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## WORLD HERITAGE AS A BALANCING ACT: EXPERIENCES FROM A MEDIUM-SIZED WORLD HERITAGE CITY IN BAVARIA

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**ABSTRACT:** The Town of Bamberg has been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1993 due to its medieval urban layout and its well preserved buildings mostly from the Middle Ages and the Baroque era. A large part of the historic streets and squares still exist. They make up an essential part of the city's public space. Yet, the demands placed on this public space are currently undergoing some changes - especially under the influence of climate change and the Corona pandemic.

In line with the UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape, Bamberg's urban fabric is based on the historical stratification of cultural and natural values and features. The urban fabric relates to the landscape in which it is embedded – river Regnitz and the surrounding hills – as well as to religious traditions, trade activities and building customs.

The aim of this paper is to analyze recent developments in the planning and use of public spaces in Bamberg taking into account current methods of participation. In 2020, the City of Bamberg was awarded the contract by the Federal Ministry of the Interior, for Construction and Home Affairs, for a project period of seven years as part of the "Smart Cities Model Projects" funding programme to promote digitalization at all levels of urban development. Accordingly, the contribution of digital technologies to urban planning and of citizen participation will receive special attention.

**KEY WORDS:** Bamberg (Germany), HUL, World Heritage, public space, medium-sized city, smart city

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## The historic urban landscape of Bamberg

According to archaeological excavations, Bamberg's history can be traced back to the 7th century when there was a large fortress on the Cathedral Hill, in which Slavs and Franks lived together peacefully. The fortress overlooked river Regnitz and two important trade routes. Bamberg was first mentioned in a chronicle in 902 as *Castrum Babenberch* – a property of the East Franconian dynasty of the Babenbergs<sup>1</sup>.

The town gained importance from the foundation of its bishopric in 1007, initiated by Henry II, who later became Holy Roman Emperor (1014-1024). The development of the bourgeois Island District, from the 12th century onwards, was accompanied by a period of great prosperity. The view of Bamberg from the Schedel World Chronicle (Fig. 1) gives an idea of the wealth of the city at that time.



Fig. 1 View of Bamberg from the Schedel World Chronicle, 1493 (BSB Rar. 287 fol. 174'-175)

Bamberg experienced a second great flowering from the late 17th century onwards with the *baroqueisation* under Prince Bishop Lothar Franz von Schönborn. Through tax concessions, he promoted the construction of new Baroque buildings and the upgrading of existing buildings with Baroque architectural elements. His edict issued in March 1700 states accordingly:

*Wir für das zulänglichste mittel erachtet  
eine nahmhafte Befreyung auf geraumere Jahren von allen und jeden Landes langen  
mit welchen sonst die neue Bhausung ihrem taxmäßigen Werth nach  
zu der Steuer und andern Beschwehden gezogen werden müßte  
gnädigst auszuwerfen<sup>2</sup>.*

<sup>1</sup> Moser P., *Bamberg: Geschichte einer Stadt*, Babenberg Verlag, Bamberg 1998, pp. 11-17.

<sup>2</sup> Bast E. M., Baur A., *Was Bamberg prägte: 52 große und kleine Begegnungen mit der Stadtgeschichte*, Verlag Fränkischer Tag, Bamberg 2017, p. 41.

Since the Baroque period, no major structural changes were implemented. The period after secularization in 1802/03 did not bring any large buildings that characterized the cityscape, but served to systemize structures. Opportunities for this arose in new building projects or in gaps in the development caused by fire damage. The consequences were straightening of streets and rows of façades. Bamberg even survived World War II with few losses to the historic building fabric<sup>3</sup>. Until today one can make one's way around the city with the oldest surviving map dating from 1602 by land surveyor Petrus Zweidler (Fig. 2).

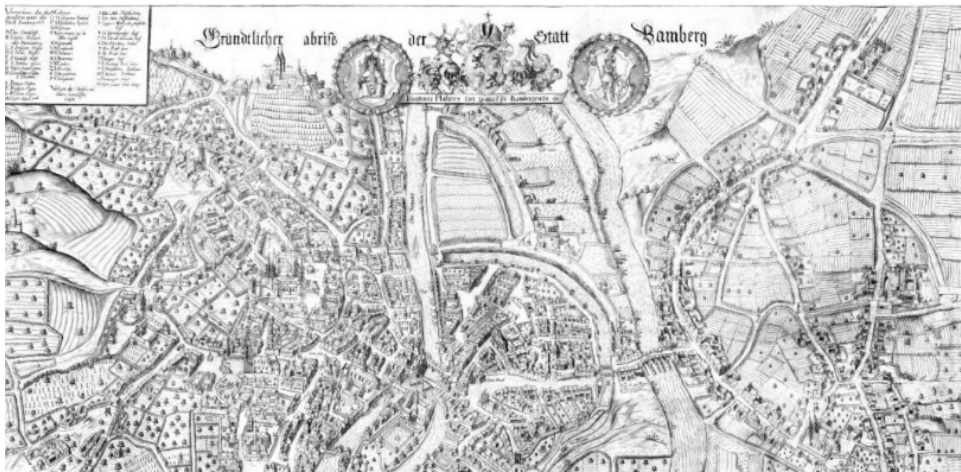


Fig. 2 Map of Bamberg by Petrus Zweidler, 1602 (Staatsbibliothek Bamberg)

