



LINKS
Future-proof historic centres
The INS & Outs – Synthesis

Jan 2013



Connecting cities
Building successes





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CONTENTS

I – The starting HYPOTHESIS:	3
II – A network of historic cities:	3
III - WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES AND AIMS OF LINKS?	4
Historic centres through the prism of sustainable development:	4
Urban, social and cultural challenges:	5
Environmental and technical challenges:	6
What is eco-restoration?	6
The necessary global approach to energy:	8
Economic challenges:	8
IV - LINKS NETWORK EXPERIENCE FEEDBACK:	9
Historic centres must evolve to exist	9
IV – a – Local Action Plans :	9
IV – b – Synthesis of the thematic works:	10
IV – c – Synthesis of the recommendations:	11



Future-proof
historic centres



I – THE STARTING HYPOTHESIS:

Historic centres are tomorrow's eco-districts

How can the challenges concerning the environment and heritage building protection be reconciled to offer a majority of people sustainable and attractive housing at the very heart of the city? This is the main question that the network of European historic cities of the LINKS project addressed within the URBACT programme.

II – A NETWORK OF HISTORIC CITIES:



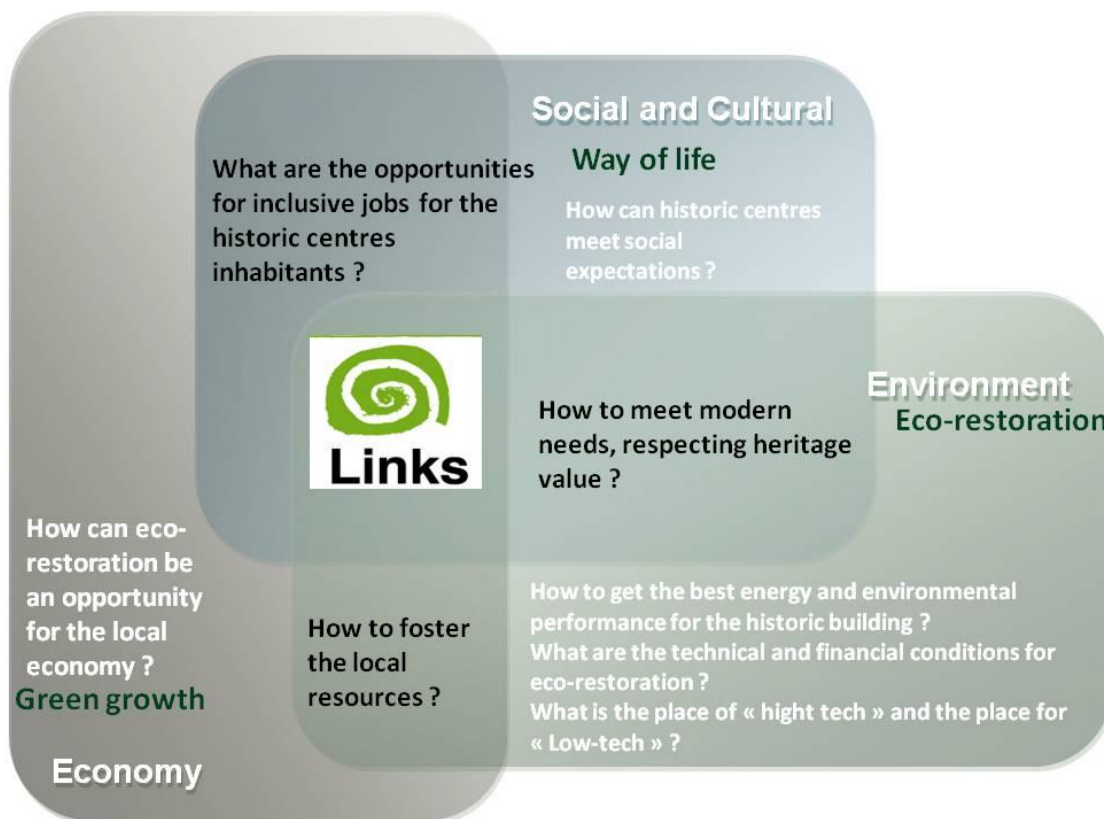
Almería (Sp),
Anderlecht (Be),
Bayonne (F),
Brasov (Ro),
Budrio (I),
Delft (NI),
Kilkenny (Ir),
Veria (Gr)

The city of Freiberg (G) withdrew from the project for financial reasons in may 2012.

III - WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES AND AIMS OF LINKS?

Historic centres through the prism of sustainable development:

To develop an integrated approach, the LINKS partners elaborated their work programme on cross approaches of urban, social, cultural, environmental and economic issues.





Urban, social and cultural challenges:

Promoting heritage and avoiding the **difficulties of museumization** has been the creed of numerous historic cities, but 30 years of sustained efforts were necessary to preserve threatened historic heritage and win back some inhabitants.

To be really attractive for housing, these cities need to offer a credible alternative to peripheral housing estates. For inhabitants to come back to city centres, **safe, comfortable and energy saving housing** should be created.

The difficult reconquest of historic centres shows, if that was needed, that the wish to live in a city centre is not only a matter of housing quality. Living in a historic centre means a certain way of life: consumption, transport, leisure habits, etc.

How can we understand and meet such expectations? How can we promote older and damaged areas without moving the most fragile populations out? How can we maintain or regain a balance between the residential functions, often the most fragile ones, of a city centre and its urban centrality and attractiveness?

Here are some of the questions the cities working on the LINKS project intend to answer to make **not only sustainable, but also attractive areas** out of their historic hearts.

In that sense, **old housing restoration needs to really improve usage quality, thermal and acoustic comfort**. The policies conducted in that sense over the past decades need to be revised.



Environmental and technical challenges:

For energy saving reasons, heritage buildings have been mishandled for years, being applied techniques that were developed for post-war buildings and were not only of poor efficiency, but also damaged old buildings. **It has recently been shown that techniques inspired from eco-constructions only are appropriate and efficient to restore an old building.**

What is eco-restoration?

The eco-restoration is a way to optimize energy and environmental performances by using the intrinsic qualities of the building, combining comfort, well-being and respect of the heritage value.

ECO

Energy efficiency

Limited environmental impact : material with low charge in water, energy, natural resources consumption, limited transport and waste production

To preserve **health** of inhabitants and craftsmen : Healthy materials

To benefit to **local economy** : short supply

RESTORATION

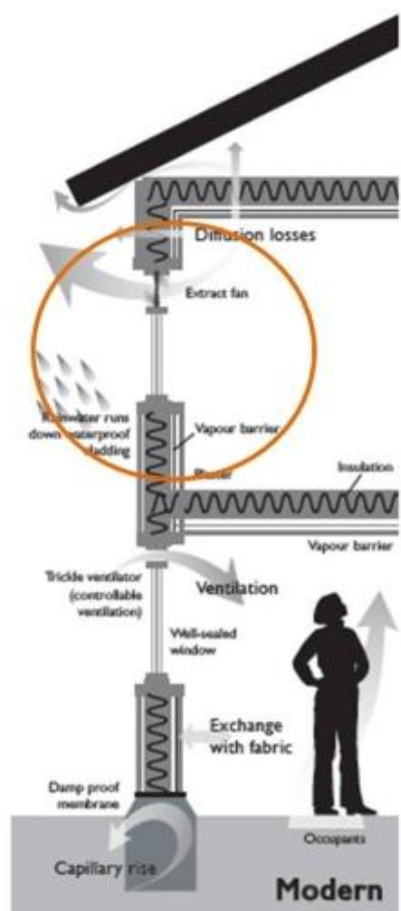
To improve **comfort** and **quality of use**

To respect the **heritage** and **architectural value**

To **respect** the **behavior of the building** and to foster its intrinsic qualities.

