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Adaptive heritage reuse

Learning from policy and governance frameworks across Europe

In this Policy Brief, we present recommendations for policy makers, heritage officers, and planners, at national and sub-national levels of government. These recommendations aim to support the implementation of adaptive heritage reuse projects. The recommendations are based on our work in the OpenHeritage project and in particular our reports on policy and the governance dialogue.¹

Adaptive heritage reuse is becoming more and more common as a way to care for heritage assets, and a sustainable way of recycling their material aspects, whilst also engaging with their immaterial, narrative, and emotive qualities. Our analysis of heritage and planning systems across Europe, identifies how adaptive heritage reuse projects can be facilitated or frustrated by regulatory systems. We have also identified relevant policies and tools that support adaptive heritage reuse. We hope to inspire change in favour of adaptive heritage reuse and help develop more sustainable governance models for heritage reuse in Europe.

¹ Reports: *Mapping of Current Heritage Re-use Policies and Regulations in Europe*; and *Typology of current adaptive reuse policies*, both can be downloaded here: www.openheritage.eu/resources and the dialogues: www.openheritage.eu/openheritage-dialogues

What is adaptive heritage reuse?

When buildings lose their primary use, one of the ways to save them from falling into ruin or being torn down is to reuse them, through adaptive reuse. Although reuse of buildings and sites brings many benefits, it also creates challenges, and both are highlighted in this policy brief.

In OpenHeritage we argue that reusing buildings, sites, ruins, and materials should be considered as a more sustainable alternative to the wasteful process of demolition. But we should not forget that these assets are not just materials, buildings, or sites. They bring about different (positive and negative) stories, meanings, and feelings for people. They are often significant for local communities, through their histories as well as their potential.

Heritage, especially when formally listed, is often seen as a challenge in the spatial planning context. Adaptive heritage reuse as a practice, is often promoted as a way of making heritage a catalyst for development. This approach can be very successful in recycling buildings and materials, in keeping those elements that are important to the local community, and creating or stimulating property markets to thrive. Adaptive heritage reuse can, however, also easily facilitate gentrification processes, commodification, and the exclusion of groups of people.

It is vital to understand the context in adaptive reuse: why it is done, and what it is for? In some countries adaptive reuse is positioned as a tool for urban regeneration, usually with a focus on deprived areas. In other countries reuse is much more directly related to solving vacancy, restricting urban sprawl, or facilitating the creation of more direct links between local communities and their heritage. Reuse, especially temporary reuse, is also used to explore the potential of the building or site (or to protest its pending demolition) in different ways, and by different actors, such as activists, a government, or by creative practitioners in need of affordable work space.

The OpenHeritage Project

OpenHeritage is developing inclusive governance and management models for overlooked heritage sites using its six Living Labs and its study of good practices of adaptive heritage reuse implemented across Europe (Observatory Cases).

Working together with residents, local businesses, higher education organisations, and municipalities, OpenHeritage explores diverse partnership arrangements, community engagement methods and finance mechanisms to help develop and sustain engaged communities around heritage sites. In the Labs, the project further explores how community empowerment could be realised in the processes of adaptive reuse, whether that is through policy change, local activities (both online and offline), increased attention from civic actors, or all of the above.

www.openheritage.eu



General Trends across Europe

Adaptive heritage reuse...

... **helps to maintain and protect historic buildings and sites** when done well.

... **is widely used as a tool** for urban regeneration, solving vacancy, restricting urban sprawl, and creating more direct links between heritage and communities.

... **can be a way to connect with local communities**, when it is used to celebrate and respect their pasts, and work with their experiences, stories, and thus heritage.

... **is seen as a catalyst for local development**, through creating regional and local identities, which fits within a

broader shift towards defining heritage as a resource for development, engagement, branding, and tourism.

... **is becoming more popular as a sustainable way to care for heritage**, and is emerging as an important policy aim in several national policy frameworks and in EU governance. Especially in the post-2008 financial crisis context, it is promoted as a tool for economic recovery.

... **is emerging in other policy domains**: e.g. energy-saving, crisis recovery, economic development, tourism, participation, culture and youth policies and (funding) programmes.

... **in some circumstances can be part of an act of protest**, to claim space, prevent demolition or to highlight the value of local assets. The value of this work is not always facilitated or appreciated by more formalised actors.



Challenges in the planning and heritage policy context

Adaptive Heritage Reuse...

... **can be hindered by inflexible heritage legislation and strict protection.**

Adaptive heritage reuse is more common and easier in countries where heritage protection is flexible (that is not to mean weak!). These countries tend to define heritage as something to care for, rather than something to protect from harm. Inflexible heritage legislation and strict protection, however, can also be the only reason a heritage asset survives.

... **suffers from complexity and contradictions within many planning and heritage systems,** with unclear and/or overlapping responsibilities and plans, and systems that are overly bureaucratic, difficult to navigate, and not designed to support adaptive reuse processes.

... **is often *not* explicitly mentioned in policy.** Terminology varies a lot across countries, and the practice of adaptive reuse falls under more general terms such as regeneration, rehabilitation, restoration or conservation. This can mean challenges, procedures, expertise and responsibility are not made specific, and e.g. focus on protection rather than adaptive reuse.

... **can be subject to long, complex, and slow 'permit' processes, needing approvals from building, planning, and heritage departments.** This is often a combination of under-resourcing and understaffing, unintegrated procedures and policies, and key decisions being taken on different levels, and /or by different organisations.

... **tends to be more difficult when decision-makers don't have authority or discretion** to deviate from a general set of standards, which are often developed with new construction in mind.

... **may also have barriers that are related to financial risks** such as unpredictable or complex bureaucratic processes. A (lack of) ownership, political support, financial investment can make is risky to undertake projects, even for local communities and 3rd sector organisations not aiming for profits.

... **is often complicated** by fiscal, funding, and procurement structures, that privilege either new construction or heritage, not a combination, or make temporary reuse, ownership, or material recycling difficult.

... **doesn't always benefit from heritage funding and tax reliefs,** which can be curtailed for protection and preservation of (sometimes only publicly owned) formal and material heritage assets and not for their use or reuse.

... **can be very rewarding but also challenging for more bottom up initiatives.** Often there is a lack of financial and practical support for such initiatives, and it can be complicated and expensive to navigate planning, heritage, and building regulation and procedures.

... **can easily be part of stimulating gentrification and commodification.** This is problematic and leads to displacement and exclusion, as well as to a loss of a variety of stories around heritage in a multi-vocal way.

Key themes in adaptive heritage reuse across European countries

It helps to have integrated heritage and planning policies, good communication between the different levels of governance, and to be open to creative ways to use heritage for wider policy aims such as sustainability or regeneration.

The potential for heritage to assist in achieving other policy goals has been an increasing focus for policymakers in recent decades. This extends across a wide range of policies dealing with place, including, for example, environmental sustainability, participation, culture, health and well-being, and socio-economic development. Adaptive heritage reuse lies at the intersection of such considerations, occupying a position where the past and the future are mediated; heritage is sustained but given new purpose as part of an ongoing social, economic, environmental and cultural transformation. A national or regional vision that explicitly supports reuse, as a tool for regeneration, waste reduction, sustainable development, or reducing sprawl, is valuable in this, too.

Flexibility can be created by decentralising systems, and devolving decision making-power to the local level. Flexibility and

discretion, especially on the local level, as well as integrated decision-making processes are key. Discretion at local level creates risks (they can decide to say no, or be unfair) but is often seen as helpful, as it opens up space where change can be negotiated and significance determined. Approaches to change can be flexible, even when heritage regulations in principle are strict. This is helped by a focus on caring for heritage and people bringing heritage back into use, and by policies and programmes that integrate and stimulate reuse for other wider local aims, e.g. housing, sustainability, culture, or tourism.

Contextual factors can be important, e.g. fees, tender criteria, procurement regulations, tax, funding criteria, zoning plan restrictions, and building codes are often not geared towards facilitating adaptive reuse. Aligning building codes and funding regulations with reuse aims may be obvious suggestions. But also revisiting tender and funding criteria, tax and value added tax (vat) regulations, zoning and temporary use regulations, and procurement policies can lead to a much more adaptive-reuse oriented context.

Even when the current policy environment is not supportive, adaptive heritage reuse is still possible. For example, adaptive reuse can be supported through anti-speculative financing and funding, EU projects, collaborative ownership models, partnership working, informal and activist approaches, and education and training projects.

The EU and Adaptive Heritage Reuse

Especially since the [European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 \(EYCH\)](#), adaptive heritage reuse is becoming more prominent in agendas on [heritage and culture](#). It is also emerging in agendas on economic (growth), [urban and regional development](#), the [quality of the built environment](#) and [architecture](#), as well as those on [greening and circular economies](#), material sustainability, recycling, and waste reduction. The potential influence of EU funding on Adaptive Heritage Reuse as a practice is very high, and could benefit a from even more explicit stimulance through urban regeneration and reuse projects, e.g. [European Social Fund](#), [the Cohesion Fund](#), and [the Regional Development Fund](#), which (co-) funds relevant programmes such as [Interreg](#), [Urban Innovative Action](#), [Leader](#), [Urbact](#), and [Creative Europe](#).



