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SUMMARY OF ANSWERS TO ICOMOS QUESTIONNAIRE ON SMALL HISTORIC TOWNS

1. Chief threats to the conservation of small historic towns - Growth is generally considered as a threat although not always as a very important one. Population growth is named by nearly each country, industrial development by almost the same number. As to other threats generated by growth, there is mentioned land speculation by Canada, Cyprus, and Peru, out-of-town-shopping facilities by USA, and concentration of population in larger centers by New Zealand.

As to the destruction of the fabric of the town, commercial or industrial interests on the one hand and public authorities on the other are mentioned nearly as frequently. Individual private owners seem to constitute a problem only in a few countries.

As to motor traffic nearly every country mentions through traffic, some also local traffic. Only Switzerland does not consider through traffic a problem, since bypasses have been built for most such cities.

Decay and lack of upkeep seems to constitute no problem in Finland, Luxembourg, Switzerland, the Soviet Union and the USA; it is mentioned by all other countries, although with varying emphasis on the two different reasons given.

Tourism is seen as a problem only in Austria, Denmark, Japan, Luxembourg, Rumania and New Zealand.

Similarly, the lack of suitably qualified professionals or technicians is also mentioned only by a minority of countries: Austria, Finland, Japan, Peru, United Kingdom and United States.

Quite a number of additional reasons is given:

Austria: Changes in water table;
Ill-conceived use of new techniques and materials.
Lack of security measures; theft, burglary, vandalism,
property speculation.
Lack of awareness of value of cultural property, above
all among politicians and administrators, less among
population at large.

Bulgaria: old town plans which do not respect historic town centres.

Cyprus: Unauthorized transformation of old buildings into shops, night clubs etc.

Finland: Chief threat is caused by an exploitative land-use and building of multi-storied houses.

Germany: Tendency of owners to build new homes outside the old core and to let the old house to parties with little interest in upkeep.

Hungary: one still finds the mistaken opinion that all that is old is obsolete.

Israel: Lack of means for the rehabilitation of old towns.

Japan: Lack of traditional building materials; non-adaption of traditional materials to building standard law; lack of technicians and artisans engaged in traditional building works.

Lebanon: sudden, rapid urbanisation.

Luxembourg: shortcomings of local authorities.

Netherlands: Nature of soil (boggy); many buildings produce insufficient income.

Peru: Earthquakes are one of our major dangers at the national level.

Switzerland: Decay of lodgings, transformation of housing into offices or lodgings unsuitable for local population.

USA: Failure of commercial interest to realize the unique potential of what they have locally.

2. Coverage of conservation and economic development of small historic towns by statutory planning procedures.

In a large number of countries, there are plans on all three levels which affect statutory planning procedures of small towns. Except Bulgaria, Cyprus and Japan, local plans are mentioned by all countries, national plans by about two thirds and regional by about half of the countries.

The limits of competence are difficult to generalize; in the majority of cases, the initiative seems to lie with the local council and the mayor, the plans being subject to approval by state authorities. This procedure constitutes for most countries the only basis for intervention of a superior authority.

The question concerning the involvement of the local population was answered in the negative sense by seven countries. But in a number of the others, the participations seem to be limited just to the possibility to object to plans laid open to public inspection. In the other cases, various procedures for more direct participation are mentioned.

The statutory planning procedures are considered satisfactory only by a minority of countries, notable those of Eastern Europe, the United-Kingdom ("when properly applied"), the Netherlands and Switzerland ("so long as the Federal Law is passed"). In Canada and Germany, improvements are expected from new legislation.

. Legislative protection for small historic towns.

All countries, except New Zealand, offer protection to individual buildings; in Austria, protection of groups of buildings is not yet safeguarded, and in addition, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Japan, Netherlands and Rumania indicate that there is no protection of the town as a whole.

Legislation protecting the surrounding and natural setting of small historic towns is available only in a minority of countries, and in still fewer cases it is possible to protect the town itself under such legislation.

In the administration of such protective laws, normally authorities on all three levels indicated are involved.

Again only a minority of countries regard such laws as sufficient: the Eastern European countries, Cyprus, United Kingdom ("when properly applied") and Switzerland ("so long as the authorities have the resources and the courage").

4. Financing of restoration and improvement of small historic towns.

Nearly all countries (with the exception of Hungary, Israel, Luxembourg, Mexico and Peru) indicate the use of grants by public authorities, whereas loans at special rates of interest are mentioned only by eight countries (and by most of them only with reservation) and tax advantages only by four countries (Canada, Denmark, Mexico and Netherlands).

A little more than half of the countries indicate the use of compulsory purchase and restoration by the State, a little less than half the same procedure by the municipality, whereas other bodies, specially created for this purpose, appear only in two answers.

Among the other means are mentioned:

Austria: private sale.

Finland: in Porvoo there exists a foundation for this purpose.

Israel: Creating special authorities for rehabilitation of historic towns.

Mexico: Private banks, private citizens.

Netherlands: When there are buildings of architectural interest, or listed in an urban renewal plan, combined grants are available.

Switzerland: private sale.

