



Historic fortresses are strong, solid buildings that are made to sustain. They are constructed as machines and landscaped in carefully selected sites. As historic monuments, they refer to eras of national defence or occupation as part of larger military systems. Their structures were based on latest international know-how, and evolved according to advances in artillery or as new thinking emerged about defensive lines – or they lost their position.

When conserving historic fortresses for reuse, their wide context, operational conditions, interconnection of different elements and relation to surrounding nature should be understood. Multifaceted significances should be kept legible by reinforcing the heritage values.

Thus, the first Fortress Development Atelier of the AT FORT project – “Atelier European Fortresses - Powering Local Sustainable Development” – focused on principles for reuses, theories of conservation implemented and methods of conservation used. During two days, participants orientated with management practices of the Suomenlinna Sea Fortress of Helsinki by site visits and presentations. Presentations of case studies and good practices carried out in the partner fortresses enhanced knowledge transfer. Intensive discussions on themes in teams and altogether led to joint conclusions.

The AT FORT project partnership gathers together representatives of eleven important European fortified heritage sites. The lead partner is the New Dutch Waterline. The project is part-financed by the INTERREG IVC programme.



← *The AT FORT project focuses on enhancing multifunctional use, enabling conditions and good governance models of heritage fortresses. The first Atelier of the project was held in the Suomenlinna Sea Fortress in Finland in November 2012. The host was the Governing Body of Suomenlinna. Photos Soili Mustapää.*



Each fortress and site has a specific context

Reuse requires transformations, but all changes should be based on a holistic view of a site. It is important to understand what is significant from urban to detailed levels, and the transformation processes in time. Only team-work can ensure the required multi-disciplined competence.

The concepts of authenticity and reversibility have specific frameworks in fortresses. Reversibility as a method is important in proper places but in general is not characteristic in these kinds of solid buildings as fortresses are. Wider aspects of authenticity within a fortification include consideration of all the values that make up the cultural significance of a place.

Political or historic events may still influence the



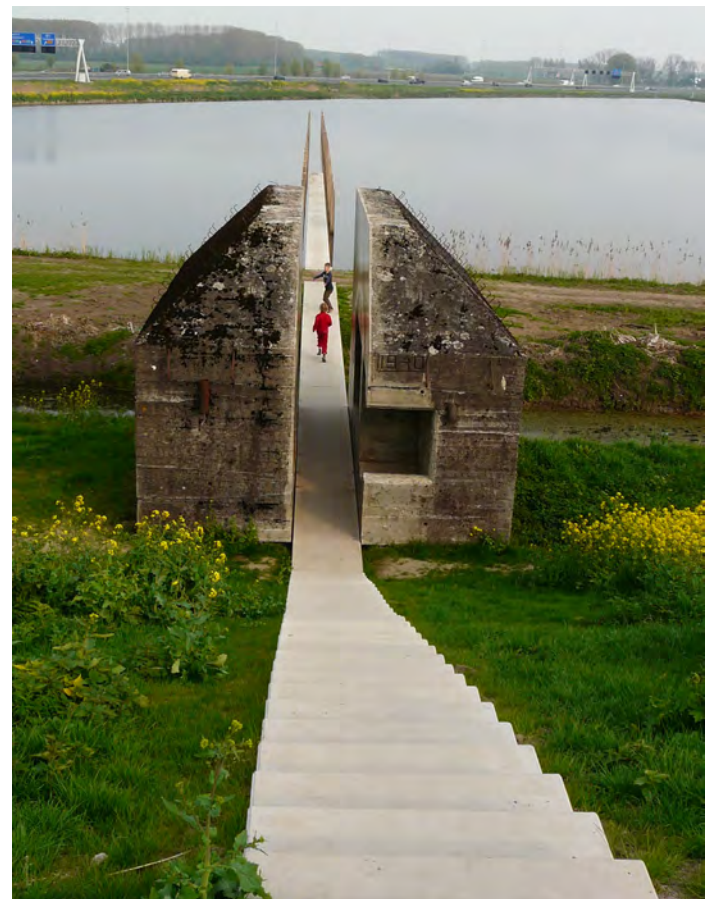
Principles of reuse

Defining of enabling conditions and principles of reuse require strategic approaches. In the regeneration of the New Dutch Waterline, preservation through development is the central maxim. “The regeneration of historical sites means bringing again into activity and prominence. The reuse will facilitate preservation. Development in turn facilitates reuse and enhances experiences. This will lead to more usage and therefore value is added, which will generate a natural obligation for preservation,” reasoned architect Gerco Meijer from the BunkerQ office for heritage development, restoration and architecture in Utrecht, Netherlands.

