

Revitalisation of Vilnius Old Town. Social and Economic integration.

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1. Present situation

Protection of cultural heritage causes a complex of problems in the countries under transition. It implicates vast range of cultural, legal, social problems, which have to be worked out every day. The need to counterbalance public and private interests, control cultural heritage protection process, follow international recommendations pointed out the lack of training and education of the cultural heritage decision-makers, officials and managers of all levels. Increasing role of the private sector and external financing clear up the situation when authorities are incapable of effectively guide ongoing process. In particular the inclusion of historic towns and cultural landscapes in specific categories of protection (e.g. region's World Heritage Cities), made the role of authorities responsible for legislation, norms and planning decision crucial.

Changes in Property Status after 1990

During Soviet Occupation time (1940-1990) the conservation of cultural heritage was realised as a necessary condition for the restoration of Lithuanian independence. Three Regeneration projects of Historic Centre were prepared during that period (1954; 1988 and 1992). The restoration of significant architectural monuments and complexes revealed many faded or damaged historical elements. In addition, parts of valuable buildings (churches, palaces, etc.) were not being used for their proper purposes; this reduced their authenticity, though in a physical sense the buildings survived. In the Soviet period, however, the government did not allot enough resources for the maintenance and repairs of housing, therefore, in 1990 - the period of the restoration of independence of the Lithuanian State - many of them were very dilapidated.

Fifty years of totalitarian regime have changed people's attitude to the maintenance of their houses and other immovable property. Living conditions in Lithuanian historic centres during soviet times were rather poor; number of flats had no hot water or sewerage. Houses were state owned and people were not used to take care about a proper repair of the buildings in spite of the fact that these were valuable heritage objects. After the privatisation of flats situation did not change at once. It was expected that after privatisation the owners would establish Home Owners Associations. Unfortunately, since the foundation of these Associations was left voluntary, the process of their establishment was very slow due to ineffective legal regulations and no supportive incentives.

According to the Vilnius Old Town Regeneration Project (1992) there were 5% of buildings that were almost ruined or required heavy restoration works. Unfortunately most of those buildings remain in the same condition today, because these buildings have no owner that can afford proper restoration. These buildings can be divided into several groups according the ownership and financing problems. Large ensembles of monasteries and churches were restituted to the Catholic Church and other religious communities, but the Church is not able to finance the restoration of all its' properties. There are municipal buildings which were rented according to the lease contract to legal persons (companies) and those companies are also financially too weak to start the restoration. Usual annual municipal budget also does not include complex restoration of buildings. There are private flats and buildings restituted to their former owners, but these owners also cannot afford the

renovation costs. System of credit mechanisms was created not long before, but it is still not effective.

Awareness raising

Until now there are no systematic training and education of decision-makers, officials and managers in the field of cultural heritage protection. Significant results were achieved in allocations made from the World Heritage Fund to support training activities based in Vilnius (in 1997, 1998, 1999). As the result of this activity, the Academy of Cultural Heritage (ACH) was established by Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania, Department of Cultural Heritage Protection, Vilnius University, Vilnius Art Academy, and Vilnius Gediminas Technical University in June 1998 (see Annex 1). The Academy's regional mandate was recognized in its statutes and supported by Ministers of Culture of Estonia, Latvia, Belarus and the Ukraine. The regional activities of the Academy are actively supported by ICCROM (International Centre for the Study of Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property, Rome) within the framework of ITUC program (Integrated Territorial Urban Conservation).

The financial support of the World Heritage fund, ICCROM, Canadian Urban Institute and Lithuanian institutions was used to organize seminars and training courses mainly in benefit of managers whose decisions affect the qualities of the region's inscribed World Heritage Cities. The courses on integrated urban conservation were given in Nida (October 27-31, 1997), the seminar and training courses on the new construction in historical environment were given in Vilnius and Druskininkai (October 23-24 and 26-30, 1998) and the seminar and training courses on the problems of investment and revitalization of the historic city centers were given in Vilnius and Kaunas (November 6 and 8-11, 1999). Since 1998 seminars and courses were organized by the ACH in close collaboration with ICCROM, its partners, international experts and attended by participants from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus and the Ukraine.

