The culture and people of Tibet have long been a source of fascination as well as inspiration around the globe. In modern times, the Tibetans have faced their share of difficulties in maintaining their ancient heritage in an adequate and dignified way.

With financial support from the European Commission, a program to investigate the issues of sustainable preservation of the heritage of Tibet seeks to evaluate adequate methodologies to preserve aspects such as Tibet’s ancient architecture, its traditional cities and its monastic art was launched. This was the initiative of ASIA Onlus, the Association for International Solidarity in Asia, a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) founded in December 1988 through the determination and the commitment of a group of scholars of Tibetan culture; in cooperation with Tibet Heritage Fund and Cicsene. Activities launched under this program include seminars and exhibitions in Italy and Germany, and publications of the results.

In June 18-22 2007, three seminars were held in Napoli, Torino and Roma, addressing the same topic. The papers presented gave an overview of Buddhist and Tibetan architecture in the region (Napoli); of the need for and examples of sustainable interventions in architectural design, architectural conservation, urban planning and financial investment in the region (Torino); and examples of successful interventions in Buddhist wall-painting conservation (Roma).

To bring these topics to a conclusion, THF and ASIA are organizing an international conference in Berlin from December 4-6 2007. This will be a forum to discuss and define parameters and strategies for intervention in the Himalayan areas, addressed to experts working in the fields, policy makers, donor institutions and the general public. An additional intention is to provide ideas for expansion of existing EU-Asia cooperation in the field of cultural heritage and sustainable development of historic cities. The first day, held at University of Technology, focuses on themes related to architecture and planning. The second day, held at Humboldt University, focuses on the relation between Tibetan material culture and development.

Moreover, an exhibition will be held as part of this European project: Exploding City Lhasa: Urban Development on the Roof of the World, shown in the foyer of the Main Building, Humboldt University, Unter den Linden 6, Berlin.
Exploding City Lhasa: Urban Development on the Roof of the World

Exhibition, 26.11. - 7.12. 2007
Humboldt University, Main Building, Unter den Linden 6, Foyer

The exhibition traces the origins of Buddhist architecture, the history of Lhasa and recent urban development of Lhasa over a course of two thousand years. Illustrated with photos, architectural drawings and maps from the archives of Tibet Heritage Fund. Entrance is free of charge.

Top: traditional Tibetan depiction of Lhasa (THF).
Center: aerial view of modern Lhasa (J. Müller).
Below: Lhasa Jokhang temple and Barkor Street (THF).