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20th Century Housing Heritage in Europe
Conserving, Participating, and Adapting



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Vorwort

Die Frage nach dem baulichen Erbe des 20. Jahrhunderts betrifft uns alle – nicht nur als materielle Hinterlassenschaft, sondern als Ausdruck sozialer Praktiken, Lebensweisen und gemeinschaftlicher Werte. Ausgehend von der Tagung „20th Century Housing Heritage in Europe: Conserving, Participating, and Adapting", der Technische Universität Wien, die im November 2024 in Kooperation mit dem Bundesdenkmalamt stattfand, versammelt dieses Themenheft Beiträge, die das Verhältnis von Wohnen, kulturellem Erbe und gesellschaftlichem Wandel im europäischen Kontext neu beleuchten. Die hier versammelten Fallstudien verbinden Denkmalpflege, Architekturgeschichte und Stadtforschung mit aktuellen Fragen der Nachhaltigkeit, Teilhabe und sozialräumlichen Gerechtigkeit.

Die ersten Beiträge widmen sich Grundsatzfragen zur Bewertung und Erhaltung moderner Wohnsiedlungen. Ana Tostões diskutiert am Beispiel des Stadtviertels Telheiras Sul in Lissabon die Verbindung sozialer und architektonischer Werte als Motor einer nachhaltigen Stadtentwicklung. Christina Schraml widmet sich den heute kaum beachteten Wiener Alte-Leute-Siedlungen und zeigt auf, wie das immaterielle Erbe gemeinschaftlichen Wohnens bewahrt werden könnte. Die Beiträge von Liliana Iuga, Irina Tulbure und Oana Țiganea über Ștei in Rumänien sowie von Aristotelis Antoniou über Aspra Spitia in Griechenland beleuchten, wie sich Nachkriegsmoderne und Gegenwart an der Schwelle zwischen historischem Erbe und der Notwendigkeit zu baulichen Transformationen begegnen. Federica Fava und Giovanni Caudo erweitern den Diskurs, indem sie emotionale und mentale Dimensionen von Stadterbe am Beispiel von Roms Stadtquartier Vigne Nuove in den Fokus rücken. Heike Oevermann entwickelt auf Basis europäischer Fallbeispiele ein Modell des Aushandelns zwischen Erhaltung, Anpassung und Partizipation. Hande Tunç, Natalie Heger und Ruth Schlögl analysieren schließlich, wie Eigentumsformen, ökonomischer Druck und spekulative Prozesse den Umgang mit Wohnsiedlungen prägen – zwischen Aufwertung, Gentrifizierung und Verfall.

Das Heft verdeutlicht, dass Wohnen und Bauen als Kulturerbe nur dann Zukunft haben, wenn sie als soziale, ökologische und kulturelle Aufgabe verstanden werden. Es lädt dazu ein, das architektonische Erbe der Moderne als lebendige Ressource gemeinsamer Gestaltung der Zukunft zu begreifen.

Ergänzend zu diesem thematischen Schwerpunkt vereinen zwei weitere Beiträge kunsthistorische und denkmaltechnologische Perspektiven jenseits des Wohnbauthemas: Markus Santner untersucht die Geschichte der Abnahme und Übertragung von Wandmalereien in Österreich zwischen 1900 und 1970 und zeigt, wie technische Innovation und ethische Fragestellungen im Spannungsfeld zwischen Erhalt und Kontextverlust miteinander verflochten sind. Jan Chlíbec widmet sich einem bislang kaum erforschten Bronzegrabmal im Prager Veitsdom und ordnet es in das Netzwerk habsburgischer Hofkunst des 16. Jahrhunderts ein.

