

Recommendations for European Actions



Preamble

The ATFORT project aims at investigating appropriate development strategies for European fortifications by exchanging experiences amongst partners. Fortresses and fortifications represent a very peculiar heritage because they were initiated to be used solely by the army. These specific structural and expansive constraints became detached from the main public infrastructures, thus entering into oblivion and abandonment. This has also impacted on the sensitivity of society on what they represent.

Although still forgotten and refused acknowledgement by parts of the European population, these places represent a potential for their values to be recognised within its architectural, engineering prowess, cultural diversity and identity. Such values go beyond the mere evaluation of its feasibility and the convenience of their preservation, thereby reiterating that the European cultural community continues to investigate appropriate financial and technical solutions.

Threats and weaknesses of European Fortifications and their preservation

On the basis of these experiences realized by all the partners and observers, and the results of their exchange network, the ATFORT project agreed on the following primary needs:

- The current approach to the restoration of European fortified Heritage is; 1). That the present operators do not have the necessary knowledge to take decisions in line with the contemporary conservation theory. 2) That the building market often offers solutions that hamper the sites' values, their integrity and authenticity.
- One of the principal causes of disuse of modern fortification is the scarce accessibility, to reach the site, to easily move in it, to obtain knowledge about it.
- The principal use of these sites and their present state of abandonment raise relevant issues of safety for the new users: pollution, dangerous structures, broken and rotten materials, etc. often prevent the full use or require costly financing for restoration.
- The public effort cannot be sufficient. There is an increasing need to involve local population, private stakeholders and different actors. Governance and management are although necessary, their achievement is dependant on new approaches to territorial development based on effective use and coherence.

- As a consequence, new forms of financing (crowd-funding, non-financial markets, public-private-NGO partnerships, voluntary work, etc.) should be investigated and promoted.
- As for many abandoned areas, fortifications are affected by uncontrolled vegetation which has in addition impacted on challenges observed in the preservation of the integrity and authenticity of structures. The theory of conservation and landscape is at stake, and critical knowledge and motivation for interventions are urgently needed.
- The extension of fortification and their original plans offer multiple solutions of reuse. Multi-functionalism could be an important ally to site managers, guaranteeing alternative and integrated sources of financing.
- Fortifications were conceived to stand alone and independently from the other living centres in the areas, thus it was provided with its own basic infrastructures, today it has become scarce or insufficient. The need for a proper water, sewage system and sustainable energy provision requires the adoption of new solutions and green technologies. This new opportunity recognises the fortification as a good pilot case for testing.

To tackle such issues, the ATFORT partnership adopted the motto: “PRESERVATION THROUGH DEVELOPMENT” which asks for the appropriate flexibility by experts and institutions involved in the reuse process in accordance with historic, cultural, social and financial constraints. To do this, 3 main channels have to be ascertained: enabling conditions, governance-management models and adaptive reuse.

Enabling conditions

- The proper reuse of fortification ask for appropriate management models, skills, staff and financial support or scheme;
- The reuse of a fortification depends on basic conditions of accessibility and safety. Awareness of the difficulty to achieve the “zero risks” situation, users should be made aware and responsible for themselves;
- There should be an appropriate flexibility by involved authorities to let reuse be possible. In particular, the preservation of these sites is easier if the conservation bonds are reasonably flexible.
- There should be existing guidelines on the appropriate conservation approach, the materials to be used, the right skills and the need of reuse conditions.
- The political agenda should include the reuse of fortifications as one of its upcoming priority. Actions can be completed if there is the political willingness.

Adaptive reuse

- The needs of architectural, historic and natural preservation have to be reasonably combined. The right solutions (complete reuse or preservation as archaeological remains) have to be carefully balanced.
- Fortifications can be easily considered as pilot cases for the advancement in the field of architectural conservation and adaptive reuse, in respect with the concepts of authenticity, integrity and reversibility.
- Flexibility in reuse is necessary. Fortifications cannot work anymore as such, so their characteristics have to be adequately improved for public use. Preservation through development.
- Not all heritage sites can become museums. The approach to an adaptable multifunctional reuse, in accordance with socio-historic constraints, should be better promoted in Europe.