Recommendations



Ways to create more supportive policy environments

- ✧ **Approach adaptive heritage reuse as a sustainable way forward:** Consider adaptive heritage reuse both as a way of recycling material and a way of finding histories and stories. When done sensitively, it is a way to care for heritage, which should focus on the people, the use and the material.
- ✧ **Collaborate within government:** Adaptive reuse tends to be easier when 1) key decisions are taken on the same level of government, and 2) there is trust and collaboration between the involved planning, (economic) development, and heritage departments.
- ✧ **Facilitate a tailored approach:** Adaptive heritage reuse benefits from a tailored approach and can thus also benefit from local level discretion, and the 'space' to make exceptions. This is, of course, different from using deregulation, austerity measures, or corruption to create these 'grey zones'.
- ✧ **Be creative when it comes to the many different and potentially relevant programmes:** Adaptive heritage reuse combines many facets and fields and operates within a variety of funding and policy programmes (e.g. energy, social, growth, recycling). Information on, and the integration of the knowledge and structures of different programmes, can increase the willingness to support adaptive reuse through non-heritage routes.
- ✧ **Focus your resources:** It helps to focus and combine resources for promoting adaptive reuse in specific areas (e.g. high streets), or thematically (e.g. industrial heritage), or in specific sectors (e.g. heritage-led tourism, sustainable development). Sustainable development policies for example, can create a 'market' for reuse, e.g. by restricting sprawl or by focusing on more efficient use of existing resources, recycling, and waste management.
- ✧ **Develop adaptive re-use specific and clear guidance:** The process of adaptive reuse can be de-risked through clearer regulator frameworks; making the building and permit processes less unpredictable and uncertain; and through clear guidance. To enable non-standard solutions for listed buildings, facilitate the creative solving of issues related to energy efficiency, health, fire safety, and the new use.
- ✧ **Revisit procurement, fiscal, funding, and tender criteria:** Procedural aspects and requirements to participate in public tenders or to initiate projects can be counterproductive for actors who try to be innovative and risk-taking in adaptive heritage reuse. Such requirements can be fees for pre-application discussions, costly guarantees, or tenders based on principles of 'low expenditure' or 'construction efficiency'. Thus, there is a need for revisiting public tender processes, procurement, funding, tax, and evaluation (success) criteria.
- ✧ **Create a framework for temporary heritage reuse:** Meanwhile use can help make projects more viable, but they can also exacerbate gentrification and speculation. Temporary (change of) use needs to be proportional to property taxes, business rates, and other use-based levies.
- ✧ **Be mindful not to facilitate gentrification and commodification:** It is important to have mechanisms for dealing with reluctant owners who refuse to maintain buildings. At the same time, it is also important to have financial and legal tools that can facilitate handing over ownership to non-commercial or commons initiatives (e.g. cooperatives, community trusts), and limit possibilities for speculation.

Recommendations



Mechanisms and practices to facilitate actors undertaking adaptive reuse projects

- ✧ **Facilitate sharing knowledge:** It is important to share practices, knowledge, and experiences, for example by setting up peer-to-peer networks, peer-learning schemes, and finding ways to showcase example projects.
- ✧ **Map vacant and dilapidated heritage assets:** Mapping these assets is a start for further thinking about urban regeneration. This can help set priority reuse actions for certain areas and assets.
- ✧ **Have designated ‘matchmakers’ with knowledge of vacancy in the locality:** Matchmakers can help match vacant heritage assets and potential users.
- ✧ **Support local groups and third sector organisations to take on adaptive reuse projects:** There are various effective ways to support bottom-up processes, e.g. giving them access to process mentors, and experts, providing free, early and continuing advice on how to navigate bureaucratic procedures, and to work around high procedural fees, especially for community-led ‘one-off’ projects.
- ✧ **Support or develop innovative pilot projects with publicly owned heritage:** Public ownership can be an opportunity to test and showcase new and innovative approaches, to the intervention, the regulation, or the collaboration, e.g. exploring new partnership models.
- ✧ **Be creative and flexible when it comes to funding and financing:** Projects can be facilitated by financial mechanisms, such as providing low rent and longer lease options, rent and facilities ‘package deals’, or shared facilities.
- ✧ **Be supportive to community-led adaptive heritage reuse:** You can give communities the means to take charge, e.g. through commons, cooperative, crowdfunding, community shares, community land trust models, but also through trust, advice, and support, or allowing activists’ interventions.
- ✧ **Actively work with communities:** Local people should not be excluded, they can be involved through stories, memories, skills, and job opportunities. Local people often are passionate about their neighbourhoods - work with them, learn from them, but also protect them from displacement and complex bureaucratic processes.
- ✧ **Be mindful how you ‘use’ communities:** Are communities just there to pave the way? Where will they go after this process and is this fair?
- ✧ **Stimulate the provision of education and training:** Universities and colleges as well as accrediting bodies, heritage knowledge centres, and larger third sector players in urban development such as housing associations, can organise everything from training days, workshops, and research projects, to programmes that offer specific or additional certification or accreditation.



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The highlighted countries are analysed in the OpenHeritage Reports mentioned on page 1



Collaborative heritage reuse

Enabling strong partnerships

In this Policy Brief, we present recommendations for policy makers, heritage officers, and planners at national and sub-national levels of government, as well as other initiators of adaptive heritage reuse projects. These recommendations aim to support the implementation of adaptive heritage reuse projects in Europe. The recommendations are based on our studies in the OpenHeritage research project and, in particular, our report on the OpenHeritage Observatory Cases.¹

Adaptive heritage reuse is a complex undertaking and involves various stakeholders. The variety of actors involved presents a challenge as well as an opportunity. NGOs, local communities, public bodies, private investors, heritage professionals and others all have different interests and priorities and it is not easy to reach consensus. At the same time, coming together to form effective and efficient partnerships for adaptive heritage reuse can yield many benefits and create sustainable and vital cultural spaces within our cities and for our communities. We hope to inspire actors to embrace collaborations across fields by providing examples of different partnership models as well as clear and applicable recommendations for their implementation.

¹ The Observatory Cases, including videos and detailed analyses, can be found on the [OpenHeritage website](#). The interactive OpenHeritage Database includes further information on each Observatory Case.

Why partnerships matter

Partnerships between public authorities, civil society organisations, knowledge institutions, financial organisations, and the private sector have the potential to mobilise a variety of skills, knowledge and expertise to address the complex challenges raised by heritage areas. Partnerships between various sectors can bring together different perceptions, insights, working cultures and resources that can make a heritage reuse project stronger and more resilient.

Partnerships for co-designing and co-managing adaptive reuse projects support broader community outreach. Involvement in such cooperations contributes to a sense of empowerment, ownership and belonging. They are instrumental in creating the foundations for the socially sustainable management of heritage sites, and also promote a deeper understanding of meanings and values locally attributed to heritage. Additionally, they can contribute to turning heritage into a catalyst for sustainable area redevelopment: More local knowledge in reuse projects enables better integration into the local economy and promotes the targeting of local needs.

Partnerships allow the sharing of risks and responsibilities and contribute to a process where the aims and methods of reuse projects resonate with affected communities. Many heritage sites require unique and sensitive reuse solutions, conscientious of past and present conflicts and possible future difficulties. Partnerships can be crucial in finding the appropriate mechanisms for the preservation, reuse and maintenance of heritage assets.

Nevertheless, partnerships are not without conflicts. Involving different actors and stakeholders might bring a clash of interests, which requires the development of project-specific expectations, a clear definition of roles and responsibilities, and accountability of all parties. These processes might take longer, and temporary postponements or changes in the project structure might be needed. Partnerships require a great deal of flexibility and adaptability, which is currently minimally addressed in education and training in this field. This policy brief also aims to help fill that gap and provide guidance toward effective collaboration.

The OpenHeritage Project

The OpenHeritage Project is developing inclusive cooperation, governance and management models for overlooked heritage sites by working with six Living Labs while 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 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. An inclusive — *open* — approach to heritage projects is a benefit to the projects themselves, as well as the individual partners working on them.

www.openheritage.eu



Key challenges

Finding the driving force: Even if there is a group of potential partners willing to work towards a common goal, the need remains for at least a few passionate enthusiasts who are the driving force behind the project. It is often a challenge to find those who are ready to step up at the initiation phase, when the rewards are still out of sight.

Harmonising aims and interests: Heritage organisations focus on the preservation and accessibility of heritage sites, municipalities often prioritise the valorisation of heritage in spatial and economic development, while civic partners tend to focus on the direct social impact of access to and involvement with heritage.

Reaching a common understanding on heritage: Expert heritage organisations and public bodies often see their task as preserving the physical integrity of a heritage site in accordance with legal regulations. This adherence to regulations, however, can be an obstacle to civic or private initiatives aiming to adapt heritage sites to the life and needs of modern communities.

Finding an efficient governance structure: Diverse partnerships make governance and management more complicated. The more partners there are, the more difficult it can be to find a governance structure that is inclusive, transparent and efficient in managing the adaptive reuse project and the operation of the site.

Reconciling different operational time frames: While public bodies plan in predetermined cycles, NGOs need the continuous support and activity of their partners to keep their civic network involved. In addition, private partners, based on their interests, often have a different time frame for when they wish to see the impact of their investment, be it social or economic.

Working with different organisational cultures: Private and civic partners operate in different organisational cultures and structures, use different languages, and work at different speeds. This difference can cost resources, especially time.

Coping with power asymmetry: Ideally, a partnership presents a group of equal associates, but in practice, their power is often not shared equally. Paternalistic attitudes by local authorities – often supported by the legal context – or the invisibility of certain civic actors are typical examples of power asymmetry.

Cutting red tape: Overly complicated bureaucratic processes can hinder or prevent joint action or decision making. People involved in adaptive heritage reuse projects often have individual and more specific needs and can't oversee the entire adaptation and management process. Heritage administrators often have preservation and economic obligations. Without a thoughtful approach to these differences, the lack of overlapping agendas can hinder public-private partnerships.



Examples of different partnership models

The 16 OpenHeritage *Observatory Cases* represent a wide spectrum of partnership models. Each model has a different impact on the project outcome. One of the main factors that affects and shapes collaborations is the duration of the partnership. Below we introduce two heritage activation projects that make use of short-term partnership contracts.