Paul Mahringer



FOKUS 20th Century Housing Heritage in Europe

Conserving, Participating, and Adapting



Heike Oevermann, Barbara Schönig

Editorial

Housing heritage concerns us all—not only as shelter for living but also as places of belonging. The 20th century housing settlements in Europe and their more recent protection status provide a valuable opportunity to examine architectural concepts and heritage values, to look at practices of living, and to reflect on forms of ownership and participation. Following the conference "20th Century Housing Heritage in Europe: Conserving, Participating, and Adapting" (hosted at Technical University Vienna, 28–30 November 2024), this special issue presents new research insights that also add to our research project "Wohnen im Denkmal". This three-year project (funded by the German Research Foundation, DFG) contributes to a fundamental understanding of the reciprocal processes of evaluation and appreciation of housing heritage. The perspectives of diverse actors and their access and participation in use and care, conservation, and design are systematically examined from the perspectives of both heritage conservation and housing research.

Conservationists and heritage researchers look at spaces, places, and objects with regard to where they come from—namely the past—, whereas urban planners are primarily concerned with where they might or should go in the future (and if planners are smart, they do so also by looking at where these places come from). Examining the history of places becomes all the more important as we need to learn to live with what is present, not only for cultural and historical reasons but also for ecological and economic ones. In the face of the climate crisis, resource scarcity, and economic challenges, we should not—and simply cannot afford to—meet our needs by tearing down and building new places; here, heritage perspectives that value existing assets are of eminent importance.

In this special issue, diverse aspects of this complex field are addressed through case studies ranging from Portugal to Romania, and Vienna to Wiesbaden. Ana Tostões adds to the discussion with her contribution in which she highlights how the social and architectural realms come together to empower heritage values in 21st century Lisbon. The urgent argument is: not enlarging our cities through ever-expanding urban sprawl or greenfield development nor demolishing and discarding the materials and wealth embodied in our built environment. Instead, we need to learn to live with what we have inherited, adapt it to our needs as far as possible and likely also adapt our needs to what previous generations have bequeathed us as their heritage, and hence learn to value built structures and housing concepts. This contrasts the challenges facing Vienna's neglected heritage of *Alte-Leute-Siedlungen*. Tracing the intangible values of this post-war social housing experiment, Christina Schraml demands action.

However, when it comes to the question of how to appreciate a housing settlement, conservationists might find an answer by looking at historical, artistic, and other cultural values. Inhabitants might find different answers and everyday solutions, as documented by Liliana Iuga, Irina Tulbure, and Oana Țiganea who examine Cold War housing heritage in the making in Ștei, Romania. The assessment of housing differs between those who use them and those involved in urban development (planners). Aristotelis Antoniou shows another multiplural perspective on heritage valuing where the modernist Aspra Spitia (Άσπρα Σπίτια) residential complex is at a juncture between becoming "historical" or "smart". We also think about enlarging the catalogue of values to intangible aspects such as social and emotional ones: In this context, Federica Fava and Giovanni Caudo introduce European research and a case study of Rome's Vigne Nuove public housing complex, investigating how cultural and natural heritage can foster emotionally healthy and resilient urban districts.

Discussing housing as heritage highlights its very specific nature: Housing is both a human right but often also a profit-generating asset. Dealing with this disparity from the perspective of a housing researcher *and* in terms of housing politics is difficult. It comes with harsh and strictly opposing societal interests that raise social and political conflicts; heritage and conservation interests introduce another layer and claim into this conflictual arena that needs to be balanced when trying to save people's homes, keep them affordable, and adapt them to their needs.

To bring together these perspectives of theory and political practice, of conservation and housing supply, however, might indeed help us to seek the very best for the city as an entity: Conservationists might need to expand their values—from only bricks and mortar to the issues that people actually valued when living in these places and which they still partially retain as intangible values: the sense and infrastructure of community, affordability, open spaces, and much more. In turn, planners, owners, and tenants would need to accept that it is indeed the history and design of such places that create their special character and quality.

Valuing the layer of history might, however, be much easier when conservation opens up to adaptation, especially when it comes to urgent needs, for example in terms of accessibility or climate neutrality. There is a lot to think about with regard to these questions, and it is essential for the various professionals and interest groups to find ways and methods to weigh up and manage these claims, necessities, and changes. The introductory article by Heike Oevermann titled "20th Century Housing Heritage. Conserving, Adapting, Participating" provides some in-depth consideration of these challenges.