United Kingdom: Purchase and restoration of buildings by voluntary bodies; rehabilitation and improvement by local authorities.

These financial provisions are considered satisfactory only by one country (Bulgaria) without reservations; by five others with reservations ("in some cases"; "insufficient expenditure"), while the rest of the countries consider the regulations and procedures unsatisfactory.

5. Measures taken to improve conditions in small historic towns:

Obviously, attempts to bring new life to the small towns by finding new uses for old buildings have been made in practically all countries; the aim of developing cultural tourism is a little less widespread, but still maintained by the majority. Most countries indicate the employment of all three ways mentioned for controlling motor traffic (bypasses, one-way-systems and parking controls, pedestrian streets). Among other means are mentioned:

Austria: Access discouraged by administrative measures; very few underground car parks.

Netherlands: Introduction of pedestrian areas and car parks.

Peru: Some indirect consequences of traffic restraints due to oil shortage, e.g. national policy of reduction to five days a week the private use of vehicles.

Switzerland: Peripheral parking for motor vehicles.

Additional measures are mentioned by a few countries:

Finland: By developing their residential conditions.

Netherlands: Zoning plans contain detailed townplanning recommendations in order to avoid intolerable separations.

- USA:
1. special legislation for historic railroad stations;
 2. National register of historic places grants program (federal) encourages adaptive use projects of this nature;
 3. National Trust for Historic Preservation (private) funds studies on adaptive uses.

As to the success of these measures, there are some positive answers and a number of remarks that such measures have begun only recently so that no final judgement can yet be given.

As to desirable and undesirable effects, there are some qualified statements:

Denmark: In a few towns attempts have been made - through conservating planning - to balance the industries and housing areas by moving the more bulky and heavily trafficked warehouses and trades to areas outside the

cities. Unfortunately, such efforts have caused a break in the traditional connection between living quarters, industries, trades and public administration, because the smaller, local shops and trades have not been supported and because the local administration has been moved outside the city as well.

Netherlands: All radical operations cause displacement of population, which can have regrettable consequences for the poorer tenants. Other measures generally have good or at least neutral social effects.

USA: Desirable for certain socioeconomic levels only. Undesirable in that the selective zoning process of the old and historic district tends to homogenize the neighborhood or village, sociologically and economically, creating "golden ghettos" consisting of inhabitants economically able to sustain themselves in the village. The National Endowment for the arts program in architecture is attempting to address itself to this problem.

6. Private organizations or groups of citizens.

In about three quarters of the countries, groups have formed to defend small historic towns. Only in very few countries, however, groups for undertaking restoration work are in existence. In most countries such groups are local groups, in some cases such groups have formed on both local and national level, and merely in one case (Bulgaria) only a national organization is mentioned.

7. Principal reasons for wishing to protect small historic towns.

Of the four reasons given, the second one ranks first in the frequency of mentioning: historical and aesthetic interest (18 mentions). Next comes the tourist attraction (16 mentions) closely followed by the quality as places to live (15 mentions). Only 8 times the use for specific cultural activity has been indicated as a reason.

Other reasons given are:

Austria: Emotional appeal.

Bulgaria: Aesthetic and patriotic education.

Hungary: Give people awareness of lessons of past in interests of social progress.

Mexico: Integrated development; cultural and socio-economic.

Soviet Union: Use of small historic towns for holidays for population of large industrial centres (if natural setting appropriate).

8. Nearly all countries - with the exception of Canada, Cyprus, and Israel - have given one or more examples of small towns successfully adapted to modern life. As a rule, both state and local authorities were responsible for the operation, in some cases also private initiative. In Austria, Finland and New Zealand, only the local authorities were responsible, in Lebanon and Peru only the state. The Japanese examples are attributed to a cooperation of local authorities and private initiative.

As to additional comments, there are the following:

Finland: The administration and legislation of conservation is under re-organizations after recent plans made by a special state commission.

Japan: In Japan, ordinances concerning the protection of historic environment have been enacted by eleven cities, towns and villages. At national level, the revision of law for protection of cultural properties is now to be discussed in the national diet.

Mexico: Since 1970, many projects drawn up and risks and advantages discussed. Though work in progress in several towns, no final results to show. Best results in towns with more than 50.000 inhabitants.

Peru: In Peru, there is now an increasing awareness of the need of the preservation of our cultural heritage according to the social purposes of the present government, however our lack of economic resources.

USA: In US, we make no distinction between historic villages and historic neighborhoods in larger cities.

Germany: It should be stressed that conditions for conservation of historic towns can be considerably influenced by national and regional planning, especially a regional economic policy which takes account of these problems. Actual impulses, however, must come from the town and its citizens themselves.

This summary is based on the questionnaires and/or reports of the following countries:

EUROPE: Austria - Bulgaria - Cyprus - Czechoslovakia -
Denmark - Federal Republic of Germany - Finland -
Hungary - Luxembourg - Netherlands - Rumania -
Spain - Soviet Union - Switzerland - United Kingdom

ASIA: Israel - Japan - Lebanon

AMERICA: Canada - Mexico - Peru - USA

AUSTRALIA: New Zealand