

BRUSSELS HERITAGE

SPECIAL EDITION – 2018



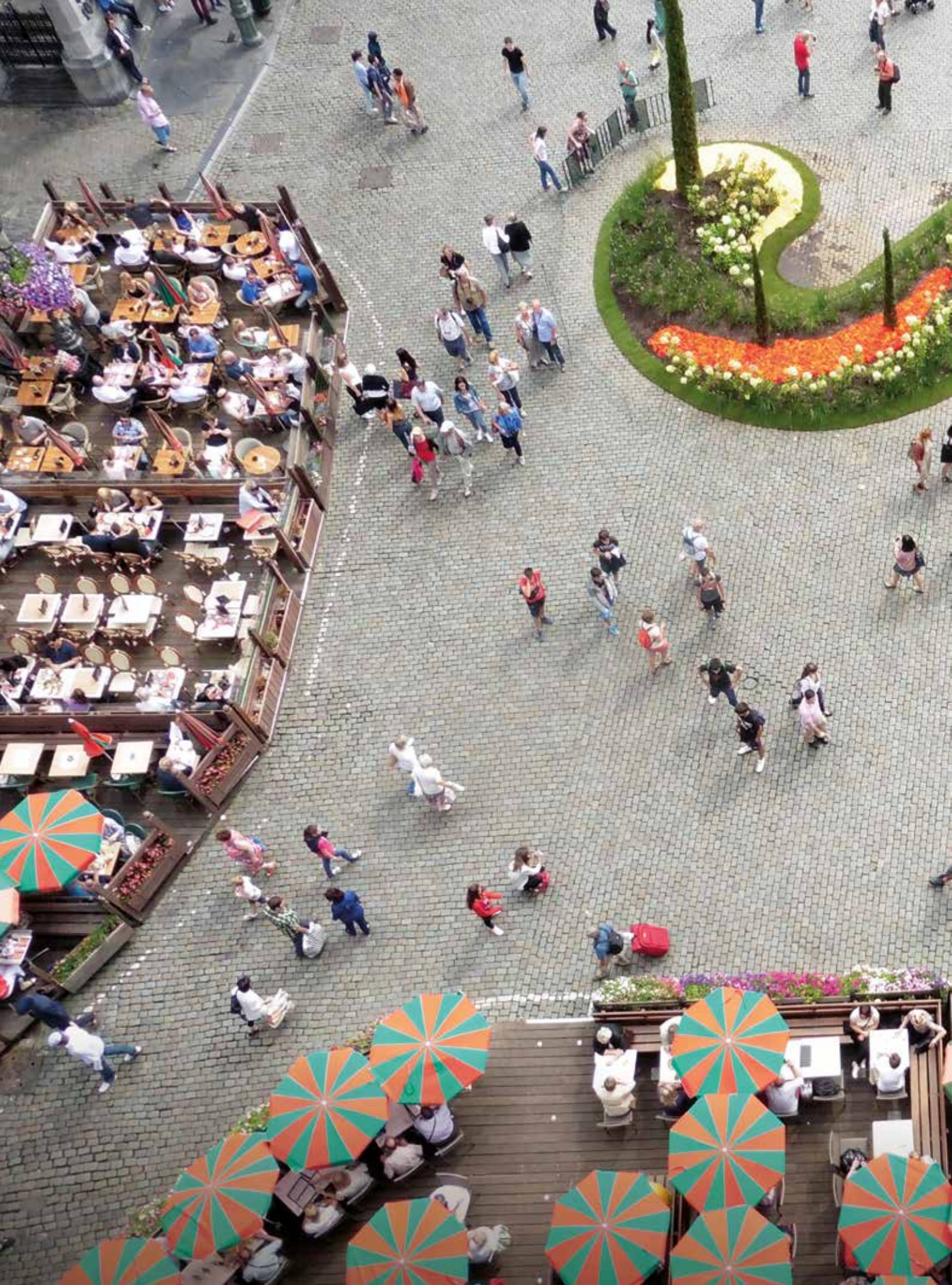
United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



La Grand-Place, Brussels
inscribed on the World
Heritage List in 1998

THE RESTORATION OF AN EXCEPTIONAL DECORATIVE ENVIRONMENT

The facades of the Grand Place





FUTURE
OUTLOOK

FlowerTime 2015 Grand Place. View from top of scaffolding during work on the façades of houses 1 to 7 (© HHU, 2015).