In 1984, the abundance of architectural monuments on an area of 250 ha was included in the Bavarian Register of Historic Monuments, listed as “Ensemble Innenstadt Bamberg” [Bamberg centre ensemble]<sup>4</sup>. The significance of Bamberg as an urban monument is largely explained by the interplay of natural, spatial, topographical and cultural factors. Bamberg’s early development resulted -consciously or unconsciously- from the place’s scenic potentials<sup>5</sup>. This concentrated amalgamation of natural and cultural elements as well as the ideal use of the topographical conditions suggests a targeted shaping of the urban landscape<sup>6</sup> in the early stages. Bamberg’s topographical position like a staircase sloping down to the plain combines three essential advantages. It enables protection, communication and representation<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Knefelkamp U., Reddig W. F., Zink R., *Vielfältiges Bamberg: Eine Stadtgeschichte*, Verlag Fränkischer Tag, Bamberg 2008, p. 231.

<sup>4</sup> This urban ensemble is defined as a protected historic ensemble by the Bavarian Act for the Protection of Historic Buildings and Monuments in accordance with Section 1 Paragraph 3 (BayDSchG)..

<sup>5</sup> Gunzelmann T., *Die Kunstdenkmäler von Bayern: Stadt Bamberg 1 – Stadtzentrum und Denkmallandschaft*, „I. Stadtentwicklungsgeschichte“, Bayerische Verlagsanstalt, Bamberg, 2012, p. 82.

<sup>6</sup> Bandarin F., van Oers R., *The historic urban landscape: Managing heritage in an urban century*, Wiley-Blackwell, Chichester 2012.

<sup>7</sup> Bandarin F., van Oers R., *Reconnecting the City: The Historic Urban Landscape Approach and the Future of Urban Heritage*, Wiley-Blackwell, Chichester, 2014.

The hills are accentuated with church buildings facing the river valley. The urban structure is adjusted to the hills and the arms of river Regnitz<sup>8</sup>.

In 1993, Bamberg's inscription on the on the UNESCO World Heritage List followed due to its medieval urban layout and its well preserved buildings mostly from the Middle Ages and the Baroque era. The city's *outstanding universal value* reads:

*Criterion (ii): The layout and architecture of medieval and baroque Bamberg exerted a strong influence on urban form and evolution in the lands of central Europe from the 11th century onwards.*

*Criterion (iv): Bamberg is an outstanding and representative example of an early medieval town in central Europe, both in its plan and its surviving ecclesiastical and secular buildings<sup>9</sup>.*

As of 2021 the city recoded 1,343 listed monuments. The World Heritage site with its 142 ha accounts for around 3 per cent of the total urban area<sup>10</sup>.

### **Current challenges and their effects on the World Heritage City of Bamberg**

According to paragraph 172 of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* the City of Bamberg is obliged "to inform the [World Heritage] Committee, through the Secretariat, of its intention to undertake or to authorize in an area protected under the Convention major restorations or new constructions which may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property"<sup>11</sup>. Accordingly, any major development must be carefully coordinated. The implementation of design competitions supports the high-quality execution of new buildings in the historic context. The low interest rates on the financial markets in recent years have benefited the construction industry. In Bamberg, too, overdue building and renovation measures were tackled. The *Quartier an den Stadtmauern* at the heart of the World Heritage site, a bone of contention between the local bank and the heritage authorities, has finally been redeveloped and the vacancies there have been remedied. The historic building fabric could be preserved. In the process, the investor has scaled back his profit expectations in favour of a small-scale structure with corresponding open spaces. Public interest and the pursuit of profit were carefully weighed. The establishment of the World Heritage Visitor Centre on the site of the Lower Mills must also be considered against this background. The new building was constructed on urban wasteland stemming from 1945. Remains of the pre-war building were integrated and historically guaranteed water rights have been resumed.

<sup>8</sup> Gunzelmann T., *Die Kunstdenkmäler von Bayern: Stadt Bamberg 1 – StadtDenkmal und Denkmallandschaft*, „1. Stadtentwicklungsgeschichte“, Bayerische Verlagsanstalt, Bamberg, 2012.

<sup>9</sup> UNESCO World Heritage Centre, *Town of Bamberg* (accessed: 3 August 2022).

<sup>10</sup> City of Bamberg, *Bamberger Zahlen 2020 - Statistisches Jahrbuch der Stadt Bamberg*, 2020, p. 8

<sup>11</sup> UNESCO World Heritage Centre, *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, 2021, p. 57.



The COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, rising energy prices – like other cities, Bamberg is currently facing a number of major challenges. Since March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has shaken up health systems, disrupted supply chains and accelerated structural developments. Cities are strongly affected due to numerous closures of hospitality and retail businesses. Prior to Corona, Bamberg registered some 700,000 overnight stays per year<sup>12</sup>. This number has halved with the outbreak of the pandemic.

