OPEN HERITAGE

Regional integration of adaptive heritage reuse projects

Strengthening sustainable local development

In this Policy Brief, we present four models that shed light on different ways of integrating adaptive heritage reuse practices into a larger territorial framework. They were created for policy makers, heritage officers, and planners at local and regional levels of government, to help them navigate the diverse landscape of Adaptive Heritage Reuse (AHR) projects and find models that are the most suitable for their contexts.

The identified models are based on studies undertaken as part of the EU Horizon 2020 OpenHeritage research project, in particular the report on regional integration[1] as well as our work in the Cooperative Heritage Labs[2] and with the OpenHeritage Observatory Cases.[3] With this Policy Brief, we hope to inspire actors to embrace the diversity of adaptive heritage reuse practices as well as the benefits of integrating them into larger territorial frameworks.

Regional integration and cooperation in the context of adaptive heritage reuse

OpenHeritage defines regional integration as a process that incorporates adaptive reuse of cultural heritage into a larger territorial framework, contributing to sustainable local development. The process is intended as a collaborative strategy that involves different stakeholders and steers their divergent interests towards common territorial development goals. In this sense, regional integration and cooperation also refer to the opening up and harmonisation of sectoral policies. Including adaptive heritage reuse projects in the process of regional development can lead to more sustainable outcomes.

The linkage between urban development and uneven spatial and social redistributions is widely recognized, and cultural heritage policies are considered among the most interconnected with spatial planning. In European cities, heritage-driven development can often lead to gentrification and other trends that reinforce inequality. However, heritage-related values to a (cultural) site can also be strategically used to overcome territorial disparities, creating multiple benefits, such as preserving place-based identity, adapting historic cultural assets for present needs, and strengthening connections with the surrounding areas.

From the perspective of local and regional governments, regional integration provides additional benefits when focusing on an adaptive reuse project. It brings new ideas and strengthens the general vision of the project. It also supports the project's better embeddedness into territorial development processes, allowing it to make use of larger networks. Furthermore, an overarching common vision at the regional scale ensures an easier implementation phase, effectively decreasing barriers and easing the work of local governments. Finally, cooperation and integration also means knowledge networks, both within a settlement and outside, creating space for crucial exchanges focused on fostering sustainable and just development.

The OpenHeritage Project

The OpenHeritage project is developing inclusive governance and management models for overlooked heritage sites by working with six Cooperative Heritage Labs and analysing case studies of good practices in adaptive heritage from across Europe (Observatory Cases). Working together with residents, local businesses, higher education organisations and municipalities, OpenHeritage explores diverse partnership arrangements, community engagement methods, as well as business and finance mechanisms to help develop and sustain community engagement with heritage sites. A central concept of OpenHeritage is the idea of "openness": open when looking at what constitutes heritage or open when deciding who should be involved in heritage processes, or even open in terms of open-ended processes with possibilities for constant change.

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Models of regional cooperation

OpenHeritage closely collaborated with 16 Observatory Cases, 6 Cooperative Heritage Labs and many other cases of adaptive heritage reuse to learn more about different models of regional cooperation and territorial integration. Although all projects were very different, there were certain common features which informed the creation of **four models of regional cooperation**.

The models were created to be adaptable under very diverse circumstances, and are aimed at supporting the process of regional integration of adaptive heritage reuse projects across Europe. The insights provided by these models are diverse, which makes them all the more flexible depending on the goals of the reader. The final outcomes of the adaptive reuse projects also strongly depend on the quality of the cooperation between the stakeholders, the efficiency of different policy instruments, and the communication, capacity building and awareness-raising techniques employed.

The models are based on the stakeholder roles and interests in the adaptive heritage

reuse process. These parameters were chosen in a process-focused manner and were selected intentionally in order not to be dependent on policy contexts. The latter was essential to ensure the usability of the models for many and not only for a select number of municipalities. Research in OpenHeritage showed that not only there is a great variety of policy contexts, but also that there is very little policy support for adaptive heritage reuse in many countries.

Focusing on the processes allows every municipality – be it large or small, operating under any combination of a possible range of different conditions – to explore practices and find suitable examples to follow.

Each model below is illustrated with a concrete case of adaptive heritage reuse, which includes the following features: a brief overview of the project, main stakeholders involved and their role in the project, objectives of the cooperation and commonly pursued interests, and main achievements. Under every case, a link provides more detailed information.

Models of regional cooperation

Model 1: Common interest-driven public model

The public authorities, mostly municipalities, are the initiators of the AHR projects and set their main goal, which usually is to strengthen social and territorial cohesion and integrate neglected areas into the city's bloodstream.