Commercial and social cooperative

Largo Residências is a hostel, artist residence and café in a four-floor former ceramic factory building from the late 19th century. The building was rented in 2011 from a private owner for ten years and was renovated to enable its new use. Largo has won grants to support some of its programmes and benefitted from members' expertise and capital contributions in its early stages. The initiators' aim was to channel commercial revenues into cultural and social activities. Heritage protection regulations initially limited the reuse of the building but the conflict was resolved with a flexible approach in the design process. This was, for example, done by creating an "artist in residence" programme which aligned with the original arrangement of the rooms. In Largo Residências, democratic decision-making unites the members of the cooperative, who come from many different backgrounds (e.g. lawyers, economists, architects).

Key challenges: Harmonising aims and interests; Reaching a common understanding on how to deal with heritage.

Solution: Largo Residências emerged in a deprived area of the city, which the municipality declared a priority neighbourhood for development. They launched a so-called BIP/ZIP programme that includes funding for community-initiated interventions. The conflicting interests were all addressed by the concept of the Largo Residências; including those of the private owner and the aims of public institutions to improve the status of the neighbourhood and to protect the heritage values of the buildings. The mix of project initiators enabled the cooperative to create a mix of uses.

Read more about [Largo Residências here](#).



Lease to renovate and maintain

Stará Tržnica (The Old Market Hall) is a historic market building in the centre of Bratislava (Slovakia). The site was closed down in 2008 after years of unsuccessful attempts by the municipality to keep the market alive. In 2013 the hall reopened with a redevelopment plan proposed by the new NGO "Alianca Stará Tržnica" (Old Market Hall Alliance), which brought together expertise from the fields of community organising, event promotion, real estate development, architecture and cultural production. The initiators collectively aimed to create a unique venue, while also keeping the original purpose of the building. They combined the food market with cultural and commercial events, and rented out shops and spaces for dining establishments. The Alliance now creates revenue from rental agreements with third parties and pays its rent to the municipality by maintaining and renovating the building.

Key challenges: Coping with power asymmetry; Cutting red tape; Working with different organisational structures.

Solution: The municipality has one renter (the Old Market Hall Alliance) responsible for maintenance, heritage preservation and management. Small businesses sub-renting the spaces have a fast-acting and flexible partner in the Alliance, which creates the right ecosystem for them and takes away the burden of dealing with regulations.

Read more about [Stará Tržnica here](#).



Examples of different partnership models

Some heritage activation projects become permanent and shape the participating organisations, the relevant legislation and ownership models, as well as structures in the long term. Below we introduce two projects that operate with long-term partnership contracts.

Public-private co-governance

Cascina Roccafranca is a multi-functional community centre located in a former farmstead in Turin's outskirts, which was vacant for 30 years. Today, it is a public asset managed through cooperations between public and civic actors, providing a wide range of social and cultural activities. The foundation running the centre has a board whose members are nominated by the municipality and elected by the 45 member associations. The foundation is nonprofit but enables tenants to develop commercial activities and create a socially impactful ecosystem. Cascina Roccafranca is connected to other community centers within the urban commons network "Neighbourhood Houses". They collaborate with the City Council in the management and regeneration of "urban commons", which in this case mainly refers to buildings.

Key challenges: Finding an efficient governance structure; Coping with power asymmetry.

Solution: The municipality teamed up with stakeholders and developed a combination of functions for the complex. This approach allowed for the municipality to designate special funds for designing the reuse and renovation of buildings. The dialogue during the initiation and design process allowed all parties to gain insights and develop skills and frameworks that resulted in the establishment of the foundation.

Read more about [Cascina Roccafranca here](#).



Shared ownership model

ExRotaprint was founded by two artists who had been renting spaces at a former industrial complex located in Wedding, a traditional working-class district in central Berlin. Together with other tenants, they first formed an association and then established a nonprofit company (ExRotaprint gGmbH) in which the association remained a partner and allowed the company to take over the site and protect it from speculative privatisation. ExRotaprint is the owner of the 10,000 m² building complex, while Stiftung trias and Stiftung Edith Maryon are the owners of the land. The company holds the land in lease, paying the fee into a "solidarity fund" that enables the development of other, similarly designed projects. ExRotaprint puts spaces up for rent to a diverse group of tenants: social projects (e.g. language classes, continued education), productive activities (e.g. production companies that create jobs), and artists, musicians and other creatives. This mix of tenants and functions makes ExRotaprint particularly well integrated in its neighbourhood.

Key challenges: Creating partnership synergy.

Solution: The ExRotaprint community established a long-lasting partnership with the help of the legal instrument of inheritable building rights, allowing the separation of ownership between land and buildings. This construct influences the quality of investments in the building while providing affordable working spaces for a diverse group. Stiftung trias and Stiftung Edith Maryon have contributed to the financing, purchase and renovation of the site and they also act as guardians of the initiative's guiding principles and achievements.

Read more about [ExRotaprint here](#).



Recommendations



How to create engaging partnerships

★ **Involve a diversity of viewpoints:**

Partnerships are a good and flexible way to bring missing skills into a project team. Partnerships with multi-disciplinary core teams can react efficiently to changing conditions and bureaucracy gaps.

★ **Keep looking for the right partners:**

It might be a challenge to find the right partners, but continuing to search is usually worthwhile. In adaptive heritage reuse, partnerships with local actors and communities are essential and especially important when compared with some other sectors. Cross-sectoral collaborations can also play a significant role: money might come from actors that have nothing to do with heritage. In other words, think outside the box: Imaginative partnerships can also bring new energy and new opportunities to your project.

★ **Engage volunteers:**

Partnerships come in all shapes and sizes. Volunteers can bring valuable informal knowledge, open up the project to a wider audience and create a different social ecosystem. Volunteers bring in a lot of valuable support in getting things done, but they can be so much more than that and can truly enrich your project when meaningfully engaged. While volunteers are not a homogeneous group and must not be held to the standards expected of paid employees, they usually bring a lot of enthusiasm and passion to the project.

★ **Define common values and motivations in your team:**

Harmonise your vision, identify common goals, clarify the limits of your partnerships and ensure that each partner benefits from the partnership.

★ **Work with civic organisations:**

Partnerships between civic organisations and municipalities create a closer connection to the residents and bring their often overlooked voices to the discourse. However, civic partnerships require constant care and public bodies should continue to ensure that their civic partners feel involved and a part of the common mission.

★ **Look at the big picture and enable capacity building:**

It is important to include and engage all stakeholders, and listen to their aims and contributions. However, not everyone is an expert and understands all the processes and rules. Make sure to keep an eye on and, at times, highlight the big picture: that way you and your partners can make informed decisions together. Whenever possible, foster capacity building and knowledge sharing so that those with less experience or, for example, less legal education can increase their expertise in adaptive heritage reuse projects and better understand the big picture. None of us were born experts!

★ **Use partnerships as a catalyst to create networks:**

A single project or a single partnership might not seem to be worth the effort, but it can be the catalyst for many similar developments. Finding new allies in the neighbourhood, in the district, other districts or even cities and towns can lead to an ever-increasing number of important allies. The more people know about your participative and inclusive work, the better and more elaborated is the framework you can rely on for such projects.

Recommendations



How to manage partnerships and create efficient governance structures

- ☛ **Aim for inclusive governance models:** Choose a governance model which supports the efficient cooperation of multiple partners in order to unite efforts and minimise administrative problems. Make sure your governance model allows for the representation of all members.
- ☛ **Creating partnership synergy:** It requires skills and effort to create a partnership that results in a whole that is more than the sum of its parts. In a synergic partnership, continued joint creativity leads to regular improvement, outperforming what any single person or entity can do.
- ☛ **No need to reinvent the wheel:** There are many good practices and projects which are successful in Europe. Learning from their experiences, including how to deal with bottlenecks as well as challenges, can prepare you very well for your own heritage activation process.
- ☛ **Create a link between the administration and the end user:** Understanding policies, regulations, as well as local practices and dynamics can help identify legal means for reducing unnecessary bureaucratic load, thereby sparing some costs. Connections via a linking party - such as an association of small organisations - can support the process, distribute the risks and work for both partners.
- ☛ **Plan the entire process:** Partnerships are important and can make your work a lot easier, but they alone do not guarantee success. Cooperation needs to be planned carefully throughout the duration of the project and should go hand in hand with proper organisation and management. Make sure to clearly define roles, expectations, goals and social responsibilities.
- ☛ **Familiarise yourself with the legal framework before diving into partnerships:** Various national and sub-national legal and policy frameworks favour different types of organisational forms for cooperation. A little research into regulations and mapping of similar local initiatives will go a long way and help you find the ideal partnership model.
- ☛ **Short-term partnerships are a good starting point:** Short-term partnerships create an opportunity to test out uses, partnerships and operational models. They are a good start to set up frameworks and can be built on in a participatory development phase. Also think about how to properly end the partnership when the time comes to wrap up the project.
- ☛ **Don't be afraid of technology:** Making more use of digital platforms does not have to be limited to the context of a pandemic, but can also extend for the foreseeable future to support and complement in-person meetings and participation and thus strengthen partnerships. When possible and appropriate, employ technologies such as business communication platforms, team collaboration whiteboards or online participation tools.
- ☛ **Structural changes need long-term partnerships:** Real structural changes in heritage reuse with meaningful investments and long-term activation is only possible with a long-term agreement and partnership. If you think big, search for like-minded partners who share your vision, possess suitable capacities and are ready for serious commitment.

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





Financing the adaptive reuse of cultural heritage

Enabling complementary financing instruments for bottom-up initiatives

In this Policy Brief, we present recommendations for policy makers, heritage officers, and planners at national and sub-national levels of government, as well as other initiators of adaptive heritage reuse projects. These recommendations aim to provide an overview of the issues at play and support the implementation of adaptive heritage reuse projects across Europe. The challenges identified and recommendations provided are based on our studies in the OpenHeritage research project and, in particular on our work in the Cooperative Heritage Labs and our report on the OpenHeritage Observatory Cases.¹

Financing the adaptive reuse of cultural heritage is a challenging undertaking and requires the orchestration of complementary funding sources to cover both renovation and operational costs. This Policy Brief has been developed from the perspective of bottom-up initiatives active in areas, where fundraising efforts tend to face particular barriers. Although heritage regeneration is often seen as a heavy bill someone has to pay, adaptive reuse projects can become dynamic value generators for surrounding areas and their communities. We hope to inspire public and private actors to embrace mixed approaches by providing examples of different financing models as well as clear and applicable recommendations for their implementation.

