

Urban Heritage in Europe: Economic and Social Revival. Edited by Gábor Sonkoly.

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Urban Heritage in Europe: Economic and Social Revival is a collective book edited by Gábor Sonkoly that addresses one of the most pressing challenges in contemporary urban planning: balancing the need for economic and social development with the preservation of historical urban environments. It takes a critical, multidisciplinary approach, drawing on diverse case studies across Europe to show how heritage can be a vehicle for both cultural preservation and urban regeneration. By using the framework of “regimes of urban heritage,” the authors outline how European cities are navigating these complexities. Although diverse regions of Europe are spanned, particular emphasis is placed on Central Europe, with chapters focusing on Kraków, Budapest, Ljubljana, Subotica, and Szentendre. This regional focus explores the distinctive challenges of urban heritage in post-socialist countries, where the transition from political upheaval to modern development frames the discussion. However, we are also offered broader insights into Western and Northern European cities, such as Edinburgh and Rome, allowing for a comparative perspective on heritage management across different historical and political contexts.

The book is structured into five parts, each focusing on a distinct aspect of urban heritage. Part I introduces the interconnectedness of historical preservation and current urban expansion, highlighting the importance of incorporating urban heritage into the framework of contemporary city planning. Gábor Sonkoly starts by unpacking the history and evolution of urban heritage in Europe, outlining its development from the reaction of urban places to the modern onslaught of industrialization to its foundational role in modern planning. Using his framework of “regimes of urban heritage,” he explicates an evolution of approaches to conservation and heritage preservation from the narrow monumentalism framework to the modern regenerative and sustainable urban heritage city. Case studies of Kaunas

and Leipzig illustrate how these approaches are reshaping urban identity. Similarly, Jacek Purchla's study of Kraków highlights the city's challenges in balancing heritage preservation with modern needs, particularly in managing tourism and maintaining cultural identity. Kraków's history, developing from being a historical city to being a modern heritage city, highlights the difficulties of conserving culture and heritage, as well as what it should do to exist as a contemporary metropolis. Purchla's analysis reflects one of the broader themes of the book: how heritage shapes the future of European cities.

Part II focuses on the challenges of conserving historical sites in modern urban contexts, including balancing preservation with social demands and maintaining authenticity while adjusting to changes. Robert J. Morris examines the transformation of Edinburgh Castle from a military fortress to a heritage site and major tourist attraction, illustrating how its identity has evolved over 200 years through a series of renovations. The author expresses concerns regarding the impact of mass tourism on heritage integrity, particularly in the light of disruptions like COVID-19, and questions the ability of these sites to maintain authenticity amid commodification pressures. In parallel, Lilla Zábó investigates the Subotica Synagogue, a prominent instance of Art Nouveau architecture, outlining its transformation from a religious site to a representation of local and national identity. She highlights the building's architectural significance and the social-political tensions it encountered throughout history. Zábó advocates for further investigation into the impacts of ongoing urban development and rising tourism on the synagogue's status, asserting that its significance transcends aesthetic considerations and necessitates strategies that promote enhanced community engagement and sustainable preservation methods.

Part III examines the challenges urban spaces encounter in maintaining their historical and cultural identity while accommodating contemporary urban needs, advocating for a balanced approach that respects historical integrity while embracing necessary modernization. Kinga Szilágyi, Ana Kučan, and Richard Stiles examine the evolution of urban parks in Vienna, Budapest, and Ljubljana, introducing their transformation from aristocratic gardens to public spaces integral to urban heritage and landscape architecture. The role of Enlightenment ideals and urban planning in democratizing spaces is emphasized, underlining their contribution to public accessibility and social and urban development. They advocate for additional research on current issues, including conservation, modernization, and the significance of parks in contemporary urban life. Péter Erdósi examines Szentendre, Hungary, showing the influence of Serbian immigration and the town's architecture on its urban heritage. He examines the transformation of the town into a cultural centre for artists and the preservation initiatives following World War II, pointing out the significance of visual arts and the synergy between architectural and artistic

heritage in defining Szentendre's identity. Erdősi advocates for a dynamic methodology in heritage conservation, arguing for the reconciliation of the demands of tourism and modernization with the safeguarding of local cultural heritage.

Part IV examines the complexities of urban heritage conservation within different contexts, stressing that there is a delicate balance between local, national, and global narratives. Tanja Vahtikari, for instance, delves into the Nordic countries' collaboration on UNESCO World Heritage harmonization, exploring the balance between local, national, and global heritage narratives. She critically examines the integration of cultural and natural heritage within the 'cultural landscape' framework, emphasizing the evolving concept of Nordic heritage from rigid to more nuanced understandings. Yet, the investigation suggests a deeper analysis of regional harmonization's impact on local perceptions and that the prioritization of natural over urban heritage could enrich the discourse. Lucia Bordone focuses on Rome's urban heritage, particularly in the Ostiense district, across three historical periods marked by significant political and social changes: the modernization of Rome as the capital of the unified Italy in the late nineteenth century, the emergence of heritage as a controversial issue on the Roman public scene in the 1960s, and the rising and fading of a culture-led regeneration strategy by the end of the 1990s. She outlines the challenges of balancing heritage preservation with urban development and community needs, highlighting the shift in Ostiense's perception as a neglected to a culturally valuable district. The author calls for additional investigation into the effects of contemporary urban planning on heritage conservation and community engagement in a historically significant area like Ostiense.

Part V reveals the complex process of reinterpreting and integrating historical narratives into the contemporary urban identity of cities such as Gdańsk and Belgrade. Noémi Kertész examines the transformation of Gdańsk, explaining the literary reinterpretation of its German heritage following World War II. She analyses the significant role of literature in transforming the identity of the city, integrating individual narratives with collective history, which enhances the understanding of Gdańsk's intricate past. Jovana Janinović addresses the transformation in the perception of urban heritage in Belgrade, emphasizing the incorporation of the socialist heritage into modern tourism. She focuses on the 'Yugotour' demonstrating the revaluation of post-socialist urban landscapes through tourism, which challenges conventional heritage discourses and introduces new complexities in the processes of heritage creation and conservation.

To summarize, the edited volume emerges as a pivotal work in the discourse on heritage preservation. It successfully bridges the gap between historical preservation and the contemporary challenges confronting European cities, especially in Central and Eastern Europe. With both theoretical frameworks and practical

case studies, the book provides valuable insights for urban planners, policymakers, and scholars in heritage studies, highlighting the critical role of heritage in shaping both the identity and the future sustainability of urban areas. The book's multidisciplinary approach ensures its standing as a primary resource for individuals engaged in urban development and heritage management.