THE GRAND PLACE MANAGEMENT PLAN

1698

CAROLO ALEXANDRO
LOTHINGORUM DUCI BELGARUM GUBERNATORI ET C.
CAROLI ANTONII
HIC POSUIT I DEI PRINCIPIS CARA SICE
CAROLUS IVANUS BRUXELL.

The Grand Place in Brussels was included on the UNESCO World Heritage List in December 1998. At the same time, the area surrounding it, commonly known as the "Ilot Sacré" or "Sacred Island", was designated a buffer zone.

This international recognition prompted the City of Brussels to develop a series of studies and to initiate an extensive campaign to restore the façades of the houses, which is the focus of this publication.

While this international endorsement is remarkably encouraging, it also necessitates the special management of the properties concerned and of their buffer zone, in accordance with the requirements of the *Convention concerning the Protection of World Cultural and*

Natural Heritage adopted in 1972. These requirements call for the implementation of a management plan, based on an accurate schedule of condition, enabling any problems affecting the properties to be identified. The resulting report then serves as a basis for action plans and restoration and repair work, in addition to the establishment of future priorities and necessary budgets. This is to ensure the proper conservation and protection of the monuments, and respect for their authenticity and integrity, as well as the values for which they were recognised by the World Heritage Committee.

The UNESCO guidelines specify that the primary objective of a management plan is to ensure the long-term conservation of world heritage

sites: "Each nominated property [for inclusion on the World Heritage List] should have an appropriate management plan (...) which must specify how the Outstanding Universal Value of the property should be preserved. The purpose of a management system is to ensure the effective protection of the nominated property for present and future generations. An effective management system depends on the type, characteristics and needs of the nominated property and its cultural and natural context. (...) They may incorporate traditional practices, existing urban or regional planning instruments (...)”¹

When the Grand Place in Brussels was included on the World Heritage List, the requirement for a management plan did not yet apply. In



Photo of the Grand Place taken by a drone (© Utopix, D-ms, 2018).

order to comply with the prescriptions of the 2011 “World Heritage Guidelines”, the City of Brussels took the initiative to establish a management plan for the area, in collaboration with the Monuments and Sites Directorate - Brussels Planning and Heritage.

This plan provides an overview of all of the actions and projects developed over the last twenty years both by the City of Brussels and by the Brussels-Capital Region, the two institutions responsible for protecting the values that have enabled these properties to obtain international recognition².

By bringing together all the actions and projects underway in the zone it was possible to structure the management plan around five strategic objectives:

1. Managing the properties;
2. Conserving the heritage site while safeguarding its integrity and authenticity;
3. Developing a functional mix of uses, particularly commercial and housing;
4. Improving the living environment;
5. Raising awareness, increasing the promotion of our heritage, stimulating exchanges of expertise and developing tourism.

These objectives are divided into specific targets, which are in turn implemented in action plans.

A precise knowledge of the site, acquired from the historical and architectural studies and schedules of condition described in previous chapters, greatly contributed to the development of the plan.

An initial document was drawn up in 2012 for a three-year period (2012-2015). It was the start of active management and the driver of

strategic development for the conservation and promotion of the site and its buffer zone. It has now been updated for a further six-year period (2015-2021)³.

It also allows the management of the site to be planned in an optimal manner and serves as a guidance tool for strategies that are yet to be developed.

In addition to basic measures for heritage protection and the restoration of monuments, and in response to specific issues raised by the management of the Grand Place and the buffer zone surrounding it, the City of Brussels implemented a series of tools to achieve the goals set by the plan. These include the creation of a monitoring committee and a new regulation.

