

COMUS Regional Workshop n. 6

Scenarios on Housing Rehabilitation and Funding Possibilities in Community-Led Urban Strategies

Sibiu, Romania
26 – 27 April 2017



Takeaways and conclusions

Content

1. About the Workshop.....	3
2. Program, participants and topics discussed	3
2.1. Program.....	3
2.2. Participants	4
2.3. Topics discussed.....	5
3. Conclusions and takeaways	10

Note: This document was elaborated by MKBT: Make Better after hosting the 6th COMUS Regional Workshop in Sibiu, in April 2017. The comments and conclusions included in this document do not represent the official position of the COMUS project team, but aim to illustrate key takeaways and conclusions originated in this workshop, as depicted and collected by MKBT team.

1. About the Workshop

1.1. Workshop context and aim

This event was held in Sibiu (Romania) on 26-27 April 2017, as a 6th Regional Workshop of COMUS ("Community-Led Urban Strategies in Historic Towns"). COMUS is a joint Council of Europe/European Union initiative, part of the second Eastern Partnership Culture Programme. Its aim is to stimulate social and economic development by enhancing cultural heritage in 9 historic towns namely: Gyumri and Goris (Armenia), Mstislavl (Belarus), Dusheti and Chiatura (Georgia), Soroca (Republic of Moldova) and Ukraine.

Throughout its duration – started in 2015 – COMUS included several regional workshops that aimed to provide an opportunity for representatives and teams of the 9 different towns involved, to meet, exchange ideas and evaluate the stage of the project, as well as foster learning experiences.

In this context, the 6th workshop held in Sibiu was the last of an array of such events, as the program was preparing for closure in June 2017. The topic of workshop was "Scenarios on Housing Rehabilitation and Funding Possibilities in Community-Led Urban Strategies". The town of Sibiu provided a good set-up for discussions and explorations, as during the past 20 years it has been involved in a large-scale historical centre rehabilitation process, which had a significant impact on the city's economic and cultural revival.

As commissioned by the Council of Europe, Division of Culture and Cultural Heritage, MKBT coordinated the organization of its workshop, both logistically as well as content wise, by bringing together local expertise, case studies, and own know-how in the field.

2. Program, participants and topics discussed

2.1. Program

The workshop lasted two days and was structured in 6 different sessions, as follows:

DAY 1

Session 1: City centre regeneration: affordable interventions on historical housing

Discussion on affordable interventions on historical housing; Presentation on the process and challenges of Sibiu City Center rehabilitation works, followed by site visit of Sibiu City Centre.

Speakers:

- Hakan Demir, Council of Europe, Division of Culture and Cultural Heritage;
- Philip Stein, Lead Expert of COMUS Program;
- Andreea Tănase, Heritas Foundation;
- Liliana Cazacu, Arhitect - LOEB FELLOW 2016 / Harvard Graduate School of Design, Heritas Foundation Collaborator.

Session 2: Activating community resources

Discussion on activating community resources through philanthropy, youth engagement and working with the private sector; the role of community foundations in mobilizing resources in small urban and rural communities.

Speakers:

- Alina Porumb, Senior Consultant for Strategic Philanthropy programs with ARC – Romanian Association for Community Relations;
- Oana Mitea, Director of Țara Făgărașului County Community Foundation.

Session 3: Approaching international donors and funding bodies

Discussion on donor bodies present in Eastern Europe, including emerging donors, as well as donor approaches and expectations

Speakers:

- Ms. Vica Rosario Bogaerts, World Bank
- Teodora Zafiu, UNDP Regional Hub for Europe and CIS

DAY 2

Session 4: Alma Vii Village tour by Mihai Eminescu Trust

Site visit and discussion on rehabilitation works of fortified church and historical housing in the village of Alma Vii; Discussion on engaging the local community in revitalization of heritage sites;

Speakers:

- Caroline Fernolend, Director of Mihai Eminescu Trust; representatives of the local community association.

Session 5: Self-evaluation and reflection exercise, led by Matthias Ripp, World Heritage Coordinator at Organisation of World Heritage Cities

Session 6: Beyond COMUS – Faro Convention. Workshop closure

- Hakan Demir, Administrator of Division of Culture and Cultural Heritage - DG II Democracy, Council of Europe
- Philip Stein, COMUS Lead Expert

2.2. Participants

The workshop was attended by 25 participants which included: experts and local coordinators from the 9 towns involved in COMUS, national coordinators representing the countries involved in COMUS (Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine), representatives of Council of Europe and Organization of World Heritage Towns, and COMUS program experts.

