. We need to bring them to the **local level**.

The challenge now is not invention - it is **implementation**.

It is about **political will, shared responsibility**, and the **courage to act**.

We saw promising examples in France, in Regensburg, and elsewhere. The knowledge is there. The methods are there. What is needed is the **collective commitment to put them into practice**.

In conclusion:

We are at a **turning point**—and new ways of working are needed.

All actors must be engaged: specialists, communities, stakeholders, and beyond.

This conference has confirmed something very important:

Our historic cities, towns, and villages are **not fragile relics**—they are **living laboratories of resilience**.

They are home to stories, to memory, to identity—and they are shaped not only by time, but by **the people who care for them**.

So let us leave here today with a renewed sense of purpose—not only to **protect** heritage, but to **live it, share it, and sustain it** together.

And finally, once again, thank you to our hosts:

the Kuldīga Municipality, ICOMOS Latvia and our CIVVIH colleagues from Latvia.

Thank you.

Paula Cordeiro
CIVVIH President



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