This principle can be carried out in many different ways. Five modes used at the New Dutch Waterline were presented. Reconstructions can be added – especially dealing with landscaping and enhancing accessibility – when restoring a site. Conversions are used to facilitate new use and to enrich experiences. Even framing, new objects and consolidation can assist in preservation. All these methods are used after careful cross-sector considerations and debates.

weight given in heritage values to a particular phase of a fortification. Thus there are still national preferences for reference styles. However, sensitiveness of notions of people is removing concerning, especially, cultural heritage of the 19th and 20th centuries. Visible layers of the past that are consistent let one to understand the aging of the built heritage.

“Change cannot solely be driven by a need to restore historic integrity or authenticity, but must also be balanced against the needs of the site as a whole. The site has to have a future, as a complex that has changed many times”, deduced conservation officer Alice Brockway when presenting the Chatham and Sheerness Dockyards in the Medway Council in the UK.



↑ An example of how to use conversion and changing experience to facilitate preservation. Architect Gerco Meijer presented methods of how preservation is conducted through development at the New Dutch Waterline. Photo on the right Gerco Meijer, photo on the left Soili Mustapää.



Landscaping is an essential part of fortresses

The relation between nature and monument is an important issue with restoration and maintenance of fortresses. The overgrown vegetation can easily disguise the concept and integrity of an area when vegetation hides structures and their interconnected relations.

Thus, views should be opened to restore the historic open form of the landscape. Regular maintenance should prevent uncontrolled growth of vegetation.



↓ *One topical target in all historic fortresses is to ensure proper degrees of accessibility. In Suomenlinna, the gable stone paved pathways are historically correct but can be challenging for any stroller.*
Photographs Soili Mustapää.



Good practices of the Suomenlinna Sea Fortress

The Atelier participants surveyed in teams the presented management practices of the Governing Body of Suomenlinna and their experiences at the Sea Fortress. Multifunctional re-use was stated as an obvious strength of the site. The authenticity of fortress was appreciated. It is based on documentation, historic studies, surveys and adoption of a multidisciplinary approach, not only structural issues. Authenticity targets also use of original or proper materials and intangible values.

Contemporary conservation of the Suomenlinna fortress has good quality with very minimalistic additions and quality details. Intrusive materials are not used. The quality of new architecture is high; there is integrity of material but contemporary architectural form.



Group discussions. →
Photos by Soili Mustapää.

Close cooperation of the Governing Body of Suomenlinna with the Helsinki Open Prison with practical restoration works by inmate labour of the prison was concluded to create a win-win situation. Fortified sites are simple in material and craft, and suit well for training sites to be developed as good examples of conservation.

“Historic fortifications consist of few materials only; stone, mortar, earth and vegetation. There is not much left if stones are moved, mortar replaced and the soil taken away”, stated Tuija Lind, architect at the Governing Body of Suomenlinna in Finland, when analysing the conservation philosophies of recent decays. Today, the restoration philosophy implemented at Suomenlinna fortress is to keep as much as possible in situ and to use only traditional material. Modern repair materials are replaced by hydraulic lime, birch bark and clay. The aim is to repair as the walls were built earlier; not for nostalgic reasons but because these materials have a capacity of aging and they can be repaired.

↓ Active measures of the Governing Body of Suomenlinna to keep the dry dock alive as a ship yard and the launching of ship repair and construction there form firm bases for revealing and regenerating of heritage values of the Suomenlinna Sea Fortress. In the left photo the head of restoration Heikki Lahdenmäki of the Governing Body of Suomenlinna. Photos Soili Mustapää.



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The next AT FORT Atelier on governance models and accessibility

The themes of the second Fortress Development Atelier are governance models, accessibility and safety. In addition, UNESCO nominations will be discussed. This Atelier will be held in March 2013 in Fort Monostor in Komárom, Hungary.

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