

Split: Conservation of a World Heritage Site
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Abstract:

Founded in 305 as a fortified villa of a retired emperor, Split developed into a medieval town, keeping traces from all periods and incorporating them into one harmonic whole. In 1979 the historic core of Split was declared a World Heritage Site on account of its well preserved architecture from all periods, but also because of the fact that it is still a living organism with all urban functions. It has been threatened by the rapid growth of the modern city, by the pressure of commercialization and by unfavorable changes in the social structure of the population. Badly managed and steadily growing «cultural» tourism has made an additional impact on the quality of life in the historic core. During the last two centuries the historic centre of Split has been a laboratory for practicing theoretical conservation principles. The centre of Split (like many other historic cities) has been too often understood as a container of fixed values, almost «frozen in time». Values-centred conservation acknowledges that values – and therefore ideas of cultural significance – are not fixed, but evolve over time. Culture is a process, not a set of things with fixed meaning. Today, we are in a position to reconsider our approach to conservation, and make a fresh start with a changed perspective. Restoration of key buildings such as the Cathedral (Diocletian's mausoleum), the Baptistery (the Temple of Jupiter) and the Golden Gate has been used as good practice examples in order to display the basic principles which should be followed in everyday practice, such as conservation rather than restoration, the use of traditional materials and techniques, emphasizing the maintenance of properties and reconstruction of urban infrastructure.