Governance

- The impact of fortifications and fortified system in the territorial scale is in most cases relevant. New management models depend on the new European cooperation in terms of good governance. New schemes of horizontal and vertical collaboration would facilitate the integration of these objects in territorial development.
- Specific researches on the appropriate management models for fortifications should be started, considering their peculiarity in terms of extension and maintenance.
- European and international nets of collaboration should be promoted (for example, ATFORT) to facilitate the exchange of information among site holders and experts in these fields.
- Fortifications peak the interests of many people that have tried so far to exchange information: historians, preservation architects, archaeologists, former soldiers and “nostalgia” should be included in the conversation for the reuse of these places and also to facilitate the resources for its reuse.
- To support the governmental process, new tools for the quality of conservation and reuse should be considered.
- Training to improve competences and skills in preservation and management is also necessary.

The ATFORT Partnership warmly recommends:

In light of the above results, it is advised that a specific European policy framework for the safeguarding of this peculiar heritage should be envisaged, at least to

establish the basis for appropriate regeneration and maintenance mechanisms in the future. EU programming should acknowledge the multisectoral characteristics of fortified heritage, dedicating explicit and specific reference to the applications on these sites as a pilot for EU development. In this respect, specific measures should be taken on:

- Legislation
- Funding and financing
- Training

1. Eu regulation

Specific attention must be given within European institutions to highlight the impact that European legislation has on historical sites. It is particularly important to ensure that the application of European directives for the management of historical sites (those related to habitat, air quality, water, waste, energy and noise pollution) are covered.

In this respect, the following main issues should be further investigated and regulated:

1. The privatization process of cultural heritage should favour the takeover of communities first, offering new eligible management structures.
2. The preservation and maintenance objectives and procedures should be given a theoretical and practical common base, with specific reference to the peculiarities of fortifications.
3. Fortified Heritage, due to its extension and critical status, should be considered a territorial priority, allowing flexibility in interventions (with reference to monumental and landscape bonds) and promoting integration within regional and local policy and strategic documents.
4. The operators working on fortified heritage should be properly certified according to a European standard. This action should include the improvement of training and practice.

2. EU Programming and funding

The sharing of experiences enabled partners to understand that they have similar problems and similar approaches, but further actions need to be taken. The partnership highlighted the fact that funding in different forms is needed, in particular:

1. The recurrence of the 1st World War should also be included in measures towards the recovery and regeneration of Modern fortifications as places of war and peace as well as tangible EU heritage. Specific and consistent funds in different measures should be allocated to the sustainable preservation of fortifications.
2. EU programming should heighten attention to various forms of active participation by the EU population. The programme should include the unemployed, volunteers etc in activities that safeguarding cultural heritage and landscape, as tools for alternative funding. Education is a resource and the engine for people commitment. Programmes and funds to support volunteers' dedication will be required.
3. EU governance policies should aim at maximising sustainable infrastructural objectives to facilitate the redevelopment of dismissed heritage areas, as well as promote the coordination of inter-sectoral projects through explicit funding calls.

3. Research and Training

The knowledge acquired on European fortresses and fortifications have reached an advanced state through different European Cooperation initiatives. This expertise needs to be enhanced, monitored, organised and communicated through efficient learning experiences:

- The promotion of awareness raising initiatives in the general public targets the creation of values;
- Training professionals able to support fortresses' owners to adopt the right decisions on restoration and management issues, in line with the international standards and latest achievements;
- Coordinated research activities aiming at a systematic organisation of valuable existing researches, data and field experiences;
- To facilitate the adoption of European dismissed fortification for the testing and application of innovative and sustainable solutions for heritage and landscape preservation, as showed by the ATFORT partners during the ateliers.

In this light, it is advised that the EU support the ATFORT initiative to establish an International Centre for the Research and Valorisation of Fortified Heritage to be located in Forte Marghera, Venice, as the starting initiative for future cooperation in this field.

ATFORT partners highly benefited from the experience of the INTERREG IVC programme and strongly advice that such opportunity could be repeated in the future. Exchange at all levels is the basis for the creation of a real European identity in respect to cultural and historic diversities.

The ATFORT Partnership represented by the Lead Partner
The New Dutch Waterline

Project partners:

New Dutch Waterline /
Government Service for Land and Water management
Medway Council
The Governing Body of Suomenlinna
Network of Vauban's major sites
Fort Monostor Non-profit Ltd.
Kaunas city municipal administration
City of Venice
Paola Heritage Foundation
University of Nova Gorica
Department Spandau of Berlin (Citadel of Spandau)
Provincial Government of Antwerp

"The Interregional Cooperation Programme INTERREG IVC, financed by the European Union's Regional Development Fund, helps Regions of Europe work together to share experience and good practice in the areas of innovation, the knowledge economy, the environment and risk prevention. EUR 302 million is available for project funding but, more than that, a wealth of knowledge and potential solutions are also on hand for regional policy-makers."

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