¹ The Observatory Cases, including videos and detailed analyses, can be found on the [OpenHeritage website](#). The interactive OpenHeritage [Database](#) includes further information on each Observatory Case. Work in the Labs can be followed at their [individual pages](#).

Why diversification of financial sources matters

Ensuring financial sustainability of adaptive cultural heritage reuse projects is a challenging task, as it requires mobilizing adequate funding sources, while maximizing the social impact of the projects. Funding diversity counterbalances the different interests of the stakeholders involved, contributes to sharing risks and responsibilities, strengthens connections between people and their surroundings and makes a project more resilient through economic cycles or in times of economic crisis. Diversity in financing does not only give stability but can also demonstrate to other possible partners that there is already certain confidence and support in a project. “Mosaic-type” funding models have a high impact on the community while contributing to territorial integration.

Adaptive heritage reuse projects need both investment and operation costs. Investment needs of renovating heritage buildings very often constitute a sociocultural statement and are therefore covered by public sources. If needed, additional public funds can be provided for operation purposes, to protect the initiators from high running costs and ensure independence of social and cultural activities. Bank loans are also useful financial instruments to cover investment needs, however, adaptive cultural heritage reuse projects are often considered too risky by commercial banks. Social banks are more flexible in this regard, providing low interest loans to convincing adaptive reuse proposals.

In an effective funding mix, operation costs are covered by multiple funding sources. The most important one is income generated within the project. Stable incomes (usually from selling products or providing services, renting spaces, membership dues, etc.) significantly

contribute to funding diversity and strengthen the long-term financial sustainability of the project. Equity schemes can also motivate additional contributors, as they see that stakeholders risk and invest their own money. Pooled funding methods - channeling money from individual investors combined together for a common purpose - are also effective instruments to generate revenues for adaptive heritage reuse projects. At the end of the day, financing the adaptive reuse of cultural heritage is highly dependent on the initiators' capacity to demonstrate the added value created beyond strictly financial terms.

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, 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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Key challenges

Challenge 1

Lack of funding, cash flow and equity

Bottom-up initiatives for the adaptive reuse of cultural heritage generally have higher ambitions than their available budgets can cover. Additional funds are needed to cover investments and running costs. The lack of funds often is a barrier to access other funds. Banks often ask for an equity of approximately 25%, while foundations often ask if there is a share of equity brought up by the initiative itself. Bank guarantees or collaterals may be required by public funding programmes, creating a vicious circle of lack of cash flow.

Challenge 2

Funding diversity versus management complexity

Bottom-up initiatives for the adaptive reuse of cultural heritage often struggle to find the most appropriate legal and management structure that can support diverse income sources. Depending on the national framework, many choose to use different legal entities (NGOs, Foundation, Cooperative) to cover different fundraising needs. Such projects are usually driven by heritage aims, social or cultural motivations, however, managing a project funded by a mix of resources requires considerable management capacity, financial planning skills and solid business plans. A certain share of more economically or technically skilled people is often missing, yet necessary for the success of such endeavors.

Challenge 3

Unpredictable costs and timing of adaptive reuse works

Buildings awaiting adaptive reuse are old and often in need of heavy renovation works. But renovations are particularly unpredictable; once started, costs, even if calculated very cautiously, tend to rise and the timeframe of the works tends to be extended. Sufficient reserves and/or the

ability to gain additional funds along the way must therefore be one of the qualities of the project initiators.

Challenge 4

Harmonising the interest of different stakeholders

Owners, funders and the community have diverging expectations which can result in a conflict of interest, in need of mediation efforts. Building owners are anxious about interventions to their property and functions that may not be suitable for future purposes. At the same time the community running the every-day-business must have the feeling of autonomy of “its” building. Additionally, the local municipality can be anxious about some initiatives, and funders might be concerned about the right use of their funds or even of repayment. The ability of sensible communication and mediation is therefore a further necessity for a successful project.

Challenge 5

Changing interests in changing times

Long term contracts give a feeling of security. At the same time change and transformations are natural parts of a project's life-cycle. One could say “take care who your partners are and treat them well”. Re-inventing purpose and actions, or at least changing plans once in a while should be foreseen from the early stages of the project. Contracts may include a paragraph stating that both sides agree on new negotiations in times of change.

Challenge 6

Hostile takeover

Initiators of adaptive reuse projects usually start by gathering a group of interested people, establishing an association, just to become visible and have a “brand” to communicate with key stakeholders. A lot

Key challenges

of time and effort is put into concept development and community building, but lack of resources prevents investment in strategic consulting and equity. Since good will alone combined with “internet-knowledge” are just not sufficient, a danger of hostile takeover lurks over visionary groups of volunteers: they can be considered idealistic or utopian actors that fail to provide a structured plan, and their ideas can be hijacked by private actors or political players with weaker intentions but more capacity to deliver. Understanding the local political agenda and the interests of the commercial sector is key for bottom-up initiatives to ensure their seat at the decision-making table.

Challenge 7

Public funding can get political

Public funding is a crucial means to reach out to and support small-scale, locally-driven adaptive reuse initiatives, especially at the municipal level. However, a full dependency on public funds can jeopardise sustainability in the long run. Political alliances and priorities change, leaving dependent initiatives in a vulnerable position. Civic initiatives need independence to be a counterpart and enrichment to official narratives, hence if funding originates from multiple sources, dependencies can be alleviated.

Challenge 8

Lack of steady income/remuneration in comparison to the added value created

Most bottom-up reuse projects have a high rate of civil engagement but a low rate of commercial activities. In most cases it is difficult to cover all investments from the money-earning activities. Often the direct value created (e.g. increase of property prizes) does not flow back to the grassroots level. Certain benefits such as social

cohesion, new skills or improved health cannot be monetized and indirect savings to public services are difficult to measure. Creating a flowchart that maps all potential generated values in relation to income and funding sources can help in approaching beneficiaries and funders.

Challenge 9

Unequal distribution of available funding

There are remarkable differences across Europe in terms of access to funding for bottom-up initiatives. A funding mix consisting of public and community funding (e.g. crowdfunding) is more present in the Western and Northern EU member states, whereas initiatives in the Eastern and some Southern member states are more likely to face a challenge to access these funds. In turn, they might need to rely more on business investments and on support from private actors, which might directly influence their aims and the trajectories of their work. Similarly, tax incentives which can be a useful tool to attract investors in cultural heritage are not available in all countries and provide limited help in the starting phase.

Challenge 10

Finding the right balance of incentives

Each funding instrument is creating different incentives and a certain level of dependency from the body providing the money. There are always strings attached and funding incentives can influence how / to what extent bottom-up initiative can thrive. Concentrated funding (being it either public, private or corporate money) not just impacts community and territory integration on a much lower level, but also carries the risk that the interests of the dominant funder will override the original goal and mission of the project.

Examples of different forms of financing models

The 16 OpenHeritage Observatory Cases and the 6 Cooperative Heritage Labs represent a wide spectrum of financing models. Each model has identified income sources that are aligned with the purpose of each project and the key target groups it aims to engage.

Step by step adaptive reuse

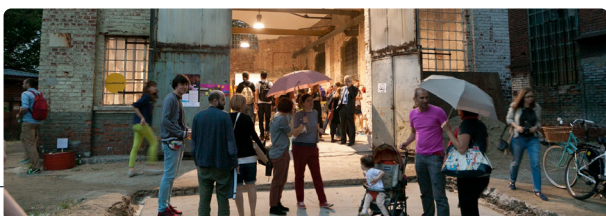
Adaptive reuse is the process of transforming buildings and areas through a flexible approach. The transition means working towards an ambition, not towards an end-picture or blueprint plan. An important element is the organisation of events and activities that are aligned with the ambition. By this, you will prove the concept. The ambition is the compass. The route can be changed along the way.

Halele Carol (Bucharest)

Halele Carol (Bucharest, Romania) is an old factory owned by a private owner. It consists of an open part which is still used for production, and of abandoned production halls in need of transformation. The project was initiated by a group of people who wanted to preserve this industrial heritage area and give it a new function as a cultural and creative hotspot. The factory is located in the south of Bucharest, the poorer part of the city where there is a clear need for such a space. Through a process of workshops and meetings, the initiators managed to build trust with the owner and started to 'brand' the space. They co-invested in the project through organising events, redesigning the buildings and creating a network and community around the location. Early on, generating cash flow was considered a priority in order to reinvest income in making the buildings safe and accessible, creating better facilities for cultural and creative programming.

Key challenges: How to align short term objectives of the owner with long term development plans of initiators? How to develop a solid business case that generates enough cash flow to renovate the buildings? How to safeguard long term involvement of the initiators in the transformation of the area?

Solution: The Halele Carol project was based on step by step renovation of the building and branding of the area. It was supported by generating income through organising events and attracting sponsorships. Unfortunately, the inability to come to a long term understanding with the owner as well as the lack of funds to buy the whole plot and become independent owners, led to a halt in event production and a termination of the transformation process.



Navy Yard (Amsterdam)

Navy Yard (Amsterdam, Netherlands) was the subject of a redevelopment project by the Dutch Ministry of Defence, based on a step by step transformation process. The state and the municipality of Amsterdam came to agreement to implement a transformation programme for temporary use of the buildings and facilities. This constitutes an approximately 15-year programme managed by a professional team contracted by but operating independently from governmental organisations.

Key challenges: How to determine the best future function of this highly precious area? How to balance public access and private use of the area, as well as (short term) political ambitions?