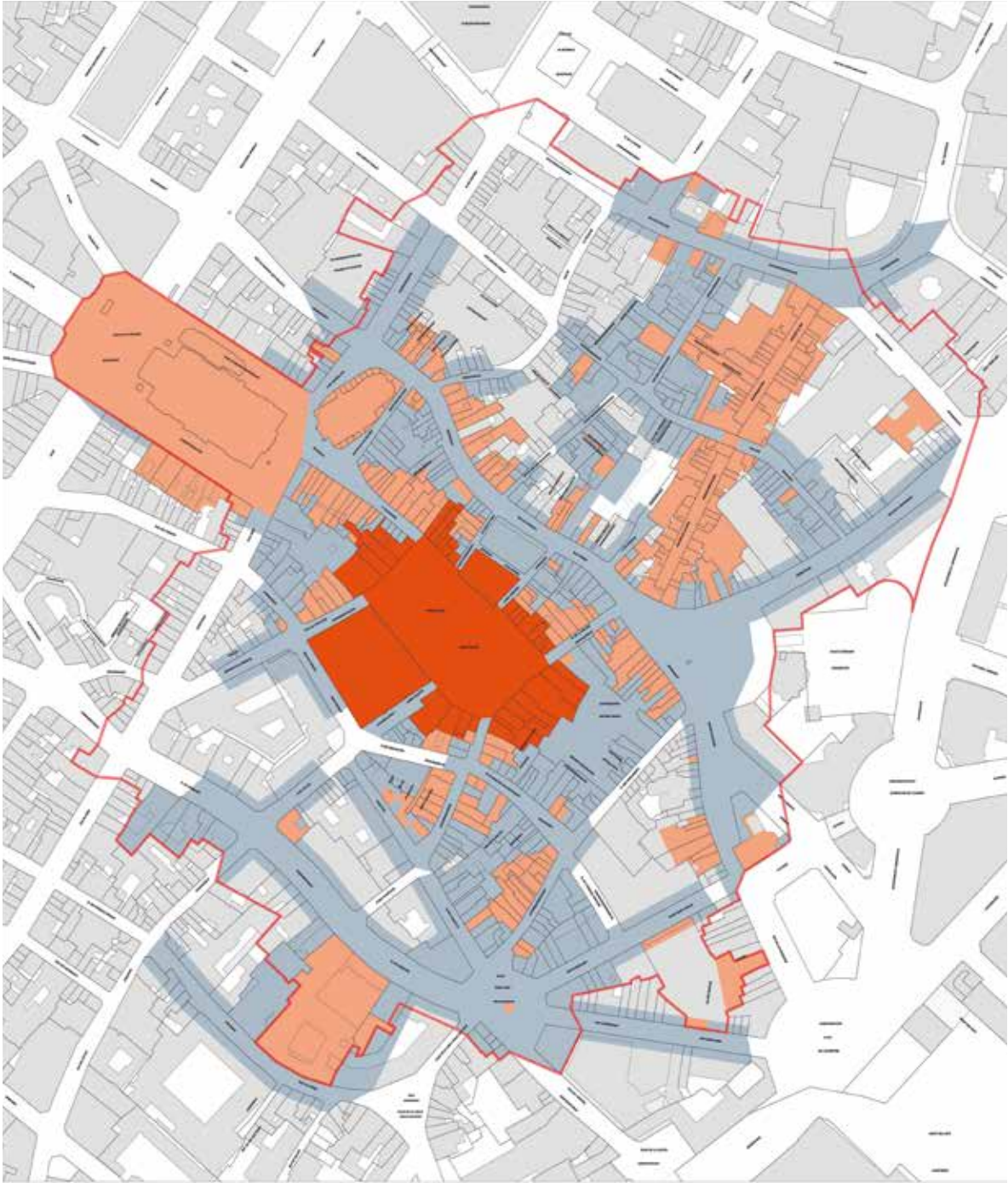
A working group called the “Grand Place-UNESCO Heritage Monitoring Committee” was established in 2003 within the City of Brussels Administration. Its aim was to coordinate the authorities’ decisions and actions, and to ensure the protection of architectural heritage and the living environment⁴.