2.3. Topics discussed

The rehabilitation of the historical centre of Sibiu – discussion and site visit with Heritas Foundation

This session was aimed to offer a relatively recent example of a complex city centre rehabilitation program in a country in transition, to serve as inspiration and potentially replicable mechanism in the participating towns. The experience shared by Heritas Foundation included aspects with regard to program design, governance and main challenges faced.

- The city centre rehabilitation process was conducted during 2000 - 2007, under the coordination and with funding of GTZ (German Organisation for Technical Cooperation) in partnership with the City Hall of Sibiu.
- The process consisted in three pillars of action: public investments, private investments and professional capacity building.
 - I. Public investment: The Local Authorities invested in the rehabilitation of public buildings and public space, the rehabilitation of streets, installing new lighting system and traffic management system; they also offered consultancy and co-financing for private interventions in the public space.
 - II. Private investment – private owners were stimulated to undergo rehabilitation works for their properties with subsidies, awareness raising campaigns (leaflets, brochures, and exhibitions with „correct rehabilitation“ examples) and consultancy free of charge for the rehabilitation of historic private buildings. The stimulants and support was focused on what property elements with great importance for the architectural identity of the town: roofs, facades, corridors, courtyards. The most important challenge was dealing with cases of buildings with multiple owners.
 - III. Professional Capacity Building: The process focused on training architects, craftsmen and construction companies, developing guidelines and tools for private interventions („how to-s“ guides, planning tools and monitoring systems) and also included exchange of experience sessions.
- Heritas Foundation was formed after GTZ redrew from Romania, to institutionalize the know-how and experience acquired throughout this urban regeneration program.
- Lessons learnt, shared by the Heritas Foundation:
 - It is recommended that the consultancy activity and the subvention of private rehabilitation measures to be accomplished by other entities than the municipality. The later should concentrate on authorisation and controlling tasks and the designing of public space;
 - The cost-free initial consultancy report done by consultant architects is the instrument with the best cost – benefit ratio;
 - In order to benefit the local economy, the consultancy services have to stimulate both supply (eg. of architecture, renovation, masonry, carpentry and other services) and demand (of such services by property owners);
 - The “step-by-step renovation” has helped to overcome stagnation and to create a market for conservation renovation services: 1) Protecting the building to stop

further decay; 2) Improvement of living conditions; 3) Rehabilitation of facades and courtyards; 4) Recombining flats, which were subdivided; 5) Further modernisation of flats and buildings.



The presentation of Heritas Foundation was followed by a guided tour about the rehabilitation of Sibiu Historical Centre which was a very good opportunity to visualize and better understand some of the aspects mentioned in the presentation. The tour also created the pretext for more in-depth discussions about the challenges and accomplishments of such a complex program.

Activating community resources - the role and activity of community foundations

Discussion with ARC and Țara Făgărașului Community Foundation

- The purpose of this session was to provide examples of functioning grass roots resource generating mechanisms currently applied also in small communities in Romania. The insights shared aimed to generate a sense of confidence that communities can contribute with own resources, even in less developed and less civically active towns of the post socialist space, provided the right approaches and instruments are used. This aimed to promote an attitude of diversifying sources of support, self-determination and non-dependency to donors.
- Community foundations are non-profit entities aiming to gather resources from the community, through fundraising and philanthropy, while supporting community leaders and local NGOs through grant making. The first community foundations were established in 2008, and currently reached 16 community foundations in 2017.
- Discussing philanthropy and gathering resources from the community, the guest speakers emphasised that, more than raising money, it is important to build relationships, increase the trust in getting involved, and cultivate the joy of giving for generating ownership. Once people put their money or skill into something, they begin to care for it.
- Stimulants and incentives for giving include: Matching (eg for one dollar donated by a person, a company donates another one), which helps at building trust that any small contribution has the power to multiply; consideration to one's own framework of thinking and ideas (ie people find satisfaction in contributing with their own ideas) or engagement through competitions;
- The actual process of raising money is less challenging than the trust required behind this process. Therefore, the issue is how to manage the money responsibly, and how to create

the structure to do that in place; Finding the right monitoring systems and collecting stories and feedback are part of the effort of community foundations.