The AHR projects are led in **close cooperation with different local stakeholders and residents** to better respond to their needs and benefit all parties involved. The common understanding, dialogue and strong formal and informal relationships between municipality and residents, experts and civic organisations are at the centre of this model. All actors are involved in most phases of the project. Bureaucratic procedures are easier to handle thanks to direct engagement of the municipality, with further support often coming from intermediary organisations, which operate on-site. The latter assures not only the inclusion and engagement of all local actors, but also a much smoother communication between the municipality and the local community.

Policy instruments developed in the process include not only policies and territorial development plans, but also **formal cooperation agreements, contracts and protocols** that institutionalise relationships between stakeholders in running joint projects.

The dominating financial instruments are public (national and international) **grants, funds and loans**. Local authorities have a strong relationship with financial institutions, and most of the project costs are financed from these sources. However, depending on the type of the project, private actors can also contribute to the operation costs, typically in the form of **rents**.
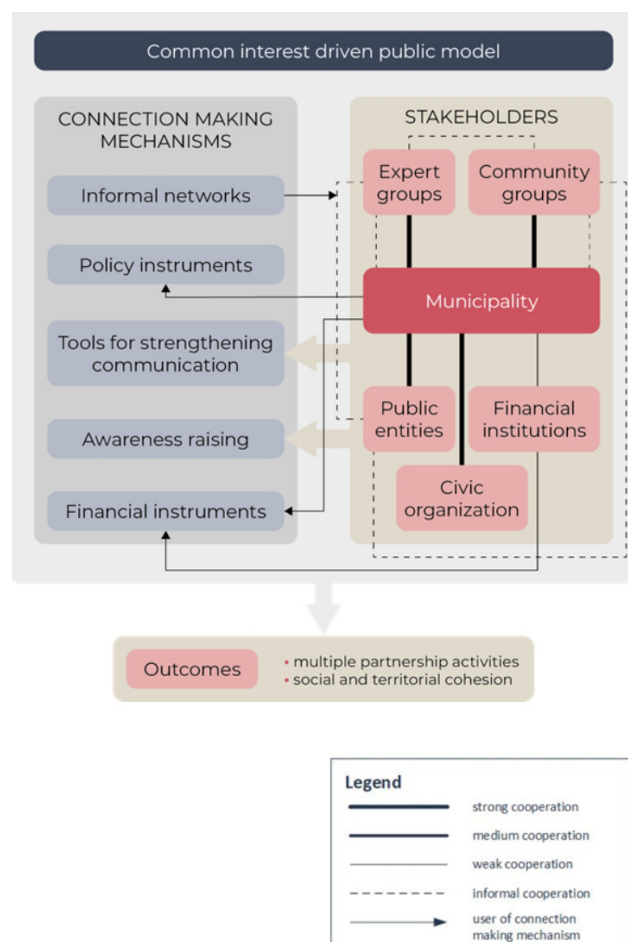
Models of regional cooperation

Model 1: Common interest-driven public model

Marquês de Abrantes, PT

Once home to Lisbon aristocracy, then an industrial hub in the city - today **Marquês de Abrantes** is a marginalised district inhabited by low-income residents, with many run-down buildings. It is disconnected from the city by rail tracks and the river, which adds to the perception of abandonment and segregation. In 2010, the area became a part of the Lisbon BIP/ZIP, which is a city-wide programme aimed at supporting local development as well as social and territorial cohesion in selected priority intervention areas.

Key characteristics: After a long negotiation process with different interested parties, the municipality decided to keep the building in public ownership to protect the identity of the neighbourhood and the community through a mixed strategy of housing and heritage, like affordable housing and communitarian/cultural use. A broad and strong stakeholders' network was developed, in which all stakeholders are connected with the municipality and among themselves in formal and/or informal ways (eg. signed protocols, contracts, agreements, etc.). The general aim of this cooperation is to promote social and territorial cohesion by maintaining the area in partnership with all stakeholders, given their common interests and using participatory processes.

The project is still in a very early phase, but its major connection mechanism, which is central to stakeholder's cooperation and regional integration, was the opening of the Local Technical Office in the area, since it assures not only the inclusion but also the engagement of all local actors, from the municipality and district officers to local stakeholders and the community itself. The project is financed by the Municipality of Lisbon.

Key achievements: The adaptive reuse of this site is a long process. The biggest achievement so far is the empowerment of the disadvantaged community living there and the bond created among stakeholders and community. This is expressed by multiple partnership activities, and the integration of these residents in wider community groups. Having a technical office on site also allowed the archaeological and historic research to frame the building in the present while preserving its history and heritage.

Click here to learn more about the case.

