

Small Towns in Promotion of Their Cultural Heritage: Possibilities and Experiences

Prague (Czech Republic) / February 15, 2018



Photo by Luďa Klusáková

H2020 project REACH is about participatory approaches to culture. It is coordinated by Coventry University with participation of important international partners. During next three years the consortium will establish a Social Platform as a sustainable space for meeting, discussion and collaboration by a wide-ranging network of professionals, institutions, researchers, arts practitioners, associations, and interest groups representatives of non-professionals with a stake in research and practice in the field of culture and cultural heritage.

The project team at Charles University is focused on small town's heritage. On 15 February 2018, it has organized the first meeting of the REACH network of associate partners. The event was arranged in the format of a one-day workshop that was intended to prepare the ground for collaboration. It was visited by a significant number of twenty partners from the pilot regions in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Belarus and a new potential member from Poland. The program was organized into four panels. The first one was devoted to presentation of the project's major objectives and to explanation of the method of critical mapping, SWOT analysis and composition of the database of best practices in cultural heritage protection, its re-use and management. The second panel focused on possible forms of collaboration with associate partners - what they can offer, and what they expect to achieve from the partnership. The third panel opened the discussion about the ways in which the actors operating in national scale approach local actors and motivate their activities related to heritage use and re-use. The fourth panel was devoted to the heritage activities carried out by towns, places and associations.

The debate was fueled by interesting cases of participatory activities in relation to cultural heritage that were presented on one hand by experts from official institutions such as National Heritage Institute and CzechTourism, and on the other hand by architects operating as volunteers in European Council for the Village and Small Town (ECOVAST) in Slovakia and in Petr Parler Association on one side and local actors from towns represented by partners from the Slovak town of Svidník, a large factory CZ LOKO operating in the town Česká Třebová, and a microregional project for participatory activities created by a group of citizens based mainly in small town Stařeč on the other. The experts operating in NGOs: Institute for monuments and culture and Anthropictures, anthropology research studio, represented those who register, survey, motivate and support the participatory activities.

The discussion indicated several themes for further reflection, such as: the persisting tendency to limit the idea of heritage in small-town setting to old and tangible monuments; the discrepancies between the values of local residents and the perspectives of protection agencies; the double-edged relations between tourism and local sustainability; or the impact of participation by the local citizenries in all phases of the heritage practices on their success or failure. The event has proven that such informal meetings are indispensable to achieve the goal of the project. The desire to meet soon again was the feeling generally shared by all participants as well as organizers.

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The Seminar Class: New Forms of Living – Politics and Innovations

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The seminar class *Nuove forme dell'abitare. Politiche e innovazioni*, in English *New forms of living - Politics and innovations*, took place on 13 March 2018 at the ancient Mill cotton of Venice, during the course *Urban development and sustainability* (held by prof. Francesco Gastaldi), in the study course *Innovation in architecture* of the Department of Design and Planning in Complex Environment (IUAV University of Venice). This seminar included a presentation of a number of case studies relating to the new forms of living, taking place between the end of XX century and the beginning of XXI century.

Moderated by the local Associate Professor Francesco Gastaldi, 5 experts took part in this event. Almost 100 future architects were taught different experiences of various Italian researchers at a different scale (from Ph.D. students to urban planners, some even coming from Italian Government Department). Moreover, it comprised the explication of different projects not only in Italy but also in Europe, comparing what had happened in Italian and European cities.

The presentations were *The quality of living at the center of European initiatives. Analysis of two case studies: Ljubljana and Bordeaux* (Fiorella Angeli, urban planner, working at urban planning studio Smart Srl), *Living at Marghera Cita neighborhood (Venice municipality)* (Alessia Mion, urban planner), *Great military properties and housing. The cases of Guido Reni barrack in Rome and La Marmorata barracks in Turin* (Federico Camerin, Early

Stage Researcher at Instituto Universitario de Urbanística, UVA Valladolid, Federica Di Piazza, working at the Italian Presidency of the Council of Ministers – Department for Cohesion Policies). Eventually, Federico Della Puppa (Chief of urban planning studio Smart Srl) summarized the contents of the previous presentations. Firstly, reflecting on Italian cities competitiveness at European level in terms of "Cohesion policy" (see for more detail http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/faq/); secondly, remarking the difficulties of Italian cities to elaborate innovating plans to participate and win the prize for being one of the *European Capitals of Culture* (https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/actions/capitals-culture_en) and the European Green Capital Award (<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/europeangreencapital/>).

To sum up, this experience could lead students to reflect on historical and emerging issues and topics on the territorial and contemporary city transformations, considering the interrelations between social phenomena evolution, spatial changes and local governance problems. The seminar analyzed approaches, instruments, actors and organizational assets, providing knowledge and capability of understanding about the complex dimension of urban sustainable development construction and implementation, especially regarding living issues and housing.

Federico Camerin
Early Stage Researcher



Photo by Francesco Gastaldi