Approaching international donors – discussion with World Bank representative

- The aim of this session was to provide an insight into expectations and approaches of donors with regards to grantees, as well as share information on emerging donors and funding sources for the CEE countries. Particularly for small towns, raising funds for heritage rehabilitation works is a considerable challenge, therefore funding preparedness and a good understanding of donor sources and mechanisms is essential;
- The representative of World Bank described types of programs funded in the CEE region, namely framework regional development programs, infrastructure development with focus on urban regenerations (including the restoration of facades and buildings, harnessing heritage sites) and institutional development;
- Important aspects considered in the decision to fund a particular project include: the engagement and financial contribution of the beneficiary local government, the bottom up sourcing of the program, and its feasibility.
- Participants raised several concerns and challenges, one having to do with the urge of local authorities to conduct cheap works (generally driven by tendering procedures) at the expense of quality, a problem most stringent in heritage rehabilitations requiring high expertise. Solutions indicated were to arrange that the municipality is not the (solely) one implementing the program or that the design stage is covered distinctively by the funding entity;
- Another concern raised had to do with the long term sustainability of heritage rehabilitation works. A significant challenges is to assess (if in place) or establish (if not existing) the institutional capacity and structure that can ensure the continuity of the project, allowing the time and resources for this to happen.

Emerging donors and funding bodies in Eastern Europe – discussion with UNDP Regional Office for Europe and CIS

- This session aimed to raise awareness on the less known emerging donors and funding platforms in the CIS area. By emerging donors we referred to countries that have recently adopted official development assistance policies, many (though not all) stimulated by post-EU accession policies.
- Emerging donors mentioned and briefly discussed in the session were new EU member states (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia), EU candidate countries (Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia), Russian Federation and Turkey.
- Even though budgetary allocations of most such donors are limited, there are multiple advantages in working with emerging donors: such countries are recent recipient, or still receive development assistance from traditional donors; they have experience in transition processes, so they understand and are interested in supporting this type of processes; they focus on sharing of expertise and lessons learnt; they support partnership – based collaboration;

- <http://fundingdevelopment.org/> is an ODA (Official Development Assistance) funding instruments search engine, that helps exploring through twenty sources of funding available in Europe and Central Asia; the tool was developed in order to increase the transparency and awareness of such funding resources and to facilitate exchange of experience and best practices;
- An advice offered to participants to help engage emerging donors in funding a project was: to join development cooperation events (ex. Black Sea NGO Forum), partner with NGOs in donor countries, link the project to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), emphasize the human development aspect of each project, communicate the project and make the field known.



Alina Porumb, ARC, on mobilizing resources from small communities



Teodora Zafiu, UNDP Regional Hub for Europe and CIS, on emerging donors in Central and Eastern Europe

Site visit to Alma Vii and discussion with Mihai Eminescu Trust

- The second day of the workshop commenced with a site visit to Alma Vii, one of the villages that were part of the Whole Village program of Mihai Eminescu Trust, aimed at helping restore heritage and revitalize communities in saxon villages of South Transilvania. The purpose of this session was to showcase and example where a small community (in this case a village of 200 people) is still capable to initiate and implement complex heritage restoration works, and challenges and lessons learned stemming from this.
- The group of participants was welcomed by the local community association that organized a brunch with local home made products, a group of pupils that organized a traditional dance performance and a guided tour in the Fortified Church.
- Representatives of Mihai Eminescu Trust described the process of working with the community during the past years and the important factors of this work: to always engage the local people in both prioritizing and implementing actions, to phase work in stages that are manageable, to prioritize projects that have relevance for a wider audience in the community and that have returns and foster continuity. Amongst the first projects implemented in the community were: rehabilitation of a bridge in the village, renovation

and re-functioning of a local baking oven that the community now uses for baking bread and pies for tourist visits, setting up a tourist information centre and shop for local produce to help commercialize locally sourced products and services. As a consequence, currently the local community association is formed and confident, based on prior successfully completed projects, that they can move on with the initiatives to more complex rehabilitation works targeting the main nave of the fortified church; as well as are endowed with minimal income generating resources that help their organisational sustainability.