Solution: The Navy Yard reuse project is based on a step by step adaptation process run by a professional team. Even though the team was contracted by the municipality and the ministry, it has been given a large mandate to freely determine what activities and which users to include in the project over a minimum time period of 15 years. Long-term planning unhindered by changes in local politics is key to the success of the project.



Examples of different forms of financing models

170/5 High Street West (Sunderland, UK)

170/5 High Street West (Sunderland, UK) is a row of three large residential buildings, built in the 1790s. They were in a very bad state when the Tyne & Wear Building Preservation Trust (TWBPT) obtained them in 2018. At the time, these buildings were valued at £1 and after investing £750.000 in restoration works, secured through a mix of grant funding, they are valued at approx. £100.000. After this first phase, working with traditional grant funding, there was a need for a more forward looking, and community building finance model.

Key challenges: How to secure initial capital from different sources to renovate the buildings? How to develop a successful financial model based on a variety of sources, including rent, and investments from tenants, as well as community-based financing-models?

Solution: In order to start building a “community of interest to invest” the project initiators piloted a crowd funder, which was focused not only on collecting money but also on getting a message out to various communities about this project, and create connections between them. The next step is to keep these communities engaged and committed longer-term, and experiment with other forms of ‘crowd’ based funding, e.g. community shares.



Hof Prädikow (Prötzel, Germany)

Hof Prädikow (Prötzel, Germany) is a former manor located in a 9.5ha estate, currently under renovation to become a place for working, living, social initiatives and culture. Better development of rural areas and “distant working” are the aims of the future tenants, many of whom are coming from Berlin located only 50 km away.

Key challenges: How to develop a self organized, democratic community in Hof Prädikow? How to establish mutual understanding and agreement with the local community? How to mitigate the risk of rapidly rising construction prices that might jeopardise the budget for the two remaining residential buildings in the first construction phase?

Solution: What makes this case special is a combination of three legal forms for the implementation of this adaptive reuse project: a foundation, a cooperative and an association. Each legal entity is meant to do what it can do best to support community building according to different financial necessities and abilities. Stiftung trias (foundation), through donations and loans provided by friends, was able to buy the site and grant it by a heritable building right to the cooperative. Mietergenossenschaft SelbstBau eG (the cooperative), used its long lasting experience, collected the necessary equity for the renovation loans and has been able to ensure considerable public funding by the Federal Government. The Hof Praedikow e. V. association represents the every-day-life in Hof Prädikow, running the “community barn” as a link between tenants and villagers.





Recommendations for public institutions

Local and regional governments

★ Use funding as a tool to create the right incentives:

Funding is not just a problem to be solved, but also a resource to engage stakeholders and generate new synergies. Building the right incentives into the funding schemes and matching well public sources with other types of resources can increase the financial potential of adaptive reuse projects without compromising their social value. Funding feasibility studies for adaptive reuse could help potential initiatives to flourish and filter out the less prospective ones.

★ Support the local civic ecosystem:

Well functioning local civic ecosystems provide the necessary environments for NGOs to stabilize, develop but also to survive crises and overcome challenges. Such an ecosystem provides mutual help, can support financial stability but also makes the often small initiatives more visible. Local authorities can support the creation of such ecosystems through platforms that offer networking, match making and visibility, seed funding, as well as through the development of a supporting local regulatory framework. This facilitates access towards investors but also provides more leverage for bottom-up initiatives.

★ Help civic initiatives become visible to investors:

Non-profit enterprises are usually not profitable enough to access financial markets and are considered too risky for private investors. Social enterprises that generate stable incomes look more attractive in the eyes of the right investors, however, this requires advanced financial management skills (financial

planning, revenue identification, expenditure analysis, risk management etc.). Public authorities can facilitate civic actors in strengthening their skills in this area by a wide range of actions and tools (capacity building and mentoring programs, workshops, consultancy etc.).

National governments

★ Develop reliable funding schemes:

Unstable and unreliable public funding represents a serious challenge for bottom-up initiatives, who tend to have less savings and limited revenue streams. It also contributes to a large fluctuation rate of the personnel and endangers the social mission of the initiatives. Predictable funding streams support financial planning and contribute to long-term sustainability in the sector. In the long run, stable public funding can also encourage further private and civic investments and contribute to the expansion and stabilization of these initiatives.

★ Create a transparent and predictable regulatory environment:

Clear guidelines, transparent regulations and a reliable institutional environment - independent of the political changes - is a precondition for a well-functioning NGO ecosystem. Stable and transparent evaluation processes support reliability and long-term planning for the entire civic sector, allowing the different initiatives to develop and expand.



Recommendations for public institutions

EU policy makers

★ Increase focus on the bottom-up:

Increasing bottom-up regional development (instead of top-down regional plans) can support local communities, allowing them to solve their own issues. This can be done in the form of subsidies, revolving funds or guarantees. EU funds need to be made easier accessible for civil initiatives and community led local development (CLLD). Instead of national governments, a specific body at EU level could manage such processes, helping communities all over the EU in setting up local projects and funding schemes.

★ Help bridge the gap of co-financing:

Many EU programmes do not cover 100% of adaptive reuse projects and require significant co-financing which can be difficult to ensure for civic initiatives. Despite the approval of a funding proposal, many projects fail to bridge the gap due to lack of cash flow or limited access to loans. A complementary partnership between EU funding institutions and the banking sector could substantially support co-financing of ideas that deserve to be realised.

Recommendations for private actors

Private investors (impact investors, developers etc.)

★ Take the opportunity to invest in a community:

Groups organised to reach a common goal can be powerful engines for generating economic and societal value. There are different types of investment tools available targeting different groups, ranging from small scale (e.g. crowdfunding) to large scale (e.g. social bonds, Corporate Social Responsibility budgets).

★ Look for new coalitions and business models:

Adaptive reuse requires new approaches to giving collective meaning to old buildings and urban areas. It's not only about the hardware (building and land) but also about the ability to organise (orgware) and to

create new use(rs) for each area (software). Different forms of input will lead to new forms of output and business modelling. Dare to make new types of coalitions (e.g. private developers along with a community cooperative) to create new organisational structures and services as well as attract new users to an area.

★ Look for the story behind the project:

Does it have the power to attract people? Private equity is not only a matter of big banks and investment funds but often relies on ordinary people, even at neighbourhood level, who have funds available and feel enough connection to the purpose of the project in order to invest in it.

Recommendations for private actors



Financial institutions

(ethical banks, regional banks etc.)

✦ Provide training and advice:

Know-how and connections can be as valuable as financial support. Connect civic initiatives to consultancy networks that can provide support in business planning, risk management etc. and support them with expert advice on financial management. Banks do not see their task in consultancy but could think over the possibility to have either an own consultancy company or maintaining good relationships to many external consultants.

✦ Create custom financial products and services:

So called “alternative Banks” as well as commercial banks should provide custom loans and financing programs offering special, favorable conditions for civic initiatives. E.g. place-based mortgage contracts or seed money for feasibility studies and try-outs. Funding of funds, lotteries and government institutions often have to be pre-financed. Finding tools for that, especially accepting different commitments as security is crucial. Risk and benefit calculations should be based on all values instead of financial values only.

Philanthropic foundations

✦ Simplify and be complementary:

The landscape of philanthropic institutions is complex and application procedures are often similar to public subsidies. Philanthropic foundations should consider collaborating and specialising on particular needs of civic initiatives in order to create more added value. Application processes could be simplified, e.g. two-stage procedures, to lower the threshold of entering.

✦ Become impact investors:

Philanthropic foundations may not only have a look at other projects for subsidies or grants but could also finance their own projects and missions as impact investors. Of course this would raise the need of an adequate interest for this investment. But interest is always dependent on the question whether an institution is centred around “money-making” only or “support-giving” instead.



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A roadmap for the EU and Europe

Integrating adaptive heritage reuse in wider EU policies, programmes and practices.

In this Policy Brief, we present recommendations for the wide range of experts within the EU who are in some way, directly or indirectly, engaged in facilitating Adaptive Heritage Reuse (AHR) policies, programmes and practices. By this we mean heritage experts, but also those in urban renewal, regional development, rural development, climate justice, sustainability, greening economies, research and innovation, entrepreneurship, social justice, social economy, housing, wellbeing, tourism, and culture, design and creative industries. And, while we mainly focus on EU institutions, this Policy Brief is also relevant for those involved in projects that could benefit from the EU. AHR, and especially the locally-led, bottom-up AHR in marginalised places that the OpenHeritage project focusses on, is often a very localised practice. As such participants may seem and feel far removed from the direct sphere the EU operates in and vice versa. We will provide an overview of the issues at play and make recommendations to address this, and to further facilitate the implementation of these local AHR projects across Europe. The recommendations are based on research within OpenHeritage (EU H2020)¹ and are in line with the 2021-2027 priorities of EU's Cohesion Policy.²

¹ This policy brief is based on OpenHeritage Deliverable 3.8. OpenHeritage's Observatory Cases can be found on the [OpenHeritage website](#). The interactive OpenHeritage [Database](#) includes further information on each Observatory Case. Work in the Labs can be followed at their [individual pages](#).

Adaptive Heritage Reuse and the EU

AHR projects are about the past, the present and the future, where tangible and intangible heritage from the past that is valued now is sustained for the future while simultaneously given new purpose as part of ongoing social, economic, environmental and cultural transformation. As such, AHR can be a tool that contributes to achieving, for example, community engagement, higher quality of life regeneration, waste reduction, and/or emissions reduction. Reuse and renovation are already integrated to a certain extent within the [European Green Deal](#),³ and the [New European Bauhaus](#).⁴ We recommend that for this to be truly effective AHR, and in particular AHR that is locally-led, should be facilitated by, incentivised by and integrated in a much wider set of EU policies and strategies including, but not limited to, [current Recovery and Resilience Facility](#),⁵ the [Just Transition Fund](#),⁶ Research and Innovation and specifically [Horizon Europe](#),⁷ [Creative Europe](#),⁸ [policies supporting SMEs and entrepreneurship](#),⁹ the [Social Economy Action Plan](#),¹⁰ the new long-term [Vision for Rural Areas](#),¹¹ and, of course, [Cohesion Policy](#).¹²

The OpenHeritage Project

OpenHeritage is developing inclusive cooperation, governance and management models for overlooked heritage sites by working with six Living Labs while analysing case studies of good practices of adaptive heritage reuse implemented across Europe (Observatory Cases).