Models of regional cooperation

Model 2: Individual interest-driven public model

Local authorities are the main initiators of the adaptive heritage reuse projects and usually create strong partnerships with other public entities and financial institutions while working closely with different types of expert groups.

There are **no well-defined common interests between different stakeholders** and each of them is following their individual goals. **Projects are led in a top-down manner** and even if they include civic participation, the potential of civic initiatives is not properly utilised in all cases. The relationship between public authorities and the local community - both formal and informal - can be very weak.

Policy instruments are usually restricted to strategies or development plans and do not include any formalised or institutionalised partnership agreements, like contracts or protocols.

Very often the **projects are large-scale** and aim to give the region a socio-economic impulse and strengthen its touristic potential. Such projects can be very successful, however, it is not always clear how sustainable they can be in the long run beyond triggering new business opportunities, as they don't necessarily reflect local needs and priorities. Much like the previous model, international and national public grants and loans are the main financial sources.
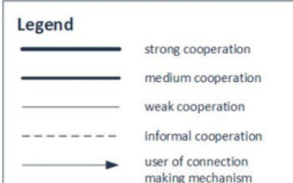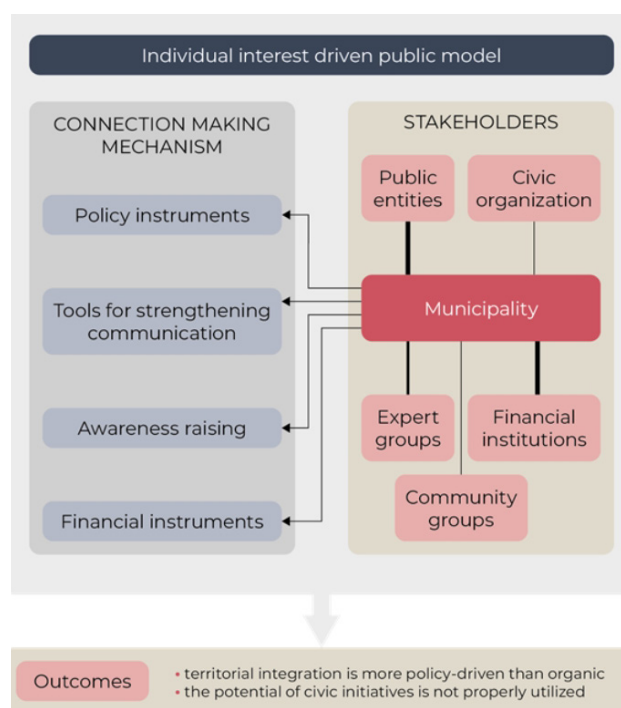
Models of regional cooperation

Model 2: Individual interest-driven public model

Alba Iulia, RO

The Citadel in Alba Iulia is a star-shaped fortification created in the 18th century by the French military engineer Vauban. Despite the citadel's central location, the complex was neglected and inaccessible to the public until the Romanian revolution in 1989. In the early 2000s, the buildings were gradually handed over to the municipality which, over time, raised more than 60 million euros for the economic, social, and cultural redevelopment of the Citadel.

Key characteristics: The renovation of the Citadel was a top-down project led entirely by the municipality. The municipality had a double aim: to give the Citadel back to the inhabitants and, at the same time, to develop it into a touristic destination. During the project several policy instruments were used, but these were limited to urban planning and management tools. There were also attempts to involve citizens in the planning process and use different tools for strengthening communication and cooperation, but since they were top-down, they remained relatively ineffective.

Although the goal was achieved and the Citadel opened to the public, the lack of collaboration with local actors, like civic organisations and experts, resulted in delivering a space that didn't really correspond to the needs of residents. Instead of creating a community space with an interesting cultural programme, the municipality decided to rent it to profit-oriented enterprises. The project was implemented within the Regional Operational Programme 2007–2013 and funded by the European Regional Development.

Key achievements: The Citadel was an essential element in city branding and marketing, thus it contributed to the economic and social development of the city. Securing more than 60 million euros from the EU for this purpose, especially in times when Romania didn't have easy access to the European funds is a big achievement in itself. The city opened the heritage site to the public, creating space for biking and walking.

Click here to learn more about the case.

Models of regional cooperation

Model 3: Common interest-driven civic model

Civic actors, like NGOs, social enterprises, associations, cooperatives or charitable trusts, are initiators of the AHR projects and implement them in close cooperation with municipalities and other public actors.

AHR projects are very diverse, depending on different regulatory environments, relationships between actors and financing structures. What strongly connects them, however, is a well-defined, **clear common interest** that serves the residents' goals and strong formal and informal relationships between involved partners.

