

Québec Roadmap: Towards a New Urban Project (2022-2024)

PRIORITY THEMATIC (6): Intangible heritage as a resource for urban rehabilitation.

Pilot City: BRUGGE

Synthesis of the Thematic Worksheet (Step 3.1.2)

In line with the Quebec Roadmap Strategic Axis 1 – “Inclusive and cohesive cities inspired by their identities and cultural diversity”, the *Priority Thematic* presented by the city of Brugge aims to find solutions to ensure the consolidation and preservation of the intangible heritage of spiritual spaces in need of rehabilitation.

One third of Brugge’s historic core is composed by religious properties, however, the number of occupied monasteries and abbeys have significantly reduced in the past few years, due to reassignment of the clerics by the church. The city governments’ challenge nowadays is how to ensure that the integrity of these religious built structures’ tangible and intangible heritage are preserved, while enabling potential adaptation to new uses of those that are currently unoccupied.

The architectural ensembles of the Beguinages located within the Flanders Region of Belgium, are typical architectural complexes composed of houses, churches, ancillary buildings and green spaces; designed to meet the spiritual and material needs of the “Béguines”, name given to Flemish unmarried or widowed women who dedicated their lives to God, living in enclosed communities but without retiring from the world. The ensemble located in Brugge went through a major restoration in the decade of the '70s, nevertheless, the houses no longer comply with today’s housing standards, and the number of residents continues to decrease. Due to its unoccupancy, lack of maintenance, and increasing touristic pressure; the Beguinage’s authenticity as “havens of peace” for unmarried women, in which the sense of community and respect for individuality are finely balanced, is currently under threat.

The Beguinage is a fundamental part of Brugge’ heritage. With the aim of rehabilitating the compound as well as strengthening its identity and the sense of belonging by the inhabitants, the city of Brugge intends to develop a masterplan to preserve the built structures through the development of unique urban approach, capitalising on the intangible heritage values of the Beguinage.

Associated matters

The city of Brugge proposes to form a Collaborative Network gathering experiences and collective research efforts on different interrelated issues, *inter alia* the following:

- Inventorying and interpreting of the intangible values;
- Capitalizing on intangible heritage for the rehabilitation and revitalization of religious or spiritual places;
- Preserving the intangible qualities of the property by strengthening the local identity and its specificities.