Working together with residents, local businesses, higher education organisations and municipalities, OpenHeritage explores diverse partnership arrangements, community engagement methods 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 open in terms of open-ended processes with possibilities for constant change.

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Trends in the European context

Adaptive heritage reuse...

- ... **is already widely used as a tool** for urban regeneration, solving vacancy, restricting urban sprawl and connecting with local communities. Yet, it is unevenly used across countries due to variation in national, regional and local level facilitation via acts and policy. This influences where AHR can happen, but also who can undertake such projects.
- ... **can be a catalyst for (sustainable) local development.** Especially when there is support for local or bottom-up AHR projects. Heritage and its reuse can be a resource for development, engagement, branding, tourism and more. As such it is becoming more popular as a sustainable way to care for heritage and is emerging as an key policy aim in several national policy frameworks and in EU governance.
- ... **is emerging in other EU policy, funding and programme aims** e.g. energy-saving, greening, circularity, reducing carbon and nitrogen emissions, crisis recovery, local identity and localism, tourism, participation and inclusion, stimulating the cultural and creative industries, as well as supporting youth, wellbeing and other agendas.
- ... **is ready to be mainstreamed in the EU** as a tool in a variety of policy and funding agendas as a logical next step after the success of the 2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage,¹³ which provided a great stimulus for mainstreaming heritage across policies and programmes.
- ... **is at the intersection of crucial policy concerns**, including environmental and social sustainability, creative and innovative practices, local identity, social justice, circular and low-carbon economy, health and wellbeing. It provides opportunities to tackle the climate crisis, creates space for creatives and start-ups, fosters local identity, culture and well-being, and contributes to sustainable and integrated socio-economic development.
- ... **is often seen as central to local identity and sense of place** and if managed in a not-for-financial-profit way, it can create affordable space, which is essential for cultural initiatives, artists, musicians and other creatives. As such, AHR supports issues of connection, identity, social cohesion and wellbeing, in line also with the New European Bauhaus values: Beautiful, Sustainable, Together.¹⁴
- ... **can be part of an act of protest** to (re) claim space, prevent demolition or highlight the value of local assets and identity, especially for minoritised groups in society.
- ... **is already a visible part of sustainability agendas** in some EU countries as pursued by a governmental organisation to pilot, explore and illustrate suitable governance and funding models, as well as lead by example through reusing historic buildings for ministries, government offices, EU offices, embassies and other public bodies.
- ... **is a way to deal with a wide variety of heritage narratives** going beyond those that are dominant and hegemonic, and to thus become more inclusive, for example paying tribute to a variety of people and their memories and histories, and recognising and addressing problematic and painful histories. The AHR process must be facilitated to address this in ethical, sensitive and open ways.

Key challenges in the European context

Adaptive Heritage Reuse...

- ... **is often called something else.** The terminology around the practice of adaptive reuse varies widely and can fall under many terms including reuse, regeneration, rehabilitation, restoration and conservation — which can result in a lack of specificity, or the exclusion of projects, in calls and requirements for funding, procurement, tendering etc.
- ... **needs further mainstreaming** as a tool in EU programmes that focus on territorial development. It is already recommended and signposted in some programmes where dealing with heritage is more common, e.g. tourism and regional development. The challenge is to make it a more common practice across the board in [Cohesion Policy](#),¹⁵ including in regional, urban and rural development financed and co-financed by the EU, as well as in EU-funded cross-border cooperation.
- ... **needs financial investment.** The challenge is to be recognised by European-level investment vehicles like the European Investment Bank or the Council of Europe Development Bank as a key sector to invest in, while understanding the specificities of public-community partnerships.
- ... **needs an ethical framework.** OpenHeritage shows AHR can contribute to general economic, social, environmental and cultural aims for wider areas, improve quality of life and reduce climate impacts. The challenge is to make sure that commodifying and capitalising on heritage doesn't make heritage a tool of gentrification or touristification, and that benefits are equitably shared across communities.
- ... **needs to be MORE than a 'Repair, Recycle, Reuse'.** In the context of climate breakdown, we must use material recycling and reduce carbon and nitrogen emissions in our practices. Climate agendas already identify the value of reuse of (heritage) buildings or sites in terms of environmental impact, but we cannot see environmental justice as separate from social justice — as is also evident in the Green Deal and Just Transition scheme, through "[making sure no one is left behind](#)."¹⁶ The challenge is using AHR to create visible and direct links between environmental and social justice in such agendas.
- ... **is not a neutral act,** representations of history, engagement with some pasts and not others, and interventions in historic sites have meaning, they have positive and negative impacts for and on people. Understanding heritage dissonance and how history and heritage are mobilised in favour of extremist and populist political narratives is important. The challenge is to use AHR as a tool to address plurality, rather than to consider it as a politically neutral activity.
- ... **can overcome disparities in participation and access.** Some national (as well as regional and local) policy systems explicitly encourage civic engagement, while others have a more neutral position or actively discourage civic engagement. Our research shows that the success of AHR tends to depend on the possibility to engage people in increasing the quality of their living environment. Similarly, different European regions have different access to ethical, non-speculative finance that enables community-led initiatives to undertake significant real estate development projects. A policy challenge is how to overcome these inequalities, as well as mitigate some of them, through the EU working directly with the 'local' level, and vice versa.

Key challenges in the European context

Adaptive Heritage Reuse...

- ... **is often a very localised practice**, far removed from the sphere that the EU institutions operate in. Direct contact, funding and influence can seem difficult. The challenge is to extend and build on existing programmes, as well as information points, agencies and networks, that directly reach projects (such as cross-border project funding, living labs, good practice sharing, labels, awards, exchange and learning programmes etc.) and for those projects to know what is available for them on the EU level.
- ... **is not always supported by building regulations and codes**, which tend to be developed for either new build or heritage, making AHR as an 'in-between' option complicated depending on the availability of local discretion, as well as knowledge, willingness and capacity. The challenge is to make AHR more attractive and possible by adapting, and not letting go, of regulations around e.g. fire safety, material recycling, construction waste, land use, or heritage protection.
- ... **is not always facilitated by regulations and criteria**, which tend also to be developed for either new build or heritage preservation. This can apply to a wide variety of things, e.g. the fiscal rules, levies, tax and funding rules for temporary use or reuse, and our understandings of, for example, 'value for money' or 'carbon neutral' in tenders and procurement rules.
- ... **often depends on temporary and meanwhile-use**. This presents numerous challenges related to issues of fostering gentrification, questions of ownership, value capture and unethical 'use' of local communities, artists and other creatives for meanwhile use.
- ... **is often promoted as a tool to involve local communities** by setting up participatory processes and mobilising local identity. The challenge is to support this without taking away rights, inserting precarity and the threat of displacement, and thus to fund projects to undertake genuine engagement, build long-term relationships and establish trust among parties involved.
- ... **is suffering from the impacts of COVID-19** on the construction industry and global supply chains, for example in production delays, worker shortages and material shortages, in turn leading to rising costs and thereby financial issues for many construction projects. Impacts continue to be felt, thus financing of AHR projects will continue to be a challenge.
- ... **is heavily constrained by the energy crisis** as many AHR projects deal with large spaces that are difficult to heat and they often undertake renovation and restoration works on a step-by-step basis, which tends to defer insulation and renewable energy installations to later stages of the regeneration process.

Recommendations



OpenHeritage Recommendations

These recommendations are grouped around four themes: greener, smarter, integrated and locally-led. They are relevant for frameworks managed by the EU's institutions (i.e. centrally managed programmes) as well as those that are jointly managed by the EU institutions and the Member States (e.g. Cohesion Policy funds) or those directly managed by the Member States (e.g. National Recovery and Resilience Plans under the EU's Recovery and Resilience Facility).

Greener: reduce, recycle, repair, reuse

- ✳ **Push the momentum around AHR in relation to climate change.** Facilitating AHR and using AHR as a tool is starting to become more common in sustainability and climate change agendas, such as in the current focus on renovated, energy efficient buildings, in a general push for Repair, Recycle and Re-use in the European Green Deal, and in Cohesion Policy's priority of funding smarter, greener and locally led development. Mainstreaming AHR can push these agendas further.
- ✳ **Make 'green financing' available specifically for reuse** and/or create other targeted funding for AHR projects which address SDGs and/or EGD targets.
- ✳ **Support or develop innovative pilot projects** with publicly owned heritage. Public ownership can be an opportunity to test and showcase new and innovative approaches to intervention, regulation, or collaboration. Lead by example and organise around environmental impacts, and the Climate Crisis by, for example, the EU making a commitment to only reuse existing buildings for its offices across Europe.
- ✳ **Increase the focus on nitrogen carbon reduction, waste management and material recycling.** The global construction industry is a significant contributor to emissions and thus climate change. Renovation and reuse are usually more sustainable alternatives. Strong international partnerships and cooperation on aspects of environmental sustainability are required to meet the shared goal of averting environmental disaster.
- ✳ **Influence standards and regulatory frameworks** in particular building codes, especially the renewal of the Eurocodes (due 2026), as well as more generally CEN and ISO codes, but also tax, procurement and tender rules. These could be reviewed specifically in relation to AHR practices to ensure they don't disadvantage reuse.