In this special issue, we also focus on the extent to which ownership and tenure imprint the way in which housing heritage is appropriated and ask how these factors can endanger or enhance heritage values. To briefly address a few of these issues: There is a threat of upgrading and gentrification, especially in places where housing is scarce or where heritage designation might enhance house prices—adding immaterial value and enabling social and cultural distinction for those who can afford to live in these very specific and distinct places. We see this happening in many large cities such as Berlin or Hamburg; and in Istanbul, Hande Tunç contrasts the divergent socio-economic trajectories of two affordable housing districts.

Conversely, where housing markets struggle for investment, vacancy rates increase as populations shrink, or investment in building stock doesn't pay off, other questions predominate: How can we ensure that these buildings in their very structure are preserved as what they were? Simple maintenance and care can also become a challenge if a settlement becomes subject to speculation and changing ownership, as Natalie Heger and Ruth Schlögl's case study of the Red Tower (Rotes Hochhaus) in Wiesbaden shows.

While these questions point to the spatial context of the settlements, we also ask whether different owners handle these issues with differing levels of interest and care. And of what relevance is the heritage status to the people and institutions who really use settlements: as their home or place where they have shops or businesses, as real estate assets that can generate profit, or simply providing for those who need homes.

Examining these issues throughout our research project, we find an urgent need for greater knowledge about the actual relationship between questions of heritage and housing; of housing as heritage; and of tenure, ownership, and participation. This special issue represents a step towards a more comprehensive understanding of the heritage/housing nexus, including its linked—yet often competing—priorities and stakeholder perspectives.

Acknowledgements

The conference and resulting proceedings built upon the intensive commitment of Luisa Omonsky, Lena Hecker, and Johann Gallis who are all involved in the research project (DFG, 511804015). Thanks also to Lasse Siemen (organization) and Dave Morris (proofreading). We extend special thanks to the Austrian Bundesdenkmalamt (BDA, Federal Monuments Authority Austria), the authority responsible for monument protection and preservation, for its cooperation and trust in the joint publication of this issue of the ÖZKD. Thanks to the BMKÖS and the Stadt Wien for their generous funding of the conference.

Ana Tostões

Sustainable Housing for the 21st Century in Lisbon

When the Social Comes Together with Architecture to Empower Heritage Values[1]

Abstract

Telheiras Sul (1974) exemplifies the Portuguese state's response to Lisbon's 1960s housing crisis, reflecting emerging concerns with identity and environmentalism. Rooted in a former garden city and integrating an old village core, the plan addressed hygiene, ecological, and social needs. Unlike Le Corbusier's Plan Voisin, it balanced standardized housing with existing urban fabric. This paper explores how to conserve and adapt the area while ensuring quality of life, recognizing housing as a broader urban experience. It argues that strong local identity and community resilience stem from aligning architecture, urban policy, and resident participation. Telheiras Sul's inclusion in Lisbon's Heritage Protection Charter confirms its significance and helps preserve its character, reinforcing community belonging.

An Innovative Plan

In 1971, the municipality of Lisbon sought to establish a business structure to address the shortage of middle-class urban housing, given that the Gabinete Técnico de Habitação (GTH, Technical Department of Housing) was primarily focused on the more disadvantaged sectors of society.[2] Consequently, the Empresa Pública de Urbanização de Lisboa (EPUL, Public Company for Urban Development of Lisbon) was established with the objective of assisting municipal initiatives concerning the design and implementation of urbanization and housing projects within the city of Lisbon.