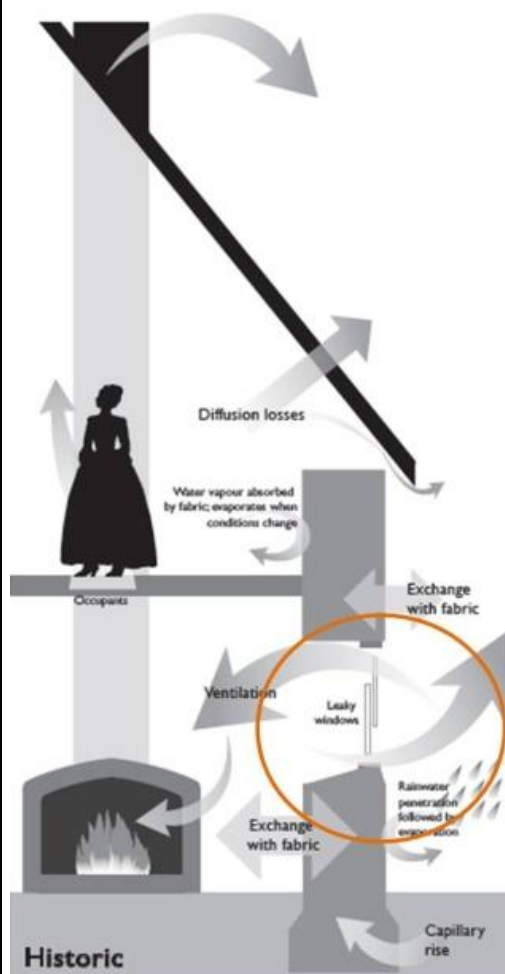
The major difference in terms of hygrothermal behaviour between a modern building (post industrial) and an old building (built with traditional techniques, generally before 1945), lies in the management of moisture.

Modern buildings are generally made of vapor-proof envelopes. Thus, they are less sensible to the implementation of impermeable insulations.



Source: *Energy efficiency and historic buildings – Application of Part L of the building regulation to historic and traditionally constructed buildings*. English heritage, june 2012

Traditional buildings are permeable to the water vapor, and this characteristic must be respected otherwise great decays can be caused to the original work. (l'humidité une fois « encapsulée » dans les murs crée de sérieux désordres à la structure). All intervention to upgrade the energy efficiency of historic buildings must therefore be technically compatible with the existing structure, particularly with the need for permeable fabric to “breathe”.



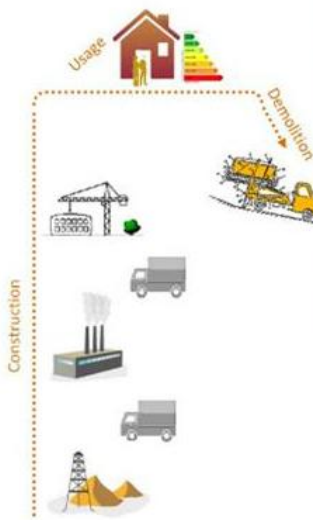


Consequently, a real technical revolution has to be carried out and supported so as to durably restore built heritage:

- improve **thermal comfort** and **energy efficiency**,
- **limit the impact** of works on the environment.

These are the technical objectives structuring the environmental part of the LINKS project.

The necessary global approach to energy:



To take the best technical options, it is necessary to consider the global consumption of energy during the whole life cycle of the building (construction/renovation, usage, demolition), and not only during this phase of usage.

Indeed, depending on the technical options, the energy consumed during the phase of usage can only represent a consistent share of the total energy needed during the life of the building.

Economic challenges:



This technical revolution will not occur if economic actors are not strongly supported to carry out this change by looking for **new market and job opportunities**. In many cases, local building markets hardly meet these new technical requirements and an entire part of the building sector needs to get structured. There is obviously a need for developing know-how and local business sectors. Mobilizing a network of actors, identifying opportunities for the local economy, taking part **in structuring the eco-restoration market and stimulating demand** are the priority objectives of the LINKS project.

IV - LINKS NETWORK EXPERIENCE FEEDBACK:

Historic centres must evolve to exist

The LINKS partners demonstrate from their local experience that it is possible to combine heritage and environmental issues to use the revitalisation of the historic centres as a very efficient tool for the social, economic and urban development.

The work conducted by the European partners contributes to sharing a great variety of answers and points of view. It makes it possible to calmly debate, practices that were tried and tested elsewhere are a source of inspiration to explorer new ideas for local solutions.

The result of over two years of exchanges is now available, thus allowing attendees to highlight concrete proposals for the social, urban, cultural, environmental and economic challenges related to the future of historic centres.

Three categories of results are now available:

- a) At the local level, each city is committed to implement a **Local Action Plan**,
- b) At the European level, **thematic reports** and **newsletters** have been edited to give account of the exchanges,
- c) At the European level again, a **set of common principles and recommendations** has been draft to communicate to the European Institutions the difficulties and obstacles met within the current legislation.

IV – a – Local Action Plans :

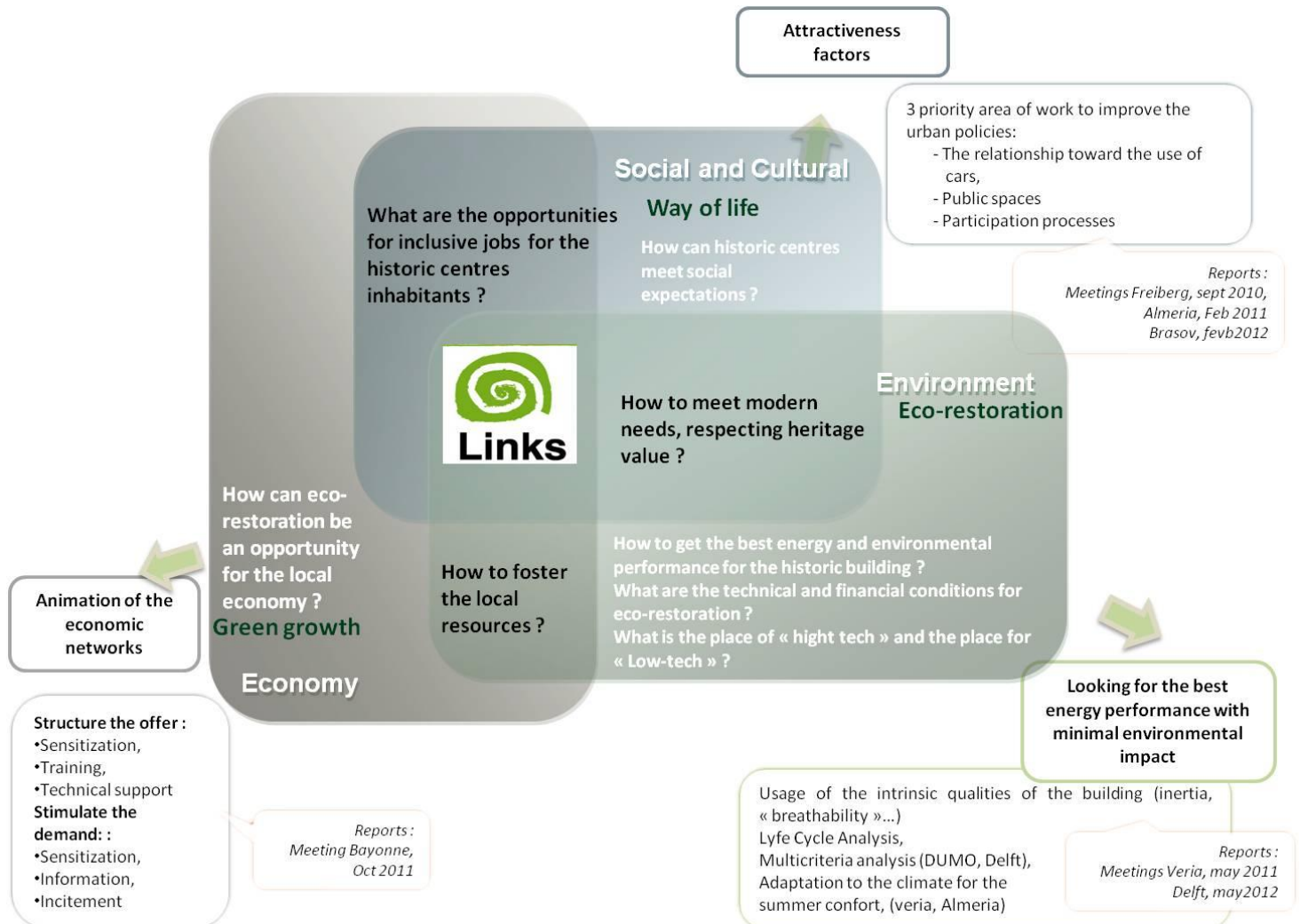
A synthesis in English of the 8 Local Action Plans is available on the URBACT-LINKS website : <http://urbact.eu/index.php?id=1643>



IV – b – Synthesis of the thematic works:

The scheme below summarises the issues addressed by the LINKS partners and precises the outputs where the results are available. It is mainly the reports on the transnational meetings. They are available on:

<http://urbact.eu/en/documents-and-resources/documents/?project=1634>



The **6 newsletters** are available on the web site :

- **NL °1: Urban challenges for historic cities :** situations, prospects and tools.
- **NL °2: Historic centres within the territorial competition.** How to identify factors of attractiveness of historic cities?
- **NL °3: Heritage conservation and environmental performance,** the end of an opposition?
- **NL °4: Be normal: eco-restore your building.**
- **NL °5: Factor4 proof historic centers**
- **NL °6 : More & Better:** opportunities exist for historic centres.

IV – c – Synthesis of the recommendations:

OBJECTIVES



More sustainable and efficient energy retrofitting for a better and effective revitalisation of historic buildings



Increase the benefits of energy saving policies and create more and better jobs for the construction sector



More innovative governance for a better and effective use of public funds

OBSTACLES

Unsuitable regulations to trigger the deployment of an effective and global energy saving of the existing and traditional building stock

Deep lack of knowledge about the thermal behavior of traditional buildings

“Business as usual” impedes real changes and raises numerous barriers for local economies based on the renovation of the building stock

Conflicts between heritage safeguard requirements and energy efficiency

Energy savings mainly take the consumption in use into account, with only low consideration for the global environmental footprint

RECOMMANDATIONS

- Adapt current energy efficiency assessment methods to the features of existing buildings,
- Consider the reduction of the global environmental footprint of renovation works as a criterion for a resource efficient policy,
- Support the necessary change of practices by the means of specific attention to the characteristics of traditional buildings within the EPBD,

- Accompaniment of measures to generate job opportunities
- Facilitate access to the market for eco-materials in order to create opportunities for SMEs.
- Raise awareness of practitioners and decision makers.

- Overcome obstacles which hinder effective cooperation of stakeholders,
- Ensure provision of a clear and stable financial support,
- Disseminate good practices.

Targeted policies and programmes: ERDF, ESF, Research agenda, Education, Horizon 2020, JPI, URBACT, Smart Cities Programme – Covenant of Mayors - Elena - Jessica

The recommendations are available on : <http://urbact.eu/en/projects/urban-renewal/links/news/?newsid=935>



For more information, all contacts are available on the URBACT LNKS website

URBACT II

URBACT is a European exchange and learning programme promoting sustainable urban development.

It enables cities to work together to develop solutions to major urban challenges, reaffirming the key role they play in facing increasingly complex societal challenges. It helps them to develop pragmatic solutions that are new and sustainable, and that integrate economic, social and environmental dimensions. It enables cities to share good practices and lessons learned with all professionals involved in urban policy throughout Europe. URBACT is 255 cities, 29 countries, and 5,000 active participants

www.urbact.eu/project



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