Although political instruments developed in the process are determined by local authorities to ensure public interest, **civil actors often play a relevant role** - with lobbying activities or special agreements - in shaping them. Transparent collaboration as well as formal and informal networks with public authorities are crucial.

The AHR projects don't have access to large amounts of public funding and **frequently rely on mixed funding** where a big group of stakeholders, like private sector, civic organisations, community groups, financial institutions, public authorities, etc. contribute to their financial sustainability.
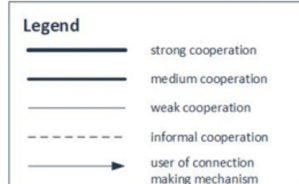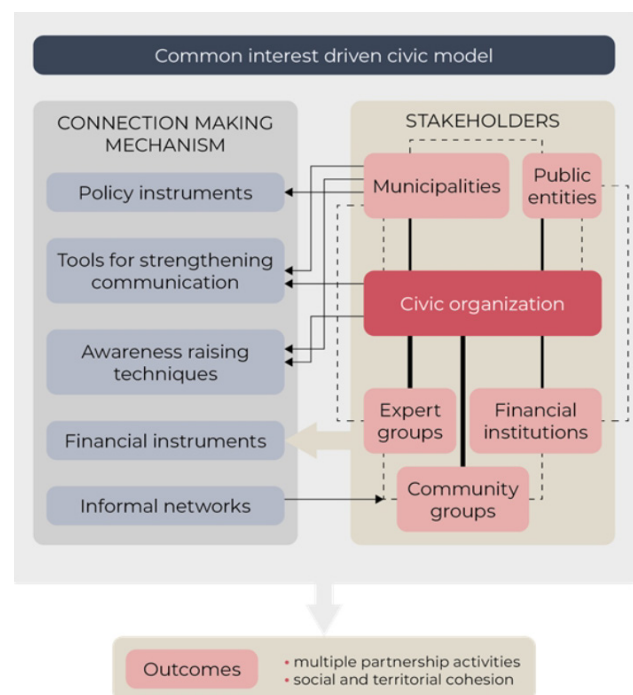
Models of regional cooperation

Model 3: Common interest-driven civic model

PragaLAB, PL

Once the poorest and most marginalised district of Warsaw, Praga currently attracts many investment projects and residential developments. Although it creates many opportunities for the district's development, it also brings many risks, like gentrification or loss of tangible and intangible heritage. Respecting Praga's industrial past and traditions related to work, **PragaLAB** aims to support the district in becoming a vibrant area of manufacturing, creative sectors and SMEs, rather than another "bedroom district".

Key characteristics: PragaLAB is an experimental space seeking effective ways to combine the district's heritage with the development of local economies and clear-cut solutions to reduce barriers to the development of initiatives. It does so by creating a shared vision for the future of Praga and building bridges between local actors, like municipal staff, district administration, civic organisations, businesses and residents. The project was initiated by the Warsaw Branch of the Association of Polish Architects (OW SARP). To cooperate in the implementation of PragaLAB activities OW SARP signed a partnership agreement with the Capital City of Warsaw, the Museum of Warsaw and the Otwarte Drzwi Association. The broad goal of cooperation is to integrate the district with the city, especially the city centre, not as a new "bedroom district" with lofts, but as an area of manufacturing, creative sectors and SMEs.

As part of the cooperation with various stakeholders several formal and informal meetings took place and workshops were organised with the relevant stakeholders: representatives of various municipal offices, district offices, cultural institutions, representatives of the Chamber of Commerce, the New Craft Association and NGOs. There was improvement in the exchange of information and closer cooperation between municipal offices. Entrepreneurs and local public institutions initiated cooperation within the framework of PragaLAB.

Key achievements: PragaLAB succeeded in establishing a solid basis for long-term cooperation between local stakeholders invested in the project. It developed models for participative workshops in the community hub and shed light on such topics as the district's labour-related traditions and circular economy. It also created a strong relationship with the municipality and advocated for more work-oriented solutions in future revitalization programmes for Praga. Thanks to its close relationship with the municipality, PragaLab has a visible impact on shaping future revitalization programmes for the district.

Click here to learn more about the case.