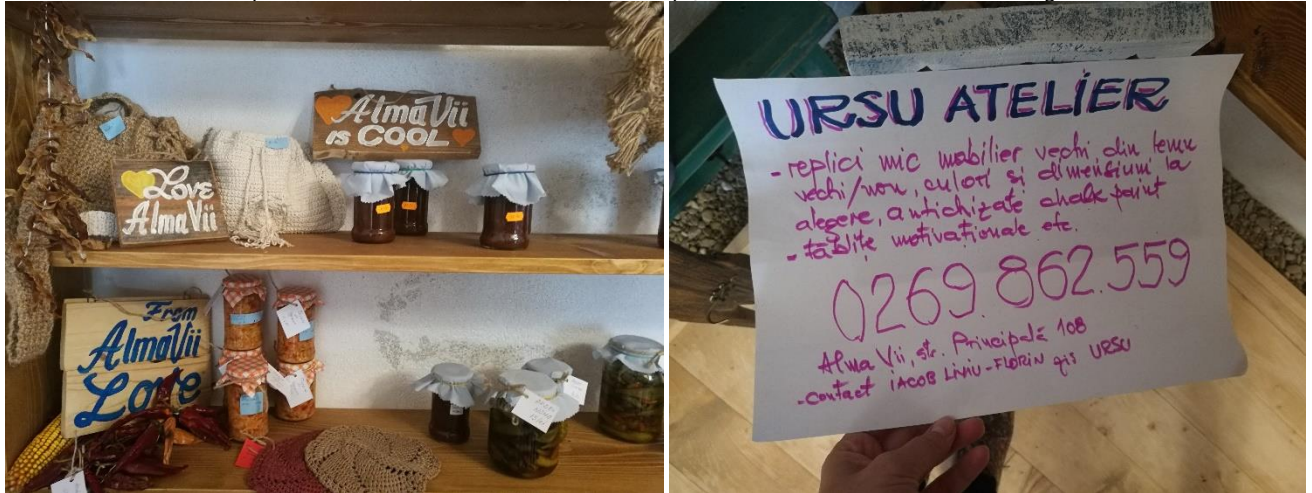


The children in Alma-Vii welcomed the participants dressed in traditional costumes and a traditional dance performance. This CoE workshop offered the impulse for two locals to organize dance lessons for the children in Alma-Vii and the villages in the vicinity for more than one month prior the visit. Sometimes such an external impulse can be a catalyst for people in small communities to discover and explore new opportunities for engaging in the development of their community, with an impact lasting long after the exterior impulse is gone.



When the initiative comes from international / national organisations, there are multiple ways to initiate and foster the engagement of the local community. With less than 400 inhabitants in total, Alma-Vii Village now has a local association with 6 members from the community, which took over the administration of the building rehabilitated by MET, in partnership with the Norwegian Institute for Cultural Heritage Research. Left – the members from the association present themselves and their role in the association (from organizing guided tours, to baking cakes and providing fresh local food to the visitors).

Right – objects donated by the villagers for the museum designed in the rehabilitated building (the fortified enclosure of the evangelical church). MET gathered these objects from the local community in order to engage them in the physical and cultural rehabilitation process and to foster a sense of ownership for the new function of the building.



The museum includes a gift shop with products home-made by the villagers and small commercials to other products and services that they can provide.

Left – Jars of gem, pickled and baked vegetables made by the women in the village;

Right – commercial to “old wooden furniture replicas, wooden motivational tablets etc.” made by a man in the village.

3. Conclusions and takeaways

- Such workshops are valuable also for the local organisations that share their expertise / learning experiences, as they offer a good opportunity for looking back, evaluating, appreciating what they have accomplished.
- Alma-Vii was an inspiring example of what a small community can accomplish with very few resources but a lot of enthusiasm and commitment. Their consistency, step-by step approach, de-centralization and mobilization of human resources were important lessons for the participants.
- When it comes to entrepreneurship in relation with cultural heritage, there usually aren't programs of direct public investment for directly turning heritage into a business. But if the municipality invests in increasing the town attractiveness, the business and the visitor economy improve, which boost the local economy, generating new jobs and economic return – such was the case of Sibiu; therefore the process is not a straight line, but rather a more complex system change that needs to happen systematically.
- The matter of where should the incentive for change come from and whether it is best that the initiative comes from an international or local level is a chicken and egg issue. What matters is the dynamic that such interactions create; the driving forces, the facilitators don't necessarily do the work, but they make sure that all the local actors are there and start working on this issue.

- The local structure is what matters – the donors or whoever comes from outside will leave at the end, so the important issue is to create the local structure and capacity that can ensure the continuity of the projects at the local level.
- When generating projects of building rehabilitation for a specific purpose, it is important to think at who actually activates the building after the physical rehabilitation is over;
- It is important to encourage people on the local level to bring their own ideas and to grow leadership and stimulate their engagement;
- More than raising money, the key for the sustainability of a process is to build relationships, increase the trust in getting involved and building the local structure that can manage the process.

Elaborated - MKBT: Make Better team, July 2017
www.mkbt.ro | contact@mkbt.ro