



UNION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN AND THE UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE CENTRE

World Heritage City Lab

Concept Note

Living with World Heritage: Adaptive Reuse and Regeneration in the Euro-Mediterranean region

on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of UNESCO's Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape

17-18 May 2021

Rationale and overall purpose

According to studies conducted by the United Nations, globally, more people live in urban areas than in rural areas, with 55 per cent of the world's population residing in urban areas in 2018 (Europe 74%, Asia approximately 50%, Africa 43%). In 1950, 30% of the world's population was urban. Between 2020 and 2050, globally, the portion of people living in urban areas is expected to shift from 53% to 68%.¹ In this context, Africa is projected to have the fastest urban growth rate in the world: by 2050, Africa's cities will be home to an additional 950 million people.²



Cities and settlements have grown rapidly and exponentially, often inadequately planned, and yet, at the same time, many of them have evolved over centuries as rich repositories of history, heritage and identity. Their diversity of forms reflects the historical encounters, environments and influences that each city or settlement has experienced.

The Mediterranean region is among the most densely populated areas around a sea in the world.³ The total population of the Mediterranean countries grew from 276 million in 1970 to 512 million in 2018, and it is expected to grow by an additional 182 million inhabitants by

¹ World Urbanization Prospects - The 2018 Revision. UN/DESA, 1 January 2019.

² Africa's Urbanization Dynamics 2020. OECD, 7 February 2020.

³ Statistics on European Neighbourhood Policy countries: South — 2020 edition. Eurostat 19 May 2020.

2050. The coastal strip is becoming increasingly populated and built up, and concentrates most of the major cities, many transport routes (roads, ports, airports), industrial and energy infrastructure.⁴ The Mediterranean is also home to more than 150 UNESCO World Heritage cities that testify its rich, long, and multi-layered history.

The unique historic heritage of cities around the Mediterranean calls for special attention to traditional forms of urbanisation, with the conservation of unique architectural and urban heritage, including some of the most impressive human achievements in urbanisation and architecture. Rapid and unplanned development of major urban areas, coupled with the onset of climate change, has caused a fast decline of many historical city centres, raising concerns on the state of conservation of the World Heritage properties, endangering cultural heritage, urban landscapes and the unique identity of the Mediterranean region.

The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) is an intergovernmental organisation with 42 Member States. Its membership covers all EU Member States and all the other Mediterranean littoral countries, among others. In view of the fact that global challenges are interconnected and can only be addressed through reinvigorated multilateralism,⁵ the Union for the Mediterranean has devised with the World Heritage Centre as a Knowledge Partner, a *UfM Strategic Urban Development Action Plan 2040 for sustainable, resilient and inclusive cities and communities in the Mediterranean* and a *UfM Housing Action Plan* for affordable and sustainable housing as a vector for inclusive, integrated and sustainable urban development and regeneration in the region. The Action Plans acknowledge that culture, heritage and historical landscapes are key to creating sustainable and inclusive economies in the region, not only through tourism, but also via the cultural and social embeddedness of the solutions pursued. The Action Plans recommend an integrated heritage strategy for the conservation and sustainable use of the valuable cultural heritage of the region, including its architectural and urban heritage, while integrating heritage conservation with sustainable urban development, including culture-specific housing. The 2011 UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL Recommendation) has been mainstreamed into the UfM Action Plans as a holistic approach to achieving these objectives. Also, a Mediterranean Heritage Knowledge Hub is planned to be established with a view to facilitate integration of UNESCO's aforementioned Recommendation and related projects, including heritage protection and peer-to-peer learning and exchange of experiences for local, regional and national policymakers on financing and managing the conservation and re-use of built heritage in cities in line with circular economy models.

In fact, many historic city centres that have been continuously inhabited for centuries, need improvements to make them liveable and sustainable in the contemporary context. Historic cities, over time may have become overcrowded, decrepit, and poor, or abandoned and desolate as residents leave for better opportunities. The HUL Recommendation provides a framework for considering policies, actions, and investments for regeneration and adaptive reuse of historic urban centres towards making them more inclusive, safe, and sustainable. UNESCO's approach to managing historic places is holistic in that it integrates the goals of urban heritage conservation and those of social and economic development. This method

⁴ SoED 2020: State of Environment and Development in the Mediterranean. UNEP/MAP, 21 October 2020.

⁵ Declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations. UNGA, 16 September 2020.

regards urban heritage as a social, cultural and economic asset for the development of cities. This way, the approach of the HUL Recommendation moves beyond the preservation of the physical environment and focuses on the entire human environment with all its tangible and intangible qualities. It also seeks to increase the sustainability of planning and design interventions, by taking into account the existing built environment, intangible heritage, cultural diversity, socio-economic and environmental factors, along with local community values.

The HUL Recommendation was adopted by the UNESCO's General Conference on 10 November 2011. The key findings of the Second Member State Survey on the Implementation of the HUL Recommendation (2019) reflect that the Recommendation needs to be implemented as an urgent and necessary tool for resolving the conflicting demands of heritage conservation and urban development towards more sustainable cities. This is necessary both for those cities that have properties inscribed on the World Heritage List and those that do not. With increasing threats from poorly planned urban development, World Heritage Committee decisions have identified the need to better address urban pressures for development in and around World Heritage properties (Decision 41 COM 7; Decision 43 COM 7.3) as well as emphasized the crucial importance of implementing the HUL Recommendation for World Heritage cities (Decision 42 COM 5A).

The UNESCO World Heritage Centre is the Secretariat of the 1972 World Heritage Convention governed by the intergovernmental World Heritage Committee. As part of its activities, the World Heritage Cities Programme is one of the six thematic programmes approved and monitored by the World Heritage Committee since 2001. Today, 313 properties inscribed on the World Heritage List are part of the World Heritage Cities Programme. These properties are inscribed for their Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) that makes the heritage valuable not only to that country or city but to all of humanity, and hence must be protected as a joint effort. Towards this, the properties must ensure the conditions of authenticity and integrity. The local attributes of urban heritage identity must be protected to ensure continued significance and manage change over time.

The seminar will focus on various issues and look for practical examples that could support the better integration of urban heritage management in urban development processes.

Objectives

1. Discuss opportunities and challenges for urban regeneration in historic cities in the Mediterranean region.
2. Discuss methods and approaches to adaptive reuse in historic cities in the Mediterranean region.
3. Examine some case studies to develop some general recommendations.

Format

Technical
2 day Zoom conference

Working languages

English, French, Arabic with simultaneous interpretation.

Tentative Programme**Monday, 17 May**

10.00 – 10.10 Opening Speeches

10:10 – 10:20 UNESCO keynote speech on the 'HUL Recommendation Approach to integrating Urban Heritage in Urban Processes'

10.20 – 10.35 Intervention by institutional representative

10:35 – 10:50 Intervention by institutional representative

10:50 – 11:05 Intervention by institutional representative

11:05 – 11:20 Case Study

11:20 – 12:00 Discussion

Tuesday, 18 May

10.00 – 10:15 Intervention by institutional representative

10.15 – 10:30 Intervention by institutional representative

10:30 – 10:45 Intervention by institutional representative

10:45 – 11:00 Intervention by institutional representative

11:05 – 11:20 Case Study

11:15 – 11:55 Discussion

11:55 – 12:00 Closing