Models of regional cooperation

Model 4: Individual interest-driven civic model

Civic actors are initiators of the AHR projects, who usually create strong formal and informal relationships with the local community and different expert groups.
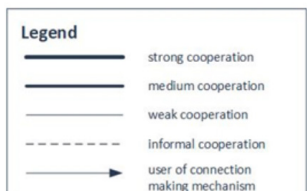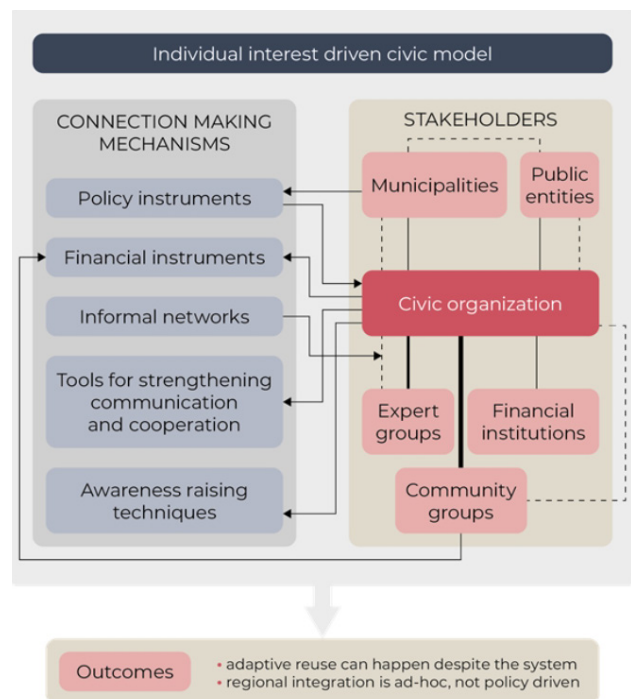
The regulatory environment is not very supportive, and **public authorities are not cooperative**. Even if some sort of informal relationship with local authorities exists, it doesn't manifest into official cooperation.

Policy instruments developed by the municipalities are completely independent of the AHR projects and the initiating actor has no influence on their development. In more favourable circumstances for this model, the regulatory environment doesn't impede the implementation of the projects.

The AHR projects are usually small-scale and depend on volunteer work and donations.

Individual interest driven civic model

CONNECTION MAKING MECHANISMS — STAKEHOLDERS

Policy instruments ← Municipalities — Public entities

Financial instruments ←

Informal networks — Civic organization

Tools for strengthening communication and cooperation ← Expert groups — Financial institutions

Awareness raising techniques ← Community groups

Outcomes
- adaptive reuse can happen despite the system
- regional integration is ad-hoc, not policy driven

Legend
— strong cooperation
— medium cooperation
— weak cooperation
- - - informal cooperation
→ user of connection making mechanism

Models of regional cooperation

Model 4: Individual interest-driven civic model

Glasshill Heritage Lab (Pomáz-Nagykovácsi-puszta, HU)

Pomáz-Nagykovácsi-puszta used to be the manorial complex of a nearby Cistercian monastery in the Middle Ages, which specialised in glass production. Now it displays ruins of the former church and manorial buildings as well as traces of historical land-use and water systems, including mediaeval fishponds. Located 20 km from Budapest, it is a great getaway spot that combines educational, recreational and community functions and enriches local cultural life in Pomáz.

Key characteristics: At the heart of the Lab there are strong informal relationships between people who want to preserve the heritage site and open it for the local community. The objective of their cooperation is to open it for the benefit of the broader public, to contribute to the cultural identity of Pomáz and to broaden the range of local heritage sites that offer educational, recreational, and community programs. These activities create an opportunity for enriching local cultural life and contributing to the quality of life in the settlement and the surrounding region. The informal networks around the site work together to raise awareness among residents of Pomáz by organising events, collaborating with local actors, and word of mouth.

Unfortunately, the absence of supporting heritage policies at the national level and limited funding opportunities makes this task very difficult. The most productive connection-making mechanism is personal communication.

Key achievements: The Lab has become a relevant heritage site on the map of the region and has brought together many people, organisations and experts invested in the process. Their work created a solid basis for the long-term preservation and sustainable management of vulnerable heritage sites – even in the absence of supporting policies at the national level. The Lab also contributed to the integration of cultural heritage policies into the agenda of the current local authorities in Pomáz.

Click here to learn more about the case.

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Authors: Hanna Szemzö, Andrea Tönkő (MRI)

Contributors: Cristina Garzillo, Olga Krajewska, Katherine Peinhardt (ICLEI Europe)

Design: Stephan Köhler (ICLEI Europe)

Images: Olga Krajewska (cover), Francisco Nogueira (page 5),
Calin Stan / Dreamstime (7), Patryk Bugajski (9)

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Partners

Contact

🌐 www.openheritage.eu
✉ info@openheritage.eu
🐦 @OpenHeritageEU
f OpenHeritage.eu

The highlighted countries are the locations of the OpenHeritage Observatory Cases, some of which are mentioned in detail in this policy brief.