The high hygiene regulations and especially the distance rules that came into force after the first lockdown in May 2020 made it difficult for hospitality businesses to cover their expenditures. Therefore, the City of Bamberg allowed for the expansion of outdoor areas of restaurants and beer gardens upon request. 31 restaurants<sup>13</sup> have made use of this offer, so that the total number of outdoor bar areas in the city has doubled (Fig. 3). Not everywhere, this has led to greater distances between the seats as originally intended.



Fig. 3 Expansion of the outdoor gastronomy in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic ©City of Bamberg

However, the pandemic also had positive effects: A survey among Bamberg's market gardeners in July 2020 has shown that consumers have increased their local purchases. The reasons for this were shopping in the fresh air, more spare time and a more thoughtful shopping behaviour. With prices currently on the rise, this trend may not continue. Instead, consumers may try to save money by shopping at the discounter.

Climate change is leading to hotter summers and extreme weather. During heat waves, Bamberg with its high building density often does not cool down sufficiently at night. As a result, the heat accumulates and becomes a health risk for the residents. Scientists call this phenomenon the “urban heat island effect”. The area around Bamberg's market square heats up considerably

<sup>12</sup> City of Bamberg, *Bamberger Zahlen 2020 - Statistisches Jahrbuch der Stadt Bamberg*, 2020., p. 106.

<sup>13</sup> According to a statement of the Municipality's Economic Development Office as of 22 July 2022.

during summer due to the completely sealed ground and missing plants. Green spaces, trees and all forms of vegetation have a cooling effect and can serve as places of retreat for the population during heat waves. The same applies to bodies of water such as rivers and lakes. They warm up much more slowly during the day than sealed surfaces. River Regnitz therefore acts as a cool band running through Bamberg and the surrounding area.

The Nördliche Promenade on the other hand, a multifunctional yet untended area in the immediate vicinity of the pedestrian zone and the central bus terminal, offers space, but little quality of stay. In July 2022, the City of Bamberg invited local residents to a community event (Fig. 4) with cultural programme to gather ideas for the redesign of the neighbourhood drawing on diversity and creativity as key assets for development.



Fig. 4 Citizen participation at Nördliche Promenade © City of Bamberg

From 2022 to 2024, a wide range of climate protection and neighbourhood projects in Bamberg are funded with 3.3 million Euros. Participatory climate protection is the top priority. The funds are also used for greening the city. Moreover, Bamberg is applying for funding from the federal programme "Zukunftsfähige Innenstädte und Zentren" (sustainable inner cities and centres) in order to tackle structural issues.

### **Digital tools for citizen participation**

Bamberg is growing and changing. Important decisions about the future development of the city involve its citizens. In line with the *Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape Bamberg* "involves a diverse cross-section of stakeholders, and empowers them to identify key values in their urban areas, develop visions that reflect their diversity, set goals, and agree on actions to safeguard their heritage and promote sustainable development". In 2020, the City of Bamberg was awarded the contract by the Federal Ministry of the Interior, for Construction and Home Affairs, for a project period of seven years as part of the "Smart Cities Model Projects" funding programme to promote digitalization at all levels of urban development. This facilitates new possibilities for civic dialogue. Among others, the digital platform <https://bamberg-gestalten.de/> has been established (Fig. 5) in order to give Bambergers a greater say in shaping their city. Hybrid formats such as citizen labs also take place in this context.



Fig. 5 Digital platform for citizen participation

Moreover, a digital twin of the World Heritage site is under development. The digital twin virtually replicates the World Heritage City. This allows for planning simulations and visualizations. In this way, it can be ensured that real planning does not undermine the attributes of the World Heritage site. Sensors will be used to enrich the digital twin with real-time data from the urban space. Places such as historic courtyards that are not accessible to the public can be examined and explored via the project. The digital twin will also be linked to various databases and virtual formats.

## Conclusion

The approach of the historic urban landscape was developed by UNESCO for the sustainable development of historic cities. It defines historic urban landscapes as spaces with tangible and intangible qualities that are equally worthy of preservation<sup>14</sup>. Bamberg with its historic layering of values is a key testimony to humankind's endeavours and aspirations through space and time. Even if the *Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape* rarely finds explicit application in Bamberg, there is a natural understanding among decision-makers of the complexity of values associated with the urban landscape.

City development requires identifying and prioritizing structures. The orientation towards the past of a city, especially a World Heritage city, can be manifold: It ranges from deliberate non-conformance with historical patterns, materials and forms to creative reinterpretations and even reconstructions. Digital tools such as the virtual World Heritage twin can help visualize values attributed to urban areas and their settings. They can document the functionality, traditional role and populations of neighbourhoods.

Digital technologies, if well managed, can make participatory processes more inclusive. Participatory formats contribute to better informed decisions in urban development. Finally, considering perceptions and realities of local residents increases the sustainability of any project.

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<sup>14</sup> UNESCO, *Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape*, 2011.



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