Short courses may change attitudes and serve a role of sharing information, but in isolation they cannot change the situation essentially. The need of permanent training linked to higher education institutions was emphasized. In 1999 the ACH carried out a survey of academic training opportunities and needs in Lithuania and within the region. Meetings of experts from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus and the Ukraine (April 16-18, 1999 - Belarus; April 19-20, 1999 – Latvia/Estonia; July 29, 1999 – Lithuania) showed, that the cultural heritage training system of the former Soviet republics was developing under more or less similar historical circumstances and now faces similar problems: the lack of financial and human resources, no systematically given training courses, poor education and training of managers, decision-makers and officials working in the field of cultural heritage protection. The survey completed by the ACH showed that given courses are of different professional standards, some of them are unsystematic and the lack of expediency is evident. Nevertheless, each country of the region has achieved appropriate results and gained experience in a particular sphere of training. The existing material and human resources are to form the basis of the network.

Cultural heritage protection training is a specific issue, since it requires specialized training in addition to normal professional preparation. Each specialist, contributing from his or her own specialization, must act as an integrated part of the process. The ACH suggested a model of professional cultural heritage protection studies' system in Lithuania, which particularly could be applied to the regional level as well

2. Management of Cultural heritage property

Vilnius Old Town Revitalisation Strategy

Over six years have passed since the Old Town of Vilnius was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List (in 1994). During this period, the renewal of the Old Town was a primary focus of funds and technical assistance from the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, the Vilnius Municipality, UNESCO, UNDP, the Danish Government, other international organisations and local and foreign experts.

A Revitalisation Strategy for Vilnius Old Town was prepared in 1995-1996 on the request of the Prime Minister and the Mayor of Vilnius, with the support of UNESCO, the World Bank, the Governments of Denmark and Norway and the Edinburgh Old Town Renewal Trust. Strategy contained an integrated approach for revitalizing Vilnius Old Town, including the creation of a new management and co-ordination institutions – Vilnius Old Town Revitalization Fund and Old Town Renewal Agency (OTRA), supervised by a Supervision Council.

During the implementation of the Strategy many significant renewal and restoration works were implemented in Vilnius Old Town. The amount allotted from the budget to the renewal of the Old Town totalled more than 20 million USD in a course of last five years. This budget was used for investigation/design works, improving the exterior of buildings and the roofs, streets and pedestrian areas, public squares, parks and courtyards, decorative lighting. Private sector at the same time financed five times more (approximately 100 million USD). The allocations amounted to 5,8 mln. USD from the state/municipal budget in 1998, 5,6 mln. USD - in 1999 and 5,7 mln.USD in 2000. The allocations from private capital funds amounted 25 mln. in 1998, 21 mln. USD in 1999 and 30 mln. USD in 2000.

There was an evident difference in renewal works done by small private owners, large investors and by the state sector. Private owners usually improved only environment of their property: a house, an office or a shop. Large investors tried to adopt buildings to new functional needs, but at the same time paid attention to the conservation and preservation of authentic elements of the building. State and municipal resources were used for the improvement of public areas: squares, lighting of streets and heritage buildings, improvement of pavements, painting of facades in the main streets. The citizens evaluated these public works very positively. The quality of works in the Old Town is constantly improving. Special plaster is used for socles that it does not allow to penetrate moisture to the building. Hydroisolation of foundations is done during the repair of the facades. Water drainage equipment is installed in streets and pavements, cables are hidden within facades. Polychromic research was done and exterior painting was conserved and exposed in several buildings.