The first plan, commissioned from a French team (*OTAM-Interlande*, coordinated by Giles O'Calaghan, 1969 and 1972), was handed over to architects Pedro Vieira de Almeida (1933–2011)[3] and Augusto Pita (1941–) for a revision that resulted in the *Plano de Pormenor de Telheiras* (PPT, Detailed Plan for Telheiras) approved by the Lisbon Municipal Council (CML) in 1974. Occupying 63.5 hectares, the plan included 3,300 dwellings for 14,400 inhabitants.[4]

The conceptual universe of Telheiras Sul, although based on a modern matrix, underwent a critical re-interpretation at the hands of architect Pedro Vieira de Almeida and his team. Their experimental approach entailed the mixing up of zoning, contradicting the CIAM grid and separating traffic lanes from pedestrian routes through the buildings, blocks, and gardens. The concept of the street as the conduit of the urban fabric was recuperated, with the base of the building again becoming the defining element of the street frontage and the residential buildings—predominantly organized

1 This work is supported by national funds through FCT—the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology, I.P., within the CiTUA (Center for Innovation in Territory, Urbanism and Architecture) research unit, Technical University of Lisbon (10.54499/UIDB/05703/2020).

2 Sérgio Melo, Telheiras. Conteúdo e Continente [Telheiras. Content and Container], MSc thesis, IST, Lisboa 2013.

3 Pedro Vieira de Almeida (1933–2011) was a Portuguese architect, theorist, critic, and historian. A graduate of the Escola Superior de Belas Artes do Porto (1963), he was a key figure in architectural thought, blending practice with rigorous theoretical analysis. He worked in Portugal, Cape Verde, and Mozambique, contributing to both urban planning and architectural criticism. His seminal works include *Ensaio sobre o Espaço da Arquitectura and História da Arte Moderna*, challenging conventional narratives and introducing innovative interpretations of modernity. A professor and researcher, he played a crucial role in shaping Portuguese architectural discourse, advocating for critical engagement and intellectual independence.

4 Ana Tostões, Lisboa Moderna [Modern Lisbon], Lisboa 2021; Ana Tostões / Zara Ferreira, Large-scale housing projects in Lisbon: Olivais and Telheiras [Housing for All], in: Docomomo Journal 65, 2021, pp. 56–69, doi: https://doi.org/10.52200/65.A.CAH2R2X9; Ana Tostões, A Idade Maior. Cultura e Tecnologia na Arquitectura Moderna Portuguesa [The Greater Age. Culture and Technology in Modern Portuguese Architecture], Porto 2015.

in linear or perimeter blocks, never exceeding eight storeys—and being divided into residential blocks or cells. However, it should be noted that the streets were not fully consolidated, the blocks were not closed, and the squares were not perceived as such, because they did not acquire monumental proportions. The egalitarian and open notion underlying modern man[5] was maintained through a more fluid understanding, as recommended by Jane Jacobs:[6] The interiors of the blocks were understood as semi-public spaces to support the community (day-care centers, schools, public services, and daily commerce); the ground floors of buildings along main roads were reserved for non-housing uses, fostering an understanding of a mixed city; a network of pedestrian paths traversed the blocks, interconnected—when possible—with green spaces and enhanced by facilities for collective use; the relationship between construction and public space approaches the human scale (Fig. 1).

Following the approach of Christopher Alexander[7] and his "Pattern Language", and thus representing a completely new approach in Lisbon's expansion to date, the PPT decided to anchor its development in the renovation of the old Telheiras (village core where the center of the old peasant village was located), considering it to be the embryo of the life already existing in the area. It acted as a backbone for the entire neighborhood, with 700 meters of pedestrianized streets interspersed with social facilities and preserved urban elements (a convent, mill, pump, wells, water tanks, benches, etc.). This option was anchored in the arguments of environmentalism and historicism, which at the time were just beginning to find their way into the ideologies of urbanism.