Recommendations



Smarter: innovative and collaborative tools and templates

- ☐ ☆ **Promote volunteer management** and the establishment of (local) ethical frameworks for non-exploitative practices. The EU could provide templates for local partnerships to adapt and adopt, as well as strategies to create 'commons' networks to support commons and community organising. This would allow local communities to become self-sustaining through a dedicated public budget in order to go beyond volunteering. This should also be linked to skills and capacity building programmes, and to existing European volunteer frameworks such as the European Solidarity Corps.¹⁷
- ☐ ☆ **Build national or international cooperation and collective momentum around a database.** The OpenHeritage database is a good start and can be expanded to share more experiences, examples, policy contexts and inspiration — both expert-led and crowd-sourced. As the COVID-19 pandemic has shown, developing appropriate digital communications, databases and networking tools for sharing and disseminating knowledge and learnings is an ongoing challenge.
- ☐ ☆ **Make vacancy and underutilisation visible through open-source mapping and crowdsourcing.** The EU can play an important role in the opening up and democratisation of information on vacancy, for example through linking up databases such as the OpenHeritage database¹⁸ with the Collaborative Cloud for Cultural Heritage,¹⁹ which is currently being established under the Horizon Europe programme. By sharing inventory and mapping methods, tools and access to data this can help to reveal vacancy, ownership, potential users and community needs, and can thus also support the further development of area-based partnership working.
- ☐ ☆ **Funding and support for capital work, use and collaboration.** Projects benefit from a combination of both funds and support in the form of sharing knowledge, mentoring and practices. Financial support could be achieved through the development of a dedicated European (investment) fund for AHR, which could then also offer — or collaborate with a network that offers — additional support and mentoring, as well as gather and share knowledge of good practices.
- ☐ ☆ **Make visible the positive and negative impacts of AHR.** A database with projects should include not just 'benefits' but also warn against potential negative impacts, such as displacement, erasure of histories, gentrification, commodification and cultural appropriation, and offer smart and ethical collaborative tools, templates and governance principles to counter these potential negative impacts.

Recommendations



Integrated: cross-sectoral agendas and understandings

- ✧ **Further mainstream AHR as a crucial tool in current and future agendas** such as European Green Deal and New European Bauhaus; New European Agenda for Culture and the Creative Europe programme; European Research Area and the Horizon Europe programme; Cohesion Policy²⁰ and its specific funds: European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund+, Cohesion Fund, Just Transition Fund and Interreg; Common Agricultural Policy and the European agricultural fund for rural development, and The New European Innovation Agenda. Now is the time to capitalise on the knowledge, interest and need to make a push for mainstreaming AHR as a tool in and for these important agendas.
- ✧ **Support new models of work for renovation and maintenance.** Various EU initiatives (e.g. ESF+, Creative Europe, European Urban Initiative) focus on capacity building, employment, education and skills and can support and develop training focused on capacity building in the cultural and creative sectors, renovation and repair skills in construction (e.g. reusing existing material, restoration techniques, maintenance and working with traditional materials). This can also address labour and skill shortages as well as youth unemployment on a local level, increase retention and future-proof jobs, and create a more sustainable and circular cycle of employment and investment.
- ✧ **Make AHR a more explicitly promoted solution, tool and ethical practice in wider EU policy and funding frameworks.** Reuse should be explicitly favoured over new construction, and thus clearer and more visibly integrated into wider policy agendas, making the development they stimulate more sustainable. This can be a wide range of policies such as those in culture, climate, tourism, regional and rural development, housing, youth, education and beyond.
- ✧ **Create awareness of terminological variation across countries,** so challenges, procedures, expertise and responsibility can be made specific to the practice of AHR. Including AHR terminology within EU policies might be useful in mainstreaming practice, which may then also lead to transfer of terminology. It can also reinforce international cooperation.
- ✧ **Facilitate, incentivise and fund AHR through non-heritage routes:** culture, youth, social, educational, tourism, sports, or creative organisations all need spaces to operate in. For instance, Rural, Social and Cultural Funds, or funds supporting SMEs, could incentivise and support beneficiaries of their funding and loans to reuse existing building stock rather than build new space. This can also help link to social inclusion by addressing histories, meanings and stories, and thus heritage dissonance, through events, storytelling, architectural intervention, or educational programmes.
- ✧ **Support and promote living labs, as places where various agendas and sectors meet.** The EU could establish long(er) term or follow-up funding for support, networking, knowledge production, peer-to-peer exchange, intersectoral working and critical living lab studies. This can occur both through 'active' living labs and through follow-up 'sustainability funds' e.g. via the European Network of Living Labs (ENoLL). The EU could adopt, develop and build on the OpenHeritage database to facilitate AHR matchmaking, partnerships, peer-learning and vacancy mapping. This can also help the continuation of connections and networks, cross-fertilisation of learnings between labs and advance community-building momentum.

Recommendations



Locally-led: ethical partnership, participation and local identity

✧ **Help local actors and support bottom-up initiatives** by creating clearer pathways to access funding (public and/or private) and capacity (e.g. available experts, knowledge, information, support) for AHR. It can be particularly helpful for actors in countries with low levels of support, or missing adequate financial infrastructure, to be able to directly access EU funds, grants and loans. Centralisation can be a barrier in some cases; direct support for AHR could be driven through the support of municipalities and other local actors.

✧ **Often AHR projects need help navigating the possible options**, whether at EU, national, or regional level. The EU could provide access to funding for mentors, peers and training to navigate the AHR process, as well as develop a subsidy / funding guide or another resource point (online and/or via e.g. Europe Direct, Creative Europe Desks or other EU programmes' information points) for locally-led projects to know what is directly available on the EU level and/or national level through EU funds, for example, by adding AHR terminology to specific tools such as the [CulturEU Funding Guide](#)²¹ or the [Guide on EU funding for tourism](#)²² of the European Commission.

✧ **Integrate AHR within, build on and extend other existing programmes** that directly reach local projects, such as the [URBACT](#)²³ and [Interreg](#)²⁴ programmes, the [European Urban Initiative](#),²⁵ [Horizon Europe](#)²⁶ with its focus on partnerships, living labs and good practice sharing, but also in [celebration of heritage through labels, awards](#)²⁷ and other research, networking, (peer) exchange and (peer) learning programmes.

✧ **Direct support for the local level and local partnerships** can also happen through non-heritage routes. Informal (or local, or unlisted) heritage often doesn't qualify for national heritage funding programmes, but can be important for local identity and locally-led regeneration. In some countries, formal heritage status can limit the possibilities for AHR significantly. The EU could also encourage national governments to make AHR eligible for heritage funding and tax relief.

✧ **Support regional and international collaboration and learning across sectors and projects.** The EU can further expand how they showcase and directly fund a wide(r) range of creative AHR projects with a very broad understanding of heritage, online and offline. It can put the spotlight on good practices through events such as [European Heritage Days](#),²⁸ [European Capitals of Culture](#),²⁹ network-meetings, site visits, [New European Bauhaus prizes](#),³⁰ [European Heritage Awards](#),³¹ the [European Heritage Label](#),³² and other good practice sharing. Communication should be multilingual and inclusive so that good practices, including financial and governance practices, are made fully accessible to all.



Locally-led: ethical partnership, participation and local identity (continued)

✧ **Promote strong locally-led partnerships between stakeholders.** Not only can they help reduce inter-local and inter-project competition, but they can also support local learning and sharing. It is crucial that contributions are not played out against each other, and ‘communities’ disregarded in favour of ‘experts’ or vice versa — collaboration is key. Support for international and pan-European networks working on the topic of independent AHR art spaces and creative hubs to foster and share practices in collaborative working, local governance and funding mechanisms is crucial.

✧ **Develop an ethical re-use and meanwhile-use framework** which can be adopted by projects, partnerships, or local authorities. These should be sensitive and inclusive enough to cater to the particulars of varying project contexts and engage with ethical collaboration, partnerships, participatory practices, material sustainability, story-telling and historical research, and help to organise against displacement and exploitation. They should help create a sense of shared responsibility for the consequences of ensuing development between all partners.

✧ **In the wake of a new (post) pandemic reality,** austerity and crisis recovery are happening, and the decade after the financial crash shows us heritage and adaptive reuse have a central role in crisis recovery. The Member States could further showcase and promote (across the EU) the role of AHR in National Recovery and Resilience Plans.³³ Furthermore, the EU institutions could also go beyond the Recovery and Resilience Facility to make other innovative funding options available, possibly through a separate fund with the European Development Bank or via Invest EU, to support locally-led AHR and mitigate uncertainty and risk.