However conservation specialists have some critical remarks regarding the recent renewal works too. Historic buildings during centuries obtained specific look on the surface - patina produced by age. Patina of the material surface allows feeling authenticity and prints of historic craftsmanship. The old building should preserve aged curved walls with soft edges, wavy vaults, and soft lime painting surfaces with rough strokes of the brush. Unfortunately walls and vaults of restored buildings often have very plane and thick layer of new plaster, sharp edges and they are painted with synthetic filmy painting. Lime and lime mortar always was used as a main material for binding stones and bricks in Lithuania. Lime was also used for artificial decorative and protective finishing layers, also for painting facades using different techniques. Lime painting was used for centuries for exterior and interior surfaces. It always corresponded requirements of material conciliation and reversibility. Cement mixed mortar and synthetic painting cause beginning of break-up of the wall. Unfortunately, cement and synthetic painting were used in restored buildings in 1970- 1980 and sometimes even now, though conservation specialists in other countries refused to use these modern materials in restored buildings.

Administrative Aspects of the Old Town protection

After independence was re-established in Lithuania in 1990, the system for protection of historical monuments was reorganised. Especially since the adoption of the Law on

Protection of Immovable Cultural Properties (1994) and the Law on Protection of Movable Cultural Properties (1996), the structure of the administration of cultural heritage in Lithuania underwent considerable changes.

The State Commission for Cultural Heritage Protection is the institution held accountable to the Seimas (Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania) with regard to formulation of the state policy and strategy on protection of state monuments and management of the implementation of the state policy.

The Ministry of Culture, the Department of Cultural Heritage Protection is responsible for the protection of cultural properties in Lithuania. The functions of the department include the responsibility for the operations involving accident prevention, repair, adaptation, research, conservation, restoration and others; establishing protection zones; preparing and managing the Register of Immovable Cultural Property. In addition, the tasks include the issuing licenses to conservation experts; assembling, systematization and dissemination of information concerning cultural property and methods of its protection; organization of state record, scientific research and propagation of cultural property.

Local government establishes its conservation heritage services. In accordance with the Local Government Law, municipal institutions take care of cultural heritage objects only in cases when they are municipal property (inventory, listing, repair, etc). Otherwise municipalities are not legally entitled to take care of the private cultural heritage objects located in their territory. Now the idea of co-operation between municipal and private sector is very much supported in municipal level, so there are first examples when local government and private owner share the conservation costs. The level of autonomy and decision-making power of local conservation heritage services compare to governmental authorities is rather small. Today the legal interaction between the government and municipal structures is not clearly defined, especially with regard to functions related to the protection and management of cultural heritage objects.

The role of Vilnius Old Town Renewal Agency (OTRA)

The revitalisation that was based on dynamic changes in the economy and social structure, required the introduction of new management methods, and structures.

The Vilnius Old Town Renewal Agency (OTRA) was established in 1998 as the main instrument for the implementation of Vilnius Old Town Revitalization Strategy. The Agency works under the control of the Municipality and Supervision Council. Chairmen of the Council are the Mayor of the City and the Minister of Culture. Old Town Renewal Agency's main tasks include: development and implementation of Old Town renewal programs; involvement of the local community and businessmen in the revitalization process; promotion of investment in the Old Town and co-ordination of state, public and private needs; promotion of co-operation between international partners. Vilnius Old Town Renewal Agency is the new institution, which is intended to become a bridge between the government and the local community.

2000-2002 Vilnius Old Town Revitalization Program

2000-2002 Vilnius Old Town Revitalization Program was developed by OTRA and approved by the Government of Lithuania. The main tasks foreseen in the Program are:

1. BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY
2. REGIONAL COOPERATION:
 - support of close co-operation with international organizations;
 - co-operation with other world heritage cities;
 - presentation of the Old Town on an international scale.
3. LEGAL ECONOMIC MEANS:

- harmonization of the legal documents related to investment into the Old Town, simplification of the process of approval of conservation activities and the issuance of building permits.

4. DATA and EVALUATION:

- collection of data regarding the course of Old Town revitalization and investment opportunities and presentation of information to the local community, potential investors and the public;
- publication of informational booklets and organization of exhibitions;
- observation, analysis and evaluation of the social state of the Old Town and its impact on the historical-cultural environment.

Building Community Capacity

New social groups coming to the Old Town seek to improve their living environment and implement their business plans. These goals often completely fail to take into account and evaluate peculiarities of the existing urban context and, as a result, ignore conservation of the historically shaped character and authentic values. None of the social groups residing or basing their business in the Old Town has sufficient knowledge about the history, culture, heritage values of their city and their conservation.