Fig. 1: Pedro Vieira de Almeida, Augusto Pita, Telheiras Sul detailed plan, 1973–74

Pedro Vieira de Almeida, the architect author of the urban design, sought to define a strong urban image in which the influence of Kevin Lynch and Gordon Cullen[8] can be found. This approach entailed the establishment of a system of spatial notation, a methodology devised by the architect to serve as a codified language for the architectural expression of buildings, characterized by volumetric, spatial, and usage-related attributes. This methodology was meticulously applied to each building, encompassing its envelope and relationship with the surrounding public space. The objective of this approach was to imbue the urban landscape with landmarks and a distinct identity. The layout and outline of the cells and buildings were guided by this system, a kind of psycho-morphological *gestalt*, which identified notable points in the ends and connections between buildings, zones of compression and decompression, barriers, and crossings. They sought to punctuate pathways with points of interest or variation. The goal was to coordinate architecture and urban design, modifying the typology and concept of the street[9] in such a way that the routes to be taken, whether from the perspective of the driver or the pedestrian, were punctuated by moments of interest defined by the geometry of the streets and the surrounding built or landscaped environment.

Modern in its planning, the PPT intended to demarcate the categories of housing by the quality of finishes rather than areas. However, following new regulations implemented in 1978,[10] in the aftermath of

5 Ana Lourenço, Olivais e Telheiras marcos do movimento moderno na expansão planeada de Lisboa [Olivais and Telheiras: landmarks of the modern movement in Lisbon's planned expansion], MSc thesis, ISCTE, Lisboa 1999.
6 Jane Jacobs, The death and life of great American cities, New York 1961.
7 Christopher Alexander, A city is not a tree, in: Architectural Forum 122, No. 1, 1965, pp. 58–62.
8 Kevin Lynch, The image of the city, Cambridge MA 1960; Gordon Cullen, Townscape, New York 1961.
9 Augusto Pita, Telheiras Sul—Plano de Pormenor [Telheiras Sul—Detailed Plan], in: Arquitectura 137, 1980, p. 48.
10 Fundo de Fomento da Habitação, Instructions for state-promoted housing projects, Lisbon 1978.



Fig. 2: Building block with exterior galleries, photo 2021

the Carnation Revolution of 25 April 1974,[11] the housing categories were replaced by a single category to promote equality and avoid social segregation. In the context of an era reaching the 21st century, this plan took care to provide housing appropriate for elderly residents and those with disabilities through differently serviced and specialized structures, and also housing for young and single people.

What is most extraordinary about Telheiras is that, despite having a great appreciation of traditional urbanism, some of the most daring Modern Movement solutions can be found there. The dialogue between the two ideologies produced a hybrid outcome. Most of the buildings in linear blocks were flanked by exterior access galleries, but—unlike the repetition on every floor commonly found in the typical housing block—the access galleries were only located every two or three floors (Fig. 2).[12] This occurred either because there were duplex apartments inside, or because the logic of familiar pathways through this urban fabric—of corners, nooks, and surprises—was elevated (via secondary routes originating from the main galleries), resulting in the front doors of the apartments being grouped on landings of a more intimate character. Sometimes, the sculptural celebration of vertical communication was expressed through elevator towers, which included a window allowing a visual promenade of the surrounding park. The towers[13] were set on *pilotis*. Research was undertaken into "low-rise high-density".[14] Inside the apartments, one can find the convenient modern solution of the kitchen hatch.

Public Space and Neighborhood Liveability

The attention given to the surrounding neighborhoods is evident in de Almeida's plan for Telheiras Sul, as he sought to achieve a harmonic design to ensure complementarity of the areas in terms of the urban landscape. As such, the neighborhood is situated in a higher-altitude area and composed of low-height buildings, planned for a controlled scale with a limited population. The PPT followed coherent planning regarding the dimensions and typology of the buildings, as well as the fundamental relationships of demographic and social balance.

However, these principles of modern urban design were intersected with a critique of the massification of the International Style and a return to certain concepts of the traditional city. The most evident principle is the rejection of isolated buildings, except for a few towers. This represents a reinterpretation of the notions of streets and blocks, where the housing layout once again becomes the defining element of the street front. Nonetheless, a compromise is evident: Although the street becomes the channel space of the urban fabric, with roads and pedestrian paths occurring simultaneously, there is a network of alