

BRUGES

WORLD

HERITAGE

CITY



INTRODUCTION



Bruges is a unique city and is featured in the list of World Heritage Sites no less than four times.

The historic centre of Bruges was acknowledged as a World Heritage Site on November 30th 2000. The Beguinage and the Belfry had already been included in the list in 1998 and 1999 respectively. In 2009 the Procession of the Holy Blood was recognized as Immaterial World Heritage.

The title of World Heritage Site is a prestigious one. It puts the city on the international map and therefore holds additional cultural and tourist appeal.

The city owes a lot to its past and its unique historical position. A city connected with the hanseatic league and the centre of European trade in the Middle Ages, Bruges is a compact city, densely built and with a wealth of art treasures.

The unique architectural heritage has been carefully preserved throughout the centuries. In addition, Bruges boasts impressive museum collections, the most important of which is the collection of Flemish Primitives. Other treasures have been preserved in museums, churches, archives, foundations and the Municipal Public Library.

The city also has a lot to offer in the field of immaterial heritage: the Procession of the Holy Blood recognised by Unesco, the Our Lady of Blindekens procession, the archers guilds, the musical traditions, to name only a few.

This makes Bruges a paradise for those looking for additional value.

The recognition as World Heritage is largely due to the architectural heritage, in particular because the city of Bruges is regarded as a 'textbook' of architectural history, specifically of 'Brick Gothic'. It was the exceptionally authentic and well-preserved medieval urban fabric that earned the city the recognition as World Heritage. The fact that Bruges was the 'birthplace' of the school of the Flemish Primitives also played a crucial role.

The World Heritage Label has been experienced as a reward for the decades of dedication to the conservation and restoration of our unique city's heritage.

The city has never experienced conservation as a burden. On the contrary, it is considered to be a major challenge. Indeed, a city is an active, evolving community which may very well be reflected in the townscape.

A conservation-oriented policy concerning heritage does not exclude high-quality new developments. It was and still is not easy to integrate new developments into the historic urban fabric. Nevertheless, it is possible and actively contributes to the further evolution of the city's architectural history.

The appeal of Bruges as cultural and World Heritage city results in ever increasing international tourism. Together with local trade and the large offer of cultural initiatives, tourism is a major economic drive for Bruges' inner city.

The challenge lies in conserving the universal heritage, combined with a sustainable development of culture and tourism in a working and living city environment. Bruges should in the first place be a lively city where it is pleasant to linger, for inhabitants as well as for visitors.

Patrick Moenaert
Mayor of Bruges

Mercedes Van Volcem
Alderwoman for spatial planning and housing



THE GROWTH OF BRUGES

In Bruges, the first settlements in the early Middle Ages (7th - 9th centuries) were situated on the sandy ridges along the river Reie. The area around the Burg had evolved into a major settlement by the late 9th century and continued its development throughout the 10th century, mainly as a result of the construction of a castle, the place of residence of the counts of Flanders.

In the period from the 10th to the 14th century Bruges evolved into an important international trading town. A number of residential and commercial nuclei developed around the Burg in the 10th and 11th centuries. In the early 12th century the first city walls were constructed, surrounding an area of approximately 75 hectares. The buildings constructed in this period had a major impact on the topographic landscape of Bruges. It largely followed the course of the existing rivers. City gates were built on the main access roads. Remnants of one of the towers of the city wall have been preserved at Pottenmakersrei. During this period Bruges evolved into a commercial centre of European importance thanks to its central location at the North Sea and along the major trade routes.



Remains of the first city walls from the 12th century, Pottenmakersrei

In the 13th and 14th centuries Bruges further developed into a rich international port and the main commercial centre of Northwestern Europe.

The Market Square was the place where urban autonomy was clearly demonstrated. It was the place where citizens gathered for every major event, and the impressive 13th-century belfry with the market halls was a symbol of this autonomy and economic wealth. It was also the place where merchants from Southern and Northern Europe met and called upon the trade intermediaries and hoteliers of Bruges for their trade. High-quality Flemish cloth was exported all over Europe from Bruges, and all kinds of other arts and trades prospered. It is of great importance that real bankers were already active in Bruges at that time. Amongst these bankers were not only citizens of Bruges, but also Italians. They enabled merchants to open current accounts, transfer considerable amounts of money, exchange coins and even pay with bank notes.

The city's material prosperity gave rise to numerous building projects. Churches, monasteries, convents, a beguinage and hospitals were built to reflect the religious and social functions of the city. During the city's golden age, from the 13th to the 15th century, large mansions and small houses were built next to one another and housed 45,000 residents. Soon, the area surrounded by the first city walls proved to be too small, and dwellings were also constructed along the major access roads to the city. The city walls were extended in 1297. It is at that moment that the final shape of the city, the so-called Bruges "egg", was established, as the extremities of the built-up area were connected. Inside the new walls, an area of approximately 370 hectares was sufficient to allow for further construction, until the end of the 19th century.

In the same period, the difference between the income of the lower classes and that of the merchants/entrepreneurs was considerable. Violent revolts such as those of 1280 and 1436-1438 were forcibly suppressed. During the uprising of 1302 the lower classes sided with the count of Flanders against the king of France and the wealthy classes. This conflict, in which Bruges played an important part, resulted in a victory for the local craftsmen and the count of Flanders during the Battle of the Golden Spurs of 11 July 1302. This historic date is now the Day of the Flemish Community.

The 14th century, a period of crises, revolts, epidemics, political unrest and wars in Flanders, ended with the merger of the dynasties of Flanders and Burgundy. The year 1384 was the start of the Burgundian era for Bruges. The city remained the most important international commercial centre north of the Alps for another century. Cloth production was gradually replaced by luxury goods, services in the banking sector and artistic crafts. The Burgundian court guaranteed a high local purchasing power, further increased by many foreign merchants who had international contacts from Portugal to Poland. Prosperity increased and travellers were impressed by the wealth and luxury reflected in the townscape. Art and culture reached an unprecedented climax in that period and a number of major projects were realised, which clearly shaped the city's fame. Bruges became the centre of oil painting, a technique practiced by the so called Flemish Primitives. The main representatives of this school were Jan van Eyck and Hans Memling, who both settled themselves in Bruges in the 15th century.



*Altarpiece of Saint Nicholas
with panorama view of Bruges,
Master of the Legend of Saint Lucia, 15th century
(© Groeninge Museum Bruges)*



Portraits of Juan Pardo II and his wives Anna Ingenieulandt and Maria Anchemant with panorama on Bruges, Antoon Claeissens, 1580
 (© Groeninge Museum Bruges)

The sudden death of Mary of Burgundy in 1482 and the uprising against her husband, Maximilian of Austria, starts the decline of the city's prosperity. Together with the Burgundian court and the international merchants, local wealth disappeared from the city. Starting from 1520, the city also lost its direct access to the sea, causing international trade to move to the port of Antwerp. However, Bruges remained important as a regional centre with some international commercial contacts and a flourishing art sector.



English convent, postcard, ca 1900

During the Counter Reformation in the second half of the 16th century many monastic orders settled within the city walls. They possessed large estates with orchards, pastures, vegetable and herb gardens and washing and bleaching facilities. The city map drawn in 1562 by Marcus Gerards at the request of the Bruges city council gives a good idea of the city and its built environment. In the 17th century Bruges became an important monastic city, but also remained a provincial town with modest maritime activities.



Plan of Bruges, detail, Marcus Gerards, 1562 (Public Library of Bruges)

During the 17th and 18th centuries Bruges continued its attempts to play a significant role as a maritime commercial town in Western Europe. The city was connected to Ghent and Ostend by digging canals. This increased accessibility resulted in the revival of Bruges as a sea port and the further internationalisation of commercial life. Shipowners and merchants from Bruges continued to conduct trade with the Spanish empire, England and the East and West Indies. The Bruges stock exchange revived, but switched from the merchant's house *Van der Beurse* to the halls on the Market Square. After 1614 the 13th-century city walls were modernised by erecting new fortifications.

Inside the city walls, a number of noticeable changes to the urban structure were made, especially during the second half of the 18th century. The Coupure canal was dug in 1751-1753, under the Austrian rule, and a number of watercourses no longer in use were vaulted over. As a result, new squares were created and residential buildings were constructed. Trade and inland navigation activities mainly took place in the warehouses near the Handelskom.



Typical street with working-class houses and lacemakers, Rolweg, 1898

During the French occupation (1794-1815) the city experienced limited industrial growth; the regional economy continued to be mainly based on agriculture and textile. Around 1850 Bruges was one of the poorest cities in Belgium. The middle class spoke French, the illiterate lower classes only knew the local dialect and public life was completely conducted in French until 1885. Nevertheless, the most important Dutch-language poet, Guido Gezelle (1830-1899), was a citizen of Bruges. In European literature Bruges acquired fame through the French-language novel 'Bruges la Morte' by Georges Rodenbach (1855-1892), in which Bruges was described as a sleepy, dead but mysterious city. However, at the time of the publication of this work, Bruges had just embarked on a number of new, ambitious projects, such as the development of Seabruges as a new sea port and the efforts to make Bruges an art city and a tourist destination.

In the late 19th century and the early 20th century, the city centre became more densely built-up. Bruges emerged relatively untouched from both World Wars. After the Second World War the urban structure was changed again in some parts of the city. The Zand square was given a new purpose and was completely redesigned after the relocation of the railway station and the railroad infrastructure to the edge of the city in 1936. In the late 1970s the Minnewater park was created between the beguinage and the moats.

The function of the city centre changed drastically during the second half of the 20th century. As the inner city was extremely dilapidated, many of its residents moved to the outskirts of the city and economic activities withdrew from the centre as well. As a result of the renewal campaigns after 1970, Bruges increasingly became a 'soft' residential city featuring cultural facilities and educational institutions as well as a large number of service industries, and gradually evolved into a major tourist destination.



The 'Burg' in Bruges, Pierre François Ledoux, 1751 (© Groeninge Museum Bruges)



BRUGES, WORLD HERITAGE CITY

The historic city centre of Bruges and the Flemish Primitives

In 1999, in preparation for "Bruges, European Capital of Culture 2002", an application file for the recognition of the historic city centre as a World Heritage Site was submitted on the initiative of the mayor.

The World Heritage Committee included the city's historic centre in the list of World Heritage because it fits in the category of cultural heritage featuring an exceptional universal value for mankind in general. In addition, the city centre meets a number of well-defined criteria.

Indeed, Bruges is a well-preserved city, still contained within its 13th-century boundaries, and bears testimony to the history of mankind and architecture over a span of many centuries, both from a spatial and a structural point of view.

The urban fabric and the 'pattern' or 'texture' of the original built-up area have largely remained intact and are still clearly visible. A characteristic feature of Bruges is not only the Gothic brick architecture, which is found all over Northern Europe and in the Baltic states, but also the neo-Gothic architecture, which guaranteed the continuation of an age-old building tradition thanks to a first major restoration wave in the 19th century.

Bruges was well-known as a commercial metropolis in the heart of Europe. The last link in the chain of Hanseatic cities, Bruges promoted the propagation of innovating artistic trends, mainly originating from Italy but also from Spain. Still an active, lively city today, it has succeeded in preserving the architectural realisations and the urban structures of the different stages of its development. The stately belfry with the market halls, the beguinage, the medieval hospitals, the churches, the convents and monasteries are regarded as exceptional reflections of the commercial and cultural history of the city and of mankind.



Moreel-triptych, Hans Memling, 1484 (© Groeninge Museum Bruges)



Portrait of Jan van Eyck, Pieter Pourbus, 1551 (© Groeninge Museum Bruges)

The city's unique universal value is also inextricably linked to the masterpieces of panel painting. Bruges is considered to be the place of birth of the Flemish Primitives. The central figures of this school of painting are Jan van Eyck and Hans Memling, who came to live and work in Bruges in the 15th century. Many paintings by these masters, but also by other contemporary and later artists from Bruges, were exported to other countries and undeniably influenced painting in the rest of Europe. The collection preserved in Bruges is impressive in its authenticity, its size and its quality.



'Burg' with former Court buildings and Town Hall



The 'Reie' with the former Saint-John's hospital



Steenhouwersdijk

Heritage conservation in Bruges is not just a thing of the present; it has been monitored very consistently and efficiently by the subsequent local governments since the 1970s. Furthermore, the recognition as World Heritage guarantees the continuity in this respect.

Restoration is a tradition that Bruges has been promoting with financial support since 1877. The city often was and still is a 'test case' in the field of restoration and urban renewal in Flanders. The integration of new buildings into this historical fabric has never been simple.

Brugge has tried to follow the guidelines of the Venice Charter (1964) since the 1970s. This charter stipulates that conservation of buildings is essential but that additions must be done in an honest contemporary style.

Buildings are continuously restored, but new buildings were and still are erected as well. The basic principle is that conservation of historic heritage always takes precedence over renovation. New developments are exceptionally permitted in places where the value of the existing buildings as cultural heritage is regarded as non-existent. In other words, heritage conservation and management are not necessarily inconsistent with high-quality new developments.

Finding a balance between the integration of new functions on the one hand and the preservation of the townscape and the city's texture on the other hand, has always proven to be difficult and is still the subject of reflexion and research today.



17th-century almshouses Saint Joseph, Nieuwe Gentweg



Neo-gothic ensemble, Markt

The exceptional universal value of the city of Bruges mainly lies in two key concepts: 'Authenticity' and 'Integrity'.

The growing number of sites included in the World Heritage list has led to the development by Unesco of guidelines for the management and conservation of World Heritage sites.

When Bruges was included in the list in 2000, neither guidelines nor a code of conduct were imposed. Nowadays, every world heritage city has the obligation to prepare a management plan for its World Heritage sites, even before they are included in the list. Cities that did not have this obligation at the time of the recognition have to prepare a plan now.

That is why the City Council decided in 2011 to invite tenders and secure the necessary funds for the preparation of a Management Plan for the historic city centre (WHP).

Bruges already features a large number of listed monuments. Still, the Flemish government also intends to develop new selective protective measures in the course of the years to come. These initiatives offer the best guarantees for the conservation of the exceptional universal value of Bruges' historic centre.

The historic city centre of Bruges was included in the list of World Heritage sites on 30 November 2000 (Cairns – Australia).



Former Saint-John's hospital, Mariastadt



The belfry and the halles, Jan Baptist van Meuninxhove, detail from *The Market in Bruges*, 1696 (© Groeninge Museum Bruges)

The belfry

Belfries are the oldest witnesses of medieval civil public architecture. The highest concentrations can be found in Flanders, the Walloon provinces and the North of France, an area that developed into one of the most prosperous and urbanised areas to the north of the Alps from the 12th century onwards. Belfries were symbols of civil emancipation and the power of the cities. The belfry was not only the place where the urban privileges and regulations were kept, but also served as a means of communication with the citizens via the town crier or the ringing of bells. The tower was also used as an observation post for spotting danger within (fire) and outside (attacks) the city.



The treasury of the belfry, Markt

The *Belfry of Bruges* is inextricably linked to its market halls. As a matter of fact, the residents of Bruges refer to the belfry as the hall tower. It is presumed that a wooden market hall complex with a belfry stood at this site as early as the second quarter of the 13th century, possibly sooner. The wooden structure was quickly replaced by bricks. In 1280 the belfry was severely damaged by a fire and was repaired in the following years. Archaeological analysis of the walls and dendrochronological research now date the wings of the cloth hall and the first segment of the belfry to the second half of the 13th century. The second segment of the tower was probably added around 1300 and subsequently embellished with a delicately crenellated parapet and octagonal turrets. The upper, octagonal segment in High Gothic style dates from 1482-1486. It was constructed in Brabant sand-lime stone and features elegant openwork windows. This lantern was crowned by a beautiful wooden spire. In the 15th century the entire complex obtained its final shape, although several minor stylistic changes were made later on. In 1741 the elegant spire was destroyed by a lightning stroke. The spire was never rebuilt, but in 1822 the belfry was topped by a neo-Gothic parapet.

The market halls themselves consist of four wings surrounding a central inner courtyard. The 83m high belfry with its carillon dating from the 17th and 18th centuries is centrally positioned on the side of the Market square. The façades of the halls are interrupted by pointed arches, finished with a crenellated gutter wall. The corners are accentuated by beautifully decorated bays. A gallery was added on the south side (Oude Burg) in the 16th century.

The exceptional universal value of the belfries was recognised by Unesco in 1999, when 32 Belgian belfries were included in the World Heritage list. In 2005 the list was extended with the belfry of Gembloux and 23 belfries from Northern France.



The belfry as seen from courtyard



The carillon bells in the belfry, Markt



Beguinage

The beguinage

The Beguine movement came into existence in the Low Countries during the 12th century, when devout women, who initially lived alone, formed small communities. Contrary to regular nuns, they did not make monastic vows. Moreover, they supported themselves by manual labour and they were allowed to own goods. The increase in the number of beguines led to the foundation of the first beguinages around 1240.

In Flanders, beguinages were usually situated just outside the city walls and were independent entities, both from a social-religious and from an economic point of view. In terms of architecture, beguinages were characterised by a centrally located church, which sometimes also housed an infirmary and which was surrounded by “convents”, individual houses with a front garden, the house of the “Grand Mistress” and the “Holy Ghost Table” for the poor. The beguinage was walled in and accessible through entrance gates that were closed between sunset and sunrise.



Benedictines in the beguinage, ca 1925

The *Ten Wijngaerde* beguinage is the only beguinage of Bruges that has been preserved and is among the most beautiful of its kind in Flanders. It was founded just outside the inner city walls during the third quarter of the 13th century and soon fell under the protection of countess Joanna of Flanders. In 1299 the French King Philip the Fair succeeded in bringing the beguinage directly under his rule. The beguinage has been called the "Princely Beguinage" ever since. By then the city's extension had caused the beguinage to be situated within the city walls, but surrounded by moats and walls, it had its own legal status. It continued to be a town within the town. A period of prosperity from the 15th to 18th centuries was followed by spiritual decline from the 19th century onwards.

Nowadays there are no more beguines, but Benedictine nuns have been living in the beguinage since 1927, while a number of houses are rented to single women.

Throughout the centuries the beguinage has preserved its mediaeval structure. The inner courtyard with its lawns and trees is surrounded by a church, a convent and rows of houses, some of which have walled front gardens and some of which have an individual entrance. Other houses are located in the adjacent street, which makes this a beguinage of the mixed type. This haven of peace, completely closed off from the outside world, is accessible through one of the monumental main entrances along the canal. The brick houses, comprising one or two storeys, mainly date from the 16th to 18th centuries, but many of them have older, 13th-century origins. The homogeneity of the beguinage as a whole is reinforced by the white façades and gables with black plinths and tiled saddle roofs. The sober brick architecture that is so typical of the region is enlivened by the sash windows divided by muntins and the polygonal chimney shafts.

Listed in 1939, the beguinage became the property of the city in 1972. This was the start of a thorough restoration project which took years to complete and during which each individual house was carefully restored and the living comfort was improved.

Together with a representative group of 13 other Flemish beguinages, the beguinage of Bruges was included in the World Heritage List on 2 December 1998 (Kyoto, Japan).



Minnewater and the main entrance of the Beguinage



Beguinage



Procession of the Holy Blood

Procession of the Holy Blood

The Procession of the Holy Blood occupies a special place among the World Heritage of Bruges.

The earliest mention of the Procession of the Holy Blood dates back to the beginning of the 14th century. The procession has been depicting Biblical scenes, in particular scenes from the Passion, since its inception. However, it soon evolved into a much more extensive parade of the guilds and fraternities, the archers guilds, the magistrates and, of course, the clergy. Groups of musicians and horsemen added lustre to the procession.

In 1310 the city council decided to have the festivities surrounding the Holy Blood coincide with the annual fair. This caused a considerable increase in the number of spectators and a strengthening of the devotion to the Holy Blood, while at the same time furthering the city's cosmopolitan appeal.

In the early 15th century the Noble Fraternity of the Holy Blood was founded, whose task it was to safeguard the relic, to promote its worship and to organise the procession. From the 15th and 16th centuries onwards, the procession depicted an increasing number of secular scenes, due to the rise of the chambers of rhetoric. At the end of the 19th century attempts were made to re-establish the link with the procession's historical background. Afterwards, and especially since the 1970s, the procession has evolved to its current form, referring to the golden age of the city of Bruges and culminating in the worship of the relic of the Holy Blood.

The age-old connection each citizen of Bruges has with "their" procession is reflected in the extremely loyal participants coming from very diverse backgrounds. The torch is passed on from one generation to the next. Every year, on Ascension Day, the Procession of the Holy Blood draws 30,000 to 40,000 spectators to Brugge.

The Procession of the Holy Blood was added to UNESCO's representative list of immaterial cultural heritage in 2009, partly thanks to the age-old tradition it represents and the local population's connection with it, both in time and in space.



Reliquary of the Holy Blood surrounded by prelates and dignitaries



Concert Hall, 't Zand 34, 2002

NEW ARCHITECTURE IN A HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Until today Bruges has succeeded in preserving a considerable part of its medieval heritage, street pattern and small-scale character. In addition, it is remarkable that most buildings from later centuries are adjusted to the medieval context in scale and style. Still, the impact of the 19th century is important. On the one hand, the advent of plastered façades causes a real break with the past. On the other hand, the Romantic period (mid-19th century) sees the development of a 'neo-Bruges' style, ranging from neo-Gothic to eclecticism. This style is promoted as a means to guarantee authenticity and to increase the city's appeal.

After the First World War, the city's urban development policy is still based on the principle that 'modern' construction is only possible outside the boundaries of the historic city centre (e.g. the railway station and the Christus-Koning district). Nevertheless, the buildings of a few new streets in the inner city are designed in art deco style or are influenced by the Hague School and early modernism. The development of the Gezelle district (1925) as a "garden district" is innovative in terms of urban development. After the Second World War, the city experiences a crisis, resulting in a downward spiral of dilapidation and demolition. It is only in the 1960s and 1970s that things start to change for the better and that an upgrading of the city centre becomes the focus of attention.



© Jan Darthet



Provincial Government buildings, Burg 4 and 5, 1966



School, Giststraat, 1969

From 1950 to 1970

Immediately following the Second World War, the 19th-century desire to create a unity of style is still very much alive in Bruges. New architecture is characterised by a sometimes simplified historicisation, based on the traditional Bruges style, but seldom with respect for the original structure and proportions. Historicism is often used to make buildings that are out of scale and style more acceptable. Buildings are mainly constructed in brick or natural stone, which is seldom painted or plastered.

From the early 1960s onwards the city is on the verge of losing its individuality as a result of a purely economic approach to its heritage. During this period the historical context is completely disregarded and preference is given to modernity (flat roofs, large windows, horizontal segmentation ...). At more visible places in the city, projects are developed that vaguely refer to the city's history, but that are again characterised by exceedingly large volumes and rather meager architecture with façade styles and storey heights deviating from the norm.



Housingproject, Spinolarei 17, 1965



Former bankbuilding, Markt 20, 1971

From 1970 to 1980

From 1970 onwards the tide is definitely turning in Bruges. The focus is mainly directed towards conservation and restoration of the city's valuable heritage. But at least an equal amount of attention is paid to reconciling sometimes large-scale new urban functions with the city's individuality, character and texture. The international modernism that desecrates other historic cities no longer stands a chance in the historic inner city of Bruges. A 'historically inspired building style' is developed in which historical elements are translated into 'modern' architecture. For Bruges, this means that scale and volume have to correspond to the 'ideal' medieval volume and to the historical construction methods and choice of materials. This approach yields a few interesting results. The exaggerated scale of some of the new constructions is disguised by a fragmentation of volumes, the play of recesses and protrusions or the actual replacement of buildings by seemingly identical, historicising copies on a different scale and completely out of proportion.



Shopping- and housingproject, Burg 16, 1977



Former youth library,
Spanjaardstraat, 1972



Public Library Bruges
Kuipersstraat, 1975



Collegebuildings,
Potterierei 11-14, 1976



Shopping centre and social housing, Zilverpand, 1976



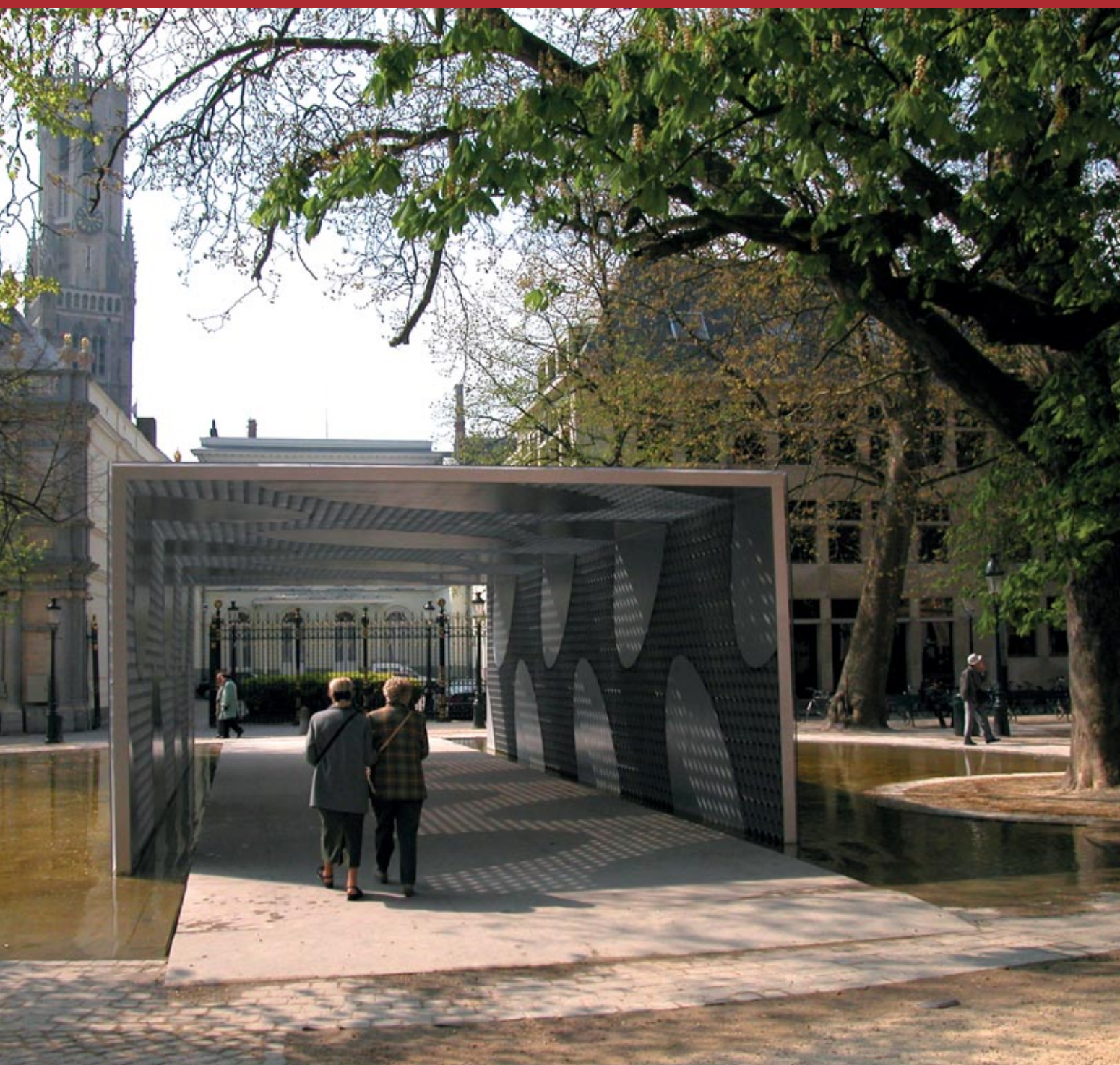
Covent of Dominican Sisters, Vlamingdam 34, 1992-1995.

From 1980 to 2000

While “postmodernism” breaks through internationally, Bruges holds on to the approach adopted in the 1970s. The influence of postmodernism is only visible in stereotypical structures and details: gables, arches, bays, dormers, balconies. Today this gives a very outdated impression. After 1990 international ‘abstract modernism’ gradually gains influence and slowly makes its way to the Bruges townscape. A subtle harmonisation with or interpretation of the typology, volume and texture of the surrounding area results in a number of innovative realisations. A growing difference of opinion about future constructions sets advocates of contemporary architecture against supporters of reconstruction (façadism) and historicising architecture.



Housing project, Spiegelrei 8 and 9, 1985



Pavillon of Toyo Ito, Burg, 2002

After 2000

‘Bruges, European Capital of Culture 2002’ is the start of a period characterised by new trends and initiatives. Bruges wants to profile itself as a trendy, lively city and makes a number of architectural statements. The new concert hall is constructed on the basis of the winning design of an architecture contest in which several international top architects participated. Toyo Ito, a Japanese architect, is appointed to create a temporary pavilion on the Burg square and designs a floating passageway through a transparent volume with a honeycomb structure. Today this is the youngest listed monument in Flanders.

In the course of the next decade, the private sector and other public authorities make a number of remarkable achievements possible as well. After the demolition of the prison building, a project consisting of 80 residential units is realised at Pandreitje, also in the context of a competition. A characteristic feature of this project is the fragmentation into small-scale brick buildings interspersed with alleys and squares.

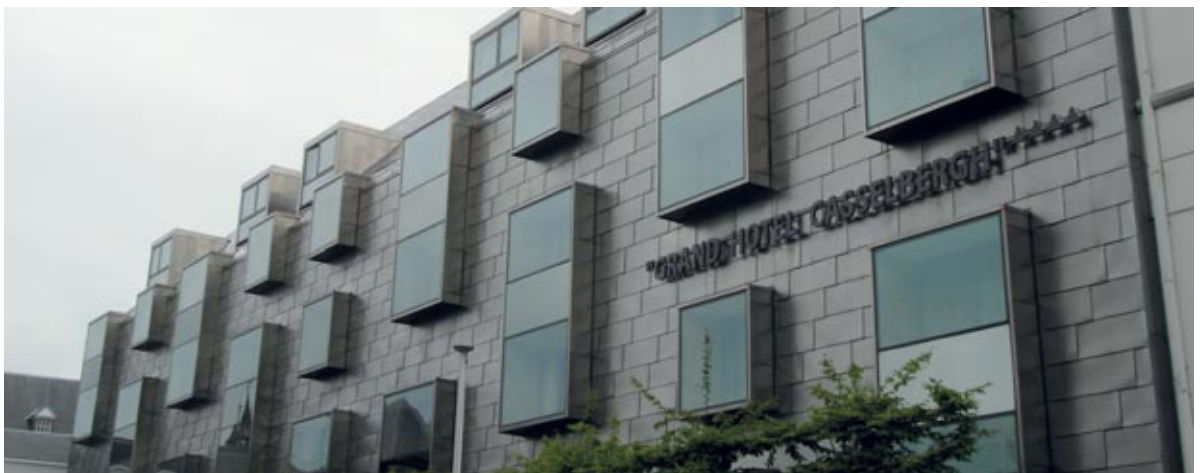
At the site of the College of Europe at Verversdijk, white sober volumes contrast with the listed buildings of the former Jesuit college.

The municipal government currently in office has succeeded in eliminating some of the last 'cancers' defacing the city. For instance, the neglected historic buildings at Hoogstraat 6 and 8 have been restored and now house a hotel. For the new extension at the back, the architect sought inspiration from the archetype of a medieval shrine. The result is a clearly delimited metal volume to which rhythm is added by protruding bay windows.

The new Public Record Office at Predikherenrei is of particular current interest. A sober brick structure covered by a very original sloping roof seems to float over a ground floor that is almost completely open.

Very soon the restoration of the former convent of the Redemptorist nuns will start. The convent itself will accommodate some 70 students. In a (less valuable) part of the garden, wood-panelled stacked houses with pointed roofs will be constructed.

These examples show the evolution in the perception by professionals of the integration of contemporary architecture into the city centre.



Grand Hotel Casselbergh, Hoogstraat 6, 2010



Concert Hall, 't Zand 34, 2002



Housing project, Pandreitje, 2003



College of Europe, Verviersdijk 16, 2007



Public Records Office, Predikherenrei 4, 2012



Grand Hotel Casselbergh, Hoogstraat 6 and 8, 2010

Do past and present clash in Bruges? Does modern architecture threaten the historic city centre?

There are few cities where more attention is paid to the preliminary research into the architectural history of inner city buildings than in Bruges. Conservation always takes precedence over renovation, and a favourable advice for demolition and new developments is only given if the heritage value of the existing building is close to non-existent. The many working-class houses and other buildings in neo-Bruges style, often dating back to the 19th or the early 20th century, constitute a very specific challenge, as they do not have a high heritage value of their own but are nevertheless a determining feature of the townscape. Façadism has always been avoided wherever possible, but may occasionally be an acceptable compromise for the “minor architecture”.

The basic principle of the urban development policy is that new developments must have a high-quality, contemporary design. At the same time, new projects are to be inconspicuously integrated into the existing small-scale texture of the surrounding streets and the city as a whole. In a historically valuable and complex context there is no place for showy architecture, driven by the desire to create a name for oneself. Architects are expected to adopt a subtle approach, with focus on sophisticated details.

Therefore the municipal bylaws contain a number of strict regulations, e.g. as regards the choice of materials (with a preference for traditional bricks, plastering, tiled or slated roofs...), roof types (no flat roofs), roof lead-throughs, shop fronts...

All new development projects are not only submitted to the municipal heritage department, but also to the Advisory Committee on the Urban Beauty, which evaluates the scale, the architectural rhythm, the selected materials and the aesthetic execution of the project within the urban context. It is not unusual for projects to be revised and presented more than once. On the one hand, this procedure leads to projects that are in perfect harmony with the existing townscape as a result of their traditional and inconspicuous nature. On the other hand, some architects succeed in creating highly innovative projects while respecting the strict criteria, thus emphasising the evolution of Bruges into a contemporary city. The latter projects are often hard to accept for conservation-minded visitors and residents.

But it are these new development projects that tell the city's story. Each century needs its own witnesses and adds another layer to the city's history, thus contributing to its identity.

More than 40 years ago, the city of Bruges adopted a policy combining conservation and restoration of the existing valuable heritage and urban fabric on the one hand and high-quality contemporary architecture on the scale of the city on the other hand, and still pursues that policy today.

In addition to being a valuable historic city, Bruges also intends to be a modern city, where high-quality contemporary projects are given the chance to become part of the never-ending story of architectural history.



Gothic versus Gothic revival

POLICY AND HERITAGE CONSERVATION

History of heritage conservation in Bruges

The story of urban renewal and heritage conservation in Bruges starts as early as in the 19th century. In 1816, one year after the Battle of Waterloo, the city welcomes the first English tourists keen on visiting the famous battlefield. Their first stop on the European continent is Bruges, renowned as being a well-preserved but impoverished mediaeval town. Numerous English art lovers come to settle in Bruges and join the local elite in their quest to preserve at all costs the typical medieval character of the city.

It is against this background that a major architectural revival takes place. Gothic architecture becomes the main source of inspiration for restorations and new developments. The neo-Gothic style is extremely popular; both small- and large-scale complexes are erected and increasingly influence the townscape. More attention is paid to the historic heritage, partly to promote the city as a tourist destination. From 1877 onwards the city grants subsidies for 'skilful restorations' of valuable historic buildings. In line with the views of that time, the restoration projects range from simple repairs over the embellishment of façades with ornaments in natural stone, mullions, stained glass and stepped gables to the complete reconstruction of façades in a richer, Gothic style.

The Advisory Committee on the Urban Beauty is founded in 1904. All façade transformation projects and new development designs are to be presented to this committee, composed of dignitaries who have shown their interest in the history, the cultural heritage and the architecture of Bruges in one way or another.

Bruges intends to play an economically more important role in the future as well. New plans to re-establish a permanent connection with the sea through the construction of a new port take shape. Bruges has the support of King Leopold II (1865-1909) for this endeavour. The works start under his rule and the port of Seabruges can be officially inaugurated in 1907. However, all hopes for a revival of the old Bruges are thwarted by the two World Wars. Fortunately the city centre is largely spared from destruction.



Construction of the port of Seabruges, 1901



Outer harbour of Zeebrugge (© Henderyckx, © Port of Seabruiges)

The postwar economic situation is far from good. The unemployment rate is high and living conditions in the inner city have drastically deteriorated. From the 1960s onwards Western Europe experiences a major industrial boost, reflected in the relatively large number of entrepreneurs establishing their businesses around Bruges, attracted mainly by the many possibilities the port has to offer.

By the mid-1960s, however, living conditions in the inner city have severely deteriorated and the 19th-century restoration philosophy, so carefully developed, dwindled away. The situation can be described in just a few words: clear competition between the old city and the suburbs, resulting in a loss of many of the old city's functions, a high unemployment rate and a low degree of industrialisation, an impoverished population in the inner city (those who have the financial means construct their houses in the new suburban districts), an average inoccupancy rate of one in eight houses, a large number of dilapidated houses, a lot of demolitions and the lack of a clear municipal view on urban development.



The Zilverstraat in 1975



The Rolweg in 1964

From 1965 onwards a group of concerned citizens alerts the local government to the loss of so much of the city's identity and heritage and succeeds in raising awareness of these issues and the possible solutions.

In 1970 the City Council declares to share the citizens' concern for the conservation of the city centre and intends to lay down basic guidelines for the urban development policy to be pursued.

In 1971 a Municipal Department for Heritage Conservation and Urban Renewal is created and entrusted with the follow-up of all architectural and urban development projects in the city centre. For the very first time this matter falls under the exclusive competence of one alderman.

From the very beginning preference is given to an interdisciplinary approach and a team of architects and art historians is created. Their job is to issue advice on and monitor restorations, prepare and follow up on urban development policy plans, deal with building permit applications, carry out scientific research and organise educational events (such as Heritage Days), set up exhibitions and competitions...

In 1972 a Structure Plan for the inner city is prepared, the very first of its kind in Belgium.

The basic principle of the plan is the preservation of the unique character of Bruges as a mosaic of small buildings, twisting streets and canals. At the same time, efforts are made to incorporate the changes needed to meet the requirements of modern living into the urban fabric. The main goals are formulated as follows:

- the centre of the historic city is to remain lively and attractive, the residential function is to be optimised;
- the city centre is the ideal setting to accommodate typical small-scale functions;
- the historic heritage is to be preserved to a maximum extent, but new high-quality architecture is to be encouraged as well, although subject to strict criteria;
- the city is in need of a well thought-out traffic plan, discouraging through traffic and keeping it contained to the ring road. The use of public transport is to be promoted and more car parks are needed;
- in addition to local trade, tourism is to become the main economic driver for the inner city.

In 1973 the second part of the Structure Plan is implemented: the preparation of an inventory of the built heritage and of sub-plans for the city centre. The city is subdivided into districts and blocks. This inventory of the built heritage contains a detailed description of functions, ownership structures, the physical condition of buildings and an assessment of their value within the context of urban development and architectural history. All these elements are mapped and a plan for the future is designed.

The city launches a major investment campaign comprising the purchase and "skilful" restoration of dilapidated historic buildings. The subsidy arrangements for "skilful restoration" dating from 1877 are updated, followed in 1984 by a subsidy plan for the "improvement of housing conditions".

The example set by the city and the funds that are made available convince numerous owners to restore their houses and encourage new residents to buy and renovate. Slowly but surely, the image of a degenerated city is evolving into that of an attractive city where it is pleasant to dwell.

In the 1970s-1980s several measures are also taken to control traffic: a loop system of one-way streets, a pedestrian area and a hierarchy of parking zones are introduced. Car parks are constructed in cooperation with the private sector; they constitute a buffer where most of the city's visitors can leave their cars behind. Streets and squares are also redesigned, considerably improving the quality of living in the city.

The increase in the number of vehicles and therefore in the density of traffic results in a few changes to the circulation plan, e.g. the introduction of a 30 km/h speed limit for the entire city centre and the improvement of public transport facilities. At the same time, the city is gradually evolving into the bicycle-friendly city we know today.

As a partial solution to the parking problems, the city constructs a number of small neighbourhood car parks for its residents. A separate parking area for tourist coaches is constructed near Katelijnegate.



Parking spaces on the Burg, 1970s



The rehabilitation of the built heritage, the redevelopment of public areas, traffic control and the booming economy: all these factors contribute to a growing interest in the city as a tourist destination. Unfortunately, the city's residential function is gradually pushed aside by the many tourism-related businesses: lace shops, chocolate shops (both typical of Bruges), souvenir shops, pubs and restaurants... The number of large-scale hotels is rapidly increasing, threatening not only the local small hotel owners but also the city's identity.

In the early 1990s the local population starts to protest against the booming tourist sector. The local government reacts to this outcry of objections by concentrating tourism to certain areas and freezing the number of hotels (1996). From then on the establishment of new hotels is only possible in exceptional cases (e.g. in historical buildings that have been vacant for a long time and for which a new use is hard to find). Existing hotels receive limited permits to expand to adjacent buildings.

By taking these measures, the local government attempts to protect the city's residential function and to guarantee the continued existence of the smaller, mostly family-run hotels. In addition, large-scale hotel complexes are difficult to integrate into the urban fabric due to their size.

In spite of the strong tourist appeal of the city centre (currently about 4 million visitors and more than 1.5 million overnight stays per year) the economic return is relatively limited: only 8% of total employment (approx 5,000 jobs) can be linked to the tourist sector. The importance of the port (approx 20,000 jobs) is considerably higher.

In order to meet these changing needs, the preparation of a new Structure Plan starts in 1996. This plan includes an in-depth investigation of the interaction and relationship between the historic city and the suburbs.

Many of the objectives of the 1972 Structure Plan have been reached, but a number of problems persist. The ambitions can be formulated as follows:

- Bruges is to remain a pleasant city to live in, the population (stable at approximately 20,000 residents) does not necessarily need to increase;
- trade is to remain contained to the typical shopping streets (mostly main streets);
- major tourist activities are to be limited to the so-called Golden Triangle (Beguine Market square-Zand square); the hotel freeze is confirmed; high-quality long-term stays are to be promoted; the reduction of traffic in the city centre is to be continued; the policy regarding parking and public transport is further pursued;
- the area surrounding the railway station is designated as a development area, into which future large-scale central functions can be integrated.

These objectives are confirmed in the 2000 and 2006 Structure Plans. In 2002 the decision is taken to freeze the increase of holiday homes.

Around the turn of the century Bruges gains (even more) international renown thanks to the Unesco recognition of several of its sites.

In 2002 Bruges and Salamanca (Spain) share the title of Cultural Capital of Europe for one year. Thanks to this initiative funds are made available for numerous large restoration projects (Church of Our Lady, the façades of the former Recorders' House and the Palace of the Liberty of Bruges on the Burg Square...) but also for distinctly modern architecture in the historic city centre, e.g. the Concert Hall on the Zand Square, the tourist conveniences at Minnewater park, the pavilion of Toyo Ito on the Burg square...





Current problems and regulations

The current city council, in power since 2007, with a dynamic alderwoman for spatial planning, heritage management and housing, has formulated a number of action items in response to the present-day challenges.

Despite different measures, tourism continues to grow (10% more overnights stays every year). The focus is now on the stimulation of high-quality long-stay tourism (and less one-day-tourism) and the spreading of this tourism over the entire year. This policy is supported by the organisation of all sorts of commercial and cultural activities in winter, e.g. high-quality exhibitions.

The city's evolution into a safe and pleasant residential environment, the limited number of high-quality houses and tourism result in price increases in the real estate market. The incentive bonus to encourage young families to live in the city centre has been doubled.

Shop owners are also encouraged by means of incentive bonuses to convert the upper storeys of their shops, which are often vacant and neglected, into housing units or student accommodation. After all, Bruges is gradually evolving into a lively student city. The number of student rooms increased by 25% to over 2,000.

Opportunities need to be created for industry and trade as well, but not at the expense of housing. That is why the establishment of businesses is preferably encouraged in the main shopping streets and the streets near the city gates.

Because of an attractive real estate market, investors want to split up large town houses into several flats. Property developers are on the prowl for the last open spaces to parcel them out or to construct multi-family dwellings. Sometimes these are gardens of large town houses, monasteries or convents that might be in danger of being abandoned due to the ageing of their occupants.

Aware of this growing problem, the city drew up an Open Space Policy Plan that includes 25 specific project files which map and delimit the valuable green areas, and guide and if need be limit the building possibilities.

For one of the most precious sites in the inner city, the former medieval hospital site of Saint-John, a master plan has been drawn up, defining the contours for a high-quality upgrade and further development of the site.

The principles and criteria of the Department for Heritage Conservation concerning structural alterations, demolition requests and the construction of new buildings remain unchanged: interesting buildings are always visited to assess the value of the façades as well as the age and value of the structural elements and the interiors with a view to their conservation. Demolition is only allowed if the building does not have any art-historical or urban landscape value.

In the (rare) case where demolition is possible, the city always strives for high-quality, contemporary architecture that is well-integrated with the immediate surroundings in terms of pattern, design, rhythm and use of materials. The quality of new architecture is partly evaluated by the Committee on the Urban Beauty, supplemented with a number of professional architects on the initiative of the alderwoman for spatial planning, heritage management and housing. These architects contribute their technical and creative input to this advisory body. Requests for the "artistic restoration" subsidy are presented to the Committee on the Urban Beauty too. In recent years it has been their deliberate choice to grant subsidies to 'minor architecture' in the city centre and to heritage buildings in the suburbs of Bruges as well, especially those buildings with urban landscape value.

In the inner city, a fairly strict '*Municipal Bylaw on Building, Parcellation and Planting*' is in vigour, based on these points of departure. In principle, a permit is required for all works on façades (plastering, removing plaster, cleaning ...), internal dismantlement works and alterations of function.

Carpentry, for instance, receives special attention: it may only be replaced by woodwork with a traditional structure and detaillling, based on the existing model or on historically grounded models.

This strict policy is not limited to the city centre, however. Two other valuable districts have been transferred to the Department for Heritage Conservation: the so-called white polder village of Lissewege and Christus-Koning, a high-quality neighbourhood developed during the interwar period.

Of particular current interest are the policy decisions that were taken following the visit by the Unesco delegation and its recommendations in 2010. For instance, the bylaw is supplemented with a legally enforceable 'demolition freeze' for buildings of art-historical or urban landscape value. Henceforth a report needs to be presented for new constructions exceeding a certain height (15m in the city centre, 20m in the buffer zone, 30m outside the buffer zone) which describes the visual impact from and towards the world heritage.

In addition, the city council has decided to draw up a Management Plan and to establish a Unesco Expert Committee. These heritage and architecture specialists are involved in all policy decisions and major projects relating to Unesco World Heritage, and first of all in the preparation of the Management Plan, of course.

Through this Management Plan, the city intends to continue to assess the policy pursued while providing political and legal support.



Begijnenvest and the Minnewaterpark



Garden of the Seminary, Potterierei



The Ramparts along the Ringvaart

THE FUTURE

Despite years of conservative heritage management and a careful urban planning policy in the inner city, a concerned heritage association took a number of initiatives up with Unesco Paris on the grounds that they were destructive to the exceptional universal value of the World Heritage of Bruges. This resulted in a Unesco mission in March 2010 and in subsequent recommendations by Unesco in August 2010.

The city immediately took these recommendations to heart and employed means to invest even more in the conservation and reinforcement of the World Heritage site in all its aspects. The local government wants to achieve this without turning the city into one large monument; on the contrary, it wants to create room for the necessary further growth and development.

Following Unesco's request, a study assignment was published to draw up a "state of conservation" of the process Bruges has undergone since the first important urban renewal campaigns and since the creation of the first Structure plan for the inner city in 1972. The evaluation of this policy will result in a Management plan for Bruges World Heritage site.

The Plan describes the exceptional universal value of Bruges. It initiates a consistent heritage policy by drawing attention to heritage of art-historical value as well as to buildings of lesser heritage value and to townscapes. Above all, the Management Plan is aimed at driving a well-considered development as a lively city, in the first place for its inhabitants and in the second place for everyone who visits or stays in the city.

One of the important elements of the Management Plan is the draw up of a heritage assessment map for each one of the 10,054 buildings in the city centre of Bruges. This heritage assessment map continues the tradition of the heritage assessment map drawn up between 1972 and 1982 within the scope of the sub-plans, combines all heritage assessment files collected so far, and is intended to complement them so as to obtain a complete, clarifying and "living" list of buildings.

The assessment is organised into seven categories, ranging from top monuments over valuable buildings and buildings important for the townscape, to new buildings and even ill-matched buildings.

The Management Plan establishes several fundamental objectives for the reinforcement of the inner city's functions and for the development model to be pursued, and investigates which tools are most suitable. The management plan divides the city into various zones. The historic city centre is a heritage zone of particularly high quality where an interesting functional mix has been preserved. This interwovenness of different functions contributes to the fact that Bruges – contrary to other World Heritage cities – has not been taken over completely by tourism. Keeping the balance between the conservation of a liveable city on the one hand and a top tourist destination on the other appears to remain an important challenge for Bruges.

In terms of housing, the city intends to continue the current policy and to protect the residential function as a priority function in the inner city. Its attraction could be reinforced by a more diversified offer of housing types and by increasing the affordability. This is a point of special interest in the development of new housing projects. The liveability of the city as a residential environment could be enhanced by the growth of supporting functions such as child care or domestic help services, the improvement of open spaces and the offering of more recreational infrastructure for small children.

Bruges is a growing student city and intends to offer more space for the integration of students into the traditional social fabric. For many years it has been clear that persuading students to stay in Bruges after their studies is much more difficult.

Urban exodus and aging of the population need to be countered by a policy aimed at students, starters and young families with children.

In close connection with this, a mobility policy is being pursued intended to further reduce the amount of traffic, especially from visitors to the city. In particular, the city aims to become a bicycle-friendly city and is developing initiatives to provide the required public infrastructure.

In addition, further efforts are made to expand the necessary neighbourhood infrastructure of garages and bicycle sheds.

The amount of green and open space is essential for the city's character and determines the quality of the residential environment. In spite of centuries of building activity the historic centre of Bruges is still remarkably green compared to other historic cities. This quality makes living in the heart of Bruges very appealing. Yet this asset also implies a real threat, since the open space is in danger of coming under pressure from several possible policy options as well as planned private initiatives and projects.

The Open Space Policy Plan provides policy makers with a tool to use the open space in the historic city centre sustainably in the short and medium term. The Plan expresses an overall view on the desired open space structure for the entire inner city, complemented with concrete recommendations and actions for a series of selected open space issues.

The city centre of Bruges aims at remaining an attractive economic location as well. Numerous large-scale activities are located in the periphery. Yet the city centre also needs to retain the possibility to develop new opportunities that fit in effortlessly with the existing urban fabric, such as IT companies, arts and crafts, culture and technology. New commercial and economic activities are best oriented towards the main shopping streets and the streets near the city gates. The improvement of the main shopping streets' attractiveness is therefore a core task. Bruges intends to direct its commercial image towards a stylish and diversified offer, and not exclusively towards a tourist offer.

Neighbourhood facilities and activities that support housing are best oriented towards the streets near the city gates as the arteries of the adjacent residential areas. In the streets near the city gates, the reconversion of shops into housing and other functions is deliberately limited.

With regard to culture management, Bruges will continue to clearly position itself as a versatile city of culture, where attention to our traditional arts goes hand in hand with a contemporary input.

Culture is propagated in terms of gastronomy as well. Bruges could be called the capital of Flemish gastronomy, where particular attention is paid to innovative gastronomic applications that go beyond the traditional sectors. The offer of arts and crafts also receives renewed attention. Bruges intends to reinforce this trend in the future and provide room to young dynamic entrepreneurs.

In terms of tourism we see enduring growth. Tourism remains an important economic factor for the inner city, yet it should not hinder housing nor dominate the townscape. A healthy balance between both is the basic principle and requires continuous monitoring.

The current heritage policy will be prolonged with endeavour. Heritage management at the level of individual buildings is based on careful conservation, while providing room for new functions and developments. Reconciling both is a continual strife. Points of interest such as sustainability and an ecological reflex require particular attention and customised strategies.

The determination of well-defined historic townscapes and urban typologies as a new holistic approach to heritage will continue to be concretised in the future and will serve as a basis for the policy pursued.

The city of Bruges will continue to financially support heritage management for non-listed valuable buildings in the future, although it should be considered to use the available means in a more balanced manner with a view to a more general conservation of the historic townscapes.



(© Jan Darthet)

The city's contribution to this sector provides considerable economic support to traditional crafts, e.g. attention to the architectural details of façades and carpentry during restoration. Thanks to the research into its heritage and years of practical experience Bruges has evolved into a centre of knowledge concerning the art of restoration. The challenge is to continue to reinforce this knowledge centre by means of the locally available courses of study in secondary and higher education.

The heritage policy will also actively pay attention to the conversion of vacant buildings and religious heritage in particular. Ageing of the population of monastic communities and the decreasing number of vocations put the future of several religious complexes at risk. Yet they are an essential part of our heritage landscape, both because of their exceptional architectural structures and because of their "atmosphere".

The historic centre of Bruges remains the focal point of urban life. Because of the city's status of World Heritage, management is a permanent balancing act between conservation of the universal heritage values on the one hand and high-quality renewal on the other.

Everything that exceeds the scale, texture and capacity of the city centre is to be located in the suburban periphery, which needs to adjust to new activities and integrate into the broader urban fabric. The interaction between the citycentre and the suburban periphery needs to be enhanced both in its functionality and in the union of the townscapes.

Within this broader urban area, an urban area policy needs to be pursued combining functions and facilities in strategic zones. The relation with World Heritage site will be taken into account when determining the policy objectives.



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CONCLUSION

The recognition of Bruges by Unesco is a great honour, but also involves particular obligations. First of all, these obligations should make us aware of what is going on, of the process that resulted in the inclusion in the list of World Heritage Sites, of the values that made this possible. We remain indebted to this process.

Yet the transformation of the city does not stop, despite the age-old tradition of conservation of the façades, texture and pattern of the city. Change can be seen in every new use of a building, in every urban development, in the value we attach to heritage, in the public space... This way the city proves its durability, its capacity to adapt to new requirements and demands.

Heritage is the main driving force behind the evolving circumstances and thus proves it is durable and has an active existence, that it is possible to reconcile changes with the essence of heritage.

Changes in the city bear witness to its history. Sometimes they can be quite destructive, but they also have the potential to achieve a new quality that contributes to the city's liveability, liveliness and attractiveness. What seemed to be an unacceptable break with the medieval pattern in the 19th century, is commended today for its urban development quality and architectural unity.

Each century needs its own witnesses and adds another layer to the city's history, thus contributing to its identity. Therefore, new architecture should remain possible, and the city should not become an open-air museum.

The city will continue to invest in the conservation of its valuable heritage and the integrity of its townscape as well as in social and economic renewal.

Bruges should remain accessible to everyone, young and old, rich and poor, residents and visitors ...

But a city cannot survive without space for commerce and catering, small businesses, arts and crafts, galleries, culture and art, recreation

Room should be made for various housing types, new housing forms in particular for young families, green areas and recreational infrastructure.

Bruges demonstrates the capacity of its heritage and urban fabric to renew and redefine itself time and again, without harming the integrity and authenticity praised in the World Heritage recognition.

Colophon

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