Awareness rising of the Old Town community is very important social goal, which is implemented with efforts of the Agency. Community education forms part of the Old Town renewal program and will become one of the priorities for the activities being developed for the Agency's Information Center.

Since 1998, the Vilnius Old Town Renewal Agency has been seeking to involve private funds in the works of improvement of buildings and their surroundings, however, no appropriate legal mechanism existed in 1998-1999. In 1999-2000 financial support for the Community Development project was provided by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Lithuania. The project goal was to involve Old Town residents with the maintenance of the Old Town buildings and their surrounding areas and to encourage setting up of homeowners associations of residential buildings. At public meetings specialists introduced to the residents the Old Town Renewal programs, peculiarities of renovation and maintenance of buildings and yards, energy conservation and housing heating issues and made a presentation on opportunities of long-term subsidized loans. Special attention was paid to problems of homeowners associations. Information handouts on how to set up a residential homeowners association were prepared for owners of each building.

An information brochure *How to Participate in Vilnius Old Town Renewal Program* was published. Opportunities and conditions for residents to participate in the maintenance of Vilnius Old Town and listing criteria for evaluation of Vilnius Old Town sites, including a questionnaire for Old Town residents were included into the brochure. The list of Vilnius Old Town properties to be renovated was made based on the evaluation criteria and principles of their application approved by Vilnius City Board. The following criteria are applied:

1. By heritage conservation characteristic of the property
2. By property function
3. By financial-social profitability of the property
4. By ratio of financial support to the applicant's investment
5. By applicant's effort to maintain the property and protect its cultural and historic values or improve the environment.
6. By physical condition of the property
7. By ownership status of the property

Criteria and their application principles have to become a precondition and a guarantee in the development of relationships of mutual trust and co-operation between Vilnius City Municipality, Vilnius Old Town Renewal Agency (OTRA) and the Old Town community. The main goal of these criteria and their application principles is to create conditions for public and transparent use of the state and private funds for the maintenance and renewal of the Old Town and the preservation of cultural values.

Discussions in the working group of the Old Town Renewal Program are held involving applicants. The Supervisory Council and competent investment experts may be called for additional reviews. Decision results approved by Vilnius City Board are made public.

In accordance with Resolution passed by Vilnius City Board on January 25, 2001, in performing of co-operation of the state (municipal) and private funds, the following principles are applied: up to 50 percent of the renewal cost of street facades and building surroundings, up to 40 percent of the renewal cost of the yard facade and its landscaping and up to 50 percent of the roof renovation cost will be covered using the state and municipal funds.

After Vilnius Old Town Renewal Program 2000 had been approved by the City Board intensive negotiations with chairmen of homeowners' associations of these buildings and representatives of owners started over making agreements regarding joint financing of building renovation. Not all owners managed to come to an agreement regarding financing, since many complained of the worsened financial situation, and, as a result agreements with seven homeowners were made regarding financial participation in the renovation of their buildings and yards. As many as 35 homeowners submitted applications to participate in the Old Town Renewal Program 2001, assuming an obligation to make a 50 percent contribution to the renovation of their building and surrounding area, following the procedure developed by OTRA and approved by the City Board.

Co-operation with the Old Town community is little by little resulting in awareness, participation and improvement of living environment joining private and public funds. This will gradually influence the increasing quantity and quality of conservation/restoration works. Cultural heritage should become recognised and valuable object of the community interest and indicator of quality of living environment.

Data Base Development and Information

In recent years with the growth in the rate and volume of Vilnius Old Town renovation and with more active resident and investor participation in the process, the need for information, education and training in the area of management, maintenance and use of immovable cultural properties increased significantly. The Agency develops and updates the Old Town database accessible to the public.

Since 1998 Vilnius Old Town Renewal Agency makes Environment Impact Assessment of the Renewal Program. Data are evaluated from social-economic, heritage conservation and technological perspectives each year.

