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## STRALSUND: CONSERVATION AND CHANGE

Cultural sites, historic buildings and monuments are places of cultural significance that give an unfiltered account of the past. They contain complex information, messages and opportunities for insight. This is especially true for the historic centres of our medieval European cities. But even when they are listed as a World Heritage Sites, they are threatened at least with two different issues:

Tourism versus the habitable city: Development into a tourist attraction means the old city centre becomes a museum including the needed infrastructure of accommodation, restaurants, cafes, and gift shops.

Integration of modern concepts of life: Traffic, parking zones, shopping malls, pedestrian areas, open spaces, special functions is part of a modern city, but most of them conflict with the structure of a historic city.

Stralsund – listed as a World Heritage Site together with Wismar since 2002 – exemplifies the history of the development of Hanseatic towns at the Southern shores of the Baltic Sea. In its heyday it became the second most powerful member after Lübeck. The wealth and pride of its citizens are until today represented in the monumental brick cathedrals, in the influential monasteries, in the exceptional town hall, and in the magnificent houses of the rich tradesmen.

The historic centre of Stralsund survived the decline of the Hanseatic League and the Second World War with only a few air raids, but it faced severe difficulties during the time of the GDR. The housing stock of the old city was dramatically neglected and the centre lost its meaning for the entire population of Stralsund. The reunification came just in time to rescue the historic centre.

The overall goal was to achieve attractiveness of the historic centre of Stralsund not only for tourists, but for the Stralsunders themselves. The population within the historic centre should increase. The residents of the “new” Stralsund should regain the historic centre as a source of their identity, where they want to live, are able to carry out administrative necessities, to go shopping, to see cultural events, to meet friends.

The central challenge has been to facilitate the needed socio-economic changes and growth on one hand and to respect the urban structure and morphology on the other. Especially the integration of big building complexes like the “Ozeaneum” (Museum of the Sea) and the planned “Quartier 17” (large scale retail for sale) has been a high wire act that needed a lot of work in convincing ICOMOS not to protest against it.

Today Stralsund’s old town has an increasing number of residents, although the population of the entire city is still in decline. It can cope with the changing needs of its inhabitants. Thus, the basis for further development and proper maintenance has been achieved.