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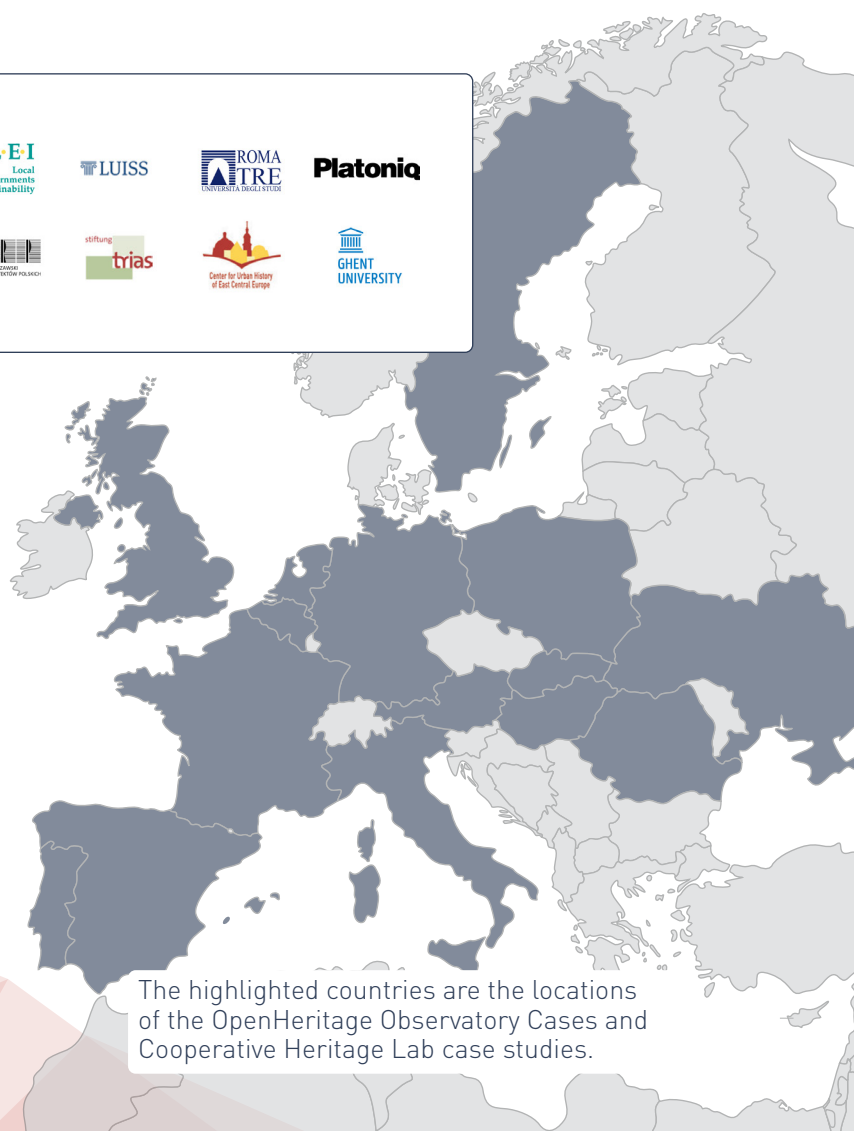
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The highlighted countries are the locations of the OpenHeritage Observatory Cases and Cooperative Heritage Lab case studies.



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 integration¹ as well as our work in the Cooperative Heritage Labs² 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.

¹ Deliverable 5.7: Roadmap to enhance regional cooperation, can be downloaded here: www.openheritage.eu/resources

² The Cooperative Heritage Labs can be found on the [OpenHeritage website](http://www.openheritage.eu).

³ The Observatory Cases, including videos and detailed analyses, can be found on the [OpenHeritage website](http://www.openheritage.eu). The interactive [OpenHeritage Database](http://www.openheritage.eu) includes further information on each Observatory Case.

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.

www.openheritage.eu

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.



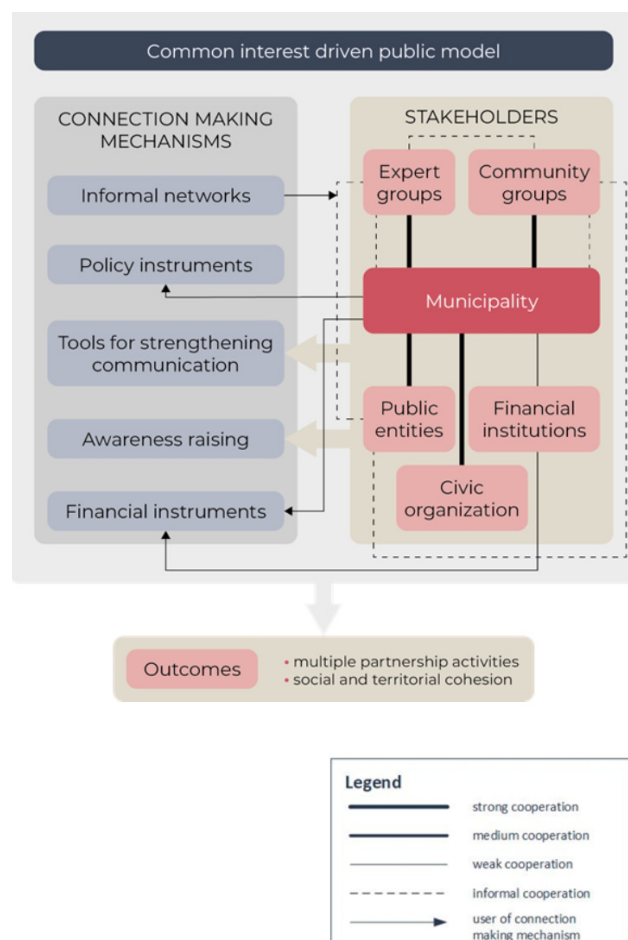
The AHR projects are led in **close cooperation with different local stakeholders and residents** to better respond to their needs and benefit all parties involved. The common understanding, dialogue and strong formal and informal relationships between municipality and residents, experts and civic organisations 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.



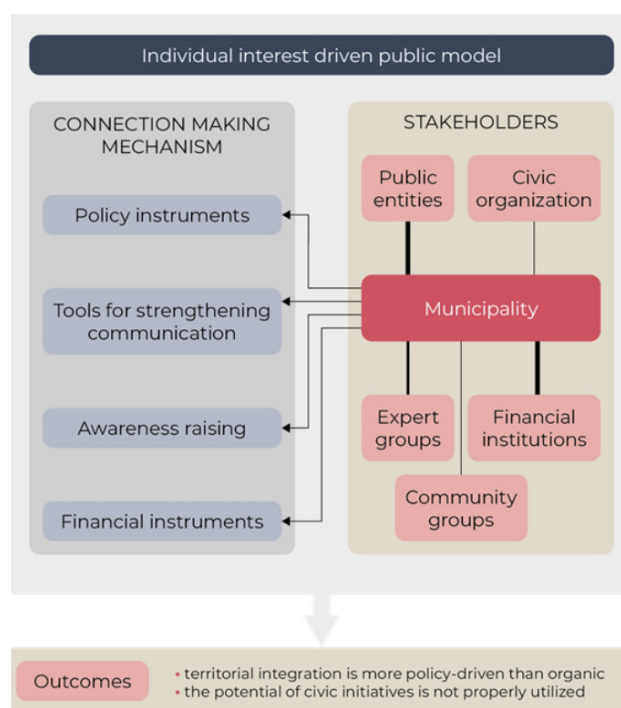
There are **no well-defined common interests between different stakeholders** and each of them is following their individual goals. **Projects are led in a top-down manner** and even if they include civic participation, the potential of civic initiatives is not properly utilised in all cases. The relationship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



Legend

- strong cooperation
- medium cooperation
- weak cooperation
- informal cooperation
- user of connection making mechanism

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.



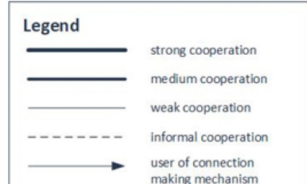
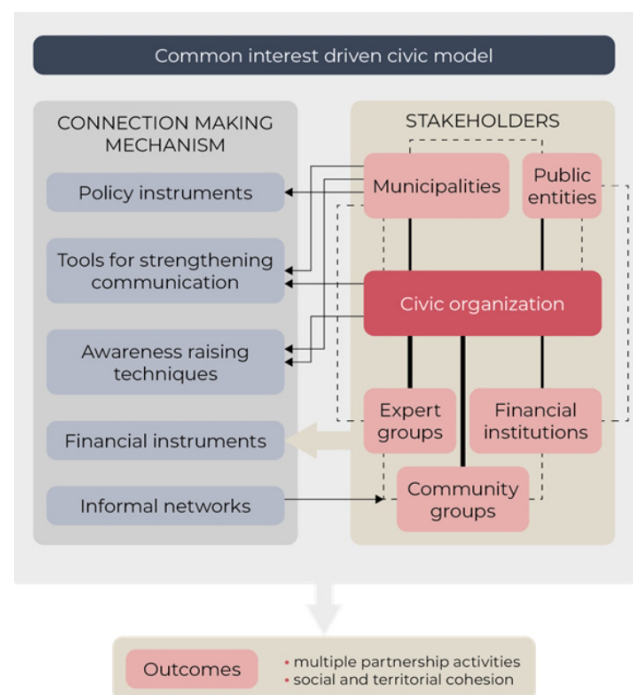
AHR projects are very diverse, depending on different regulatory environments, relationships between actors and financing structures. What strongly connects them, however, is a well-defined, **clear common interest** that serves the residents' goals and strong formal and informal relationships between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



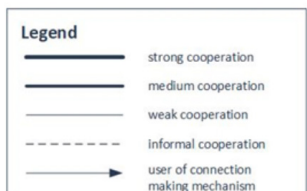
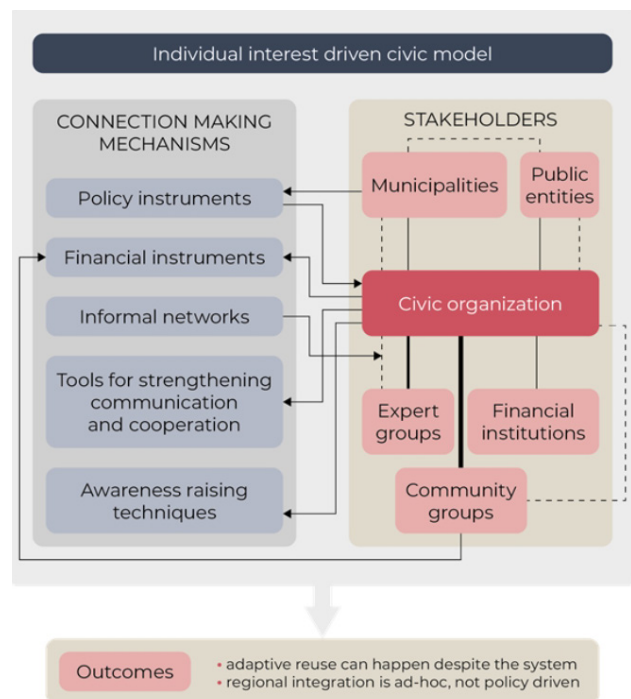
The regulatory environment is not very supportive, and **public authorities are not cooperative**. Even if some sort of informal relationship with local authorities exists, it doesn't manifest into official cooperation.



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.



Models of regional cooperation

Model 4: Individual interest-driven civic model

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

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