The Information Center of Vilnius Old Town Renewal Agency that started its operation at the end of 2000 provides for consistent and regular information for residents about the Old Town renewal programmes and activities; the development plans, investment or renewal works; the conservation and management of heritage properties. The Center also prepares and implements training programs in integrated heritage conservation for schoolchildren, investors and other stakeholder groups in order to increase awareness and interest in the values of Vilnius Old Town, methods of their preservation, legal documents regulating their preservation and maintenance. Seminars for property owners and contractors on the specific features of heritage buildings renewal and renovation were organized together with specialists from Monuments Restorations Institute. Restorers and conservation specialists explained the value of traditional materials and technologies, also qualities of new progressive technologies. These seminars directly influenced further renewal works.

The Information center should gradually become a center for education in the field of heritage conservation and renewal and for specialized exhibitions, discussions and other public events. The involvement of children and young people in the centre's activities should in time become one of the priorities.

The Role of International Co-Operation

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has providing support for the revitalisation of the Vilnius Old Town. In 1999, the World Heritage Centre approved the UNESCO - UN/UNDP Technical Assistance Programme. The programme included promotion of public involvement, dissemination of information among the population and investors, and the improvement of management processes within Vilnius Old Town Revitalisation Agency. A feasibility study for a pilot project (block of Augustian Monastery) was prepared. Two seminars, "Safety of People and Property in the Vilnius Old Town" and an international seminar "Investment Environment in Historic City Centres" have been held.

Citizen's participation in the Old Town Revitalization process was the main achievement of the program that influenced on the development of positive social climate in the community. Implementation of this part of the program was especially important because of the lack of attention to this sphere of activities from the side of local government.

UNESCO/WHC- UN/UNDP Technical Assistance Program had a very positive impact on implementation of integrated urban conservation management principles under conditions of transition economy and changes in social life. The implementation of the Technical Assistance Program made a positive influence not just for Vilnius City, but also for all Lithuania and for the surrounding region improving common understanding of the society on the importance of World heritage maintenance and preservation.

International Center for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) through its ITUC (Integrated Territorial and Urban Conservation) Regional Programme in North-East Europe (Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and the Ukraine) has committed its supporting through ensuring access to appropriate training. Since 1997, ICCROM's NE Europe ITUC programme, frequently in co-operation with the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, has organised series of training workshops and seminars in Lithuania. These seminars were designed specifically for managers whose decisions can have an impact on the cultural heritage values of historic settlements. These activities have demonstrated the importance of understanding the integrated approach to urban conservation and has equipping managers with negotiation and conflict resolution skills which are necessary to achieve the heritage objectives in the diverse economic and social environments.

3. Evaluation of Vilnius Old Town revitalisation strategy implementation

One of the results that has occurred as a consequence of the changes to the environment stimulated by the Old Town revitalisation activities, is that the opinion of both Lithuanian citizens and foreign guests on the Old Town has generally improved. The new image has given confidence to instigate further improvements to the development processes both in Vilnius and in the country as a whole. In securing improvements to the quality of the processes, special attention to the Old Town remains an important and indispensable strategy.

The preconditions for the attainment of the long-term substantial objectives of the strategy have been established and partially achieved:

- the interaction between public and private investment by co-ordinating common interests;

- the involvement of residents and businessmen in the renewal process, co-operation of private and public funds;
- a more consistent and effective utilisation of public funds in managing cultural properties and encouraging owners to protect them;
- increasing residents' and entrepreneurs' confidence in the municipal authorities and transparency in the use of public investments for the benefit of the Old Town and its residents.