In 2009, the City of Brussels Municipal College adopted a specific municipal planning regulation applicable to a zone termed the “UNESCO Buffer Zone”. This particular regulation adds to and fleshes out the Regional Planning Regulation with more precise and restrictive prescriptions in terms of commercial image. It focuses on two main objectives: preventing economic activity from damaging the aesthetic and architectural quality of the buildings and ensuring that they serve a variety of purposes by facilitating accessibility to upstairs apartments and by limiting any defacement caused to rear courtyards by technical installations.

The historical centre of Brussels is both the most valuable and the most fragile element of the city’s urban fabric. Protecting it is a daunting challenge; the public authorities alone have the resources to meet this by implementing a coherent wide-scale policy. They must therefore assume their responsibilities with determination and sensitivity.

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NOTES

1. *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, UNESCO.
2. City of Brussels website: <https://www.brussels.be/unesco-world-heritage> Brussels-Capital Region website: <http://patrimoine.brussels/decouvrir/patrimoine-international-a-bruxelles/la-grand-place-de-bruxelles>.
3. This plan can be viewed on the City of Brussels website: <https://www.brussels.be/unesco-world-heritage>
4. This working group contains representatives of regional and municipal services directly involved in this issue. It meets once or twice a year.



- Property inscribed on the World Heritage List
- Buffer zone around the Grand-Place of Brussels
- Protected property (Safeguarding - Classification)
- Legal protection zone

The Grand Place, Brussels, UNESCO World Heritage. Protection zone known as "Buffer zone" (© urban.brussels).

TIMELINE OF THE WORK 2004-2018



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Before and after restoration: the façades of No. 39 – 2003-2004 and Nos. 34 to 38 -2014-2016 on the Grand Place (details p. 143)
Firm Galère sa

Cost of work (nr. 39): € 229.041,92 VAT incl.
Financial aid given by the Region (nr. 39): €146.512,47 VAT incl.



© HHU, 2006



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Before and after restoration: the façades of Nos. 8 to 12 on the Grand Place - 2007-2008
Firm Galère sa

Cost of work: € 1.041.548,92 VAT incl.
Financial aid given by the Region: € 844.867,03 VAT incl.



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Before and after restoration: the façades of Nos. 20 to 28 on the Grand Place - 2011-2012
Firm Renotec n.v.

Cost of work: €994.594,53 VAT incl.
Financial aid given by the Region: € 771.778,88 VAT incl.



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Before and after restoration: the façades of Nos. 1 to 7 and Nos. 34 to 38 on the Grand Place - 2014-2016
Firm Renotec n.v.

Cost of work: €1.645.809,66 VAT incl.
Financial aid given by the Region: €1.107983,22 VAT incl.

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ICONOGRAPHIC COORDINATION

Paula Cordeiro and Marie-Noëlle Martou
The Historical Heritage Unit of the City of Brussels

AUTHORS

Paula Cordeiro and Marie-Noëlle Martou
With the assistance of Quentin Demeure, Vincent Heymans, Yves Van Cutsem
The Historical Heritage Unit of the City of Brussels

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Cindy De Brandt,
Brigitte Vander Bruggen.
bpeb@urban.brussels

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CONTACT

The Cultural Heritage Directorate – Sensitisation Unit
Mont des Arts/Kunstberg 10-13, 1000 Brussels
<http://www.erfgoed.brussels>
bpeb@urban.brussels

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AVB – Archives de la Ville de Bruxelles
CSTC – Centre scientifique et technique de la construction
HHU – Historical Heritage Unit of the City of Brussels
KIK-IRPA – Koninklijk Instituut voor het Kunstpatrimonium / Institut royal du Patrimoine artistique
KU Leuven – Katholieke Universiteit Leuven
VUB – Vrije Universiteit Brussel

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