During the international conference, Vilnius Old Town Revitalization Strategy: Implementation: Co-operation, Results, Vision" held on September 15-16, 2000, the results achieved in the Old Town management process were evaluated as very important, well timed and effective. The participants of the Conference emphasized the significance of common efforts of Lithuanian and international partners to revitalize Vilnius Old Town and recognized that Vilnius Old Town Revitalization Program was one of the most successful investment projects during the period of 1998-2000 and an example of successful co-operation between Lithuanian Government, Vilnius Municipality, foreign donors and private capital. Lithuanian government also recognized the implementation of the program as the most successful state investment project in the urban field.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

„VILNIUS OLD TOWN REVITALISATION STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION:
COOPERATION, RESULTS, VISION"

September 15-16, 2000, Vilnius

RESOLUTION

Emphasising the significance of the Vilnius Old Town for the world cultural and historical heritage, and common efforts of Lithuanian and international partners to revitalise this site, inscribed on the UNESCO World Natural and Cultural Heritage list;

acknowledging that Vilnius Old Town is and will remain a place representing Lithuanian history, culture and progress;

recognising that Vilnius Old Town Revitalisation Program is one of the most successful investment projects during the period of 1998-2000 and an example of successful co-operation between Lithuanian Government, Vilnius Municipality, foreign donors and private capital;

seeking to improve the efficiency and quality of the Old Town revitalization programs, as well as to secure progressive long term results for the benefit of social-economic development of this area, city and Country;

seeking to guarantee the implementation of the Vilnius Old Town Revitalization Strategy, prepared and executed with the assistance of the World Bank, United Nations Development Program (UNDP), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), International Center for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Denmark, Norway, Scotland and private consultants, become exemplary and be followed in Lithuania and the Central, and Eastern European region;

The participants of the conference call for the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, the Municipal Council of Vilnius, international partners to continue to pay exceptional attention to the implementation of the Vilnius Old Town Revitalization Strategy, by

authorizing Vilnius Old Town Renewal Agency (OTRA), The Supervision Council and Vilnius Old Town Revitalization Fund (OTRF), to implement the following measures:

1. **To continue to implement the Old Town Revitalisation work** as foreseen in the 2000-2002 Old Town Revitalisation Program approved by the Government of Lithuania; and to introduce the priority principles laid out in the 'Work Plan for 2000 –2005' presented at the Conference.
2. **To develop an integrated and publicly accessible information source on property ownership, funding sources and etc** which would ensure more effective and "transparent" management processes for the revitalisation of the Old Town and offer the opportunity for everyone to participate in the program.
3. **To support and increase public involvement in the preservation and revitalisation of the Old Town:**
 - to stimulate interest and awareness of the Old Town cultural and urban environment, support financially and promote preservation, improvement and revitalisation initiatives of the environment,
 - to consult and inform the public about heritage values, their conservation and integration into everyday life,
 - to establish OTRA information centre.
4. **To seek for a more effective management of the program and quality of work:**
 - after harmonisation of the main functions of the institutions responsible for the implementation of the Vilnius Old Town Revitalisation Program, namely OTRA, OTRF and Vilnius Old Town Restoration Directorate, to entrust them with legal status and authorisations foreseen in the Old Town Revitalisation Strategy,
 - to entrust OTRA and OTRF with the responsibility of preparing a comprehensive register of the Old Town properties belonging to the Municipality and, after the preparation of necessary legal deeds, make recommendations to the Vilnius City Council and the Government of Lithuania to consider the establishment of a specific fund from a percentage of the proceeds from sale, rent or lease of the publicly owned properties as a permanent resource to be offered as loans and grants on a revolving basis,
 - after evaluating good international practices to develop and implement economic-financial model of public involvement in the Old Town Revitalisation Program, which would insure transparent use of public funds.
5. **To co-ordinate activities, pay exceptional attention and allocate funds** for the infrastructure development in the Old Town and other surrounding areas, which have direct influence to the Old Town. The priorities for implementation: reconstruction of water-supply system, water purification, sewerage, electric power systems, renewal of streets, organisation of traffic, establishment of parking lots; preparation of investment projects and feasibility studies for potential use for recreation and tourism of Neris and Vilnele rivers and Kalnu park, the conversion of industrial zone of Paupys site, prison which is located in Viziticiu Monastery and military area in Kalnu park.
6. **To continue to forge links for international co-operation**, ensuring exchange of progressive international experience in the field of integrated urban conservation for the benefit of the continuity and efficiency of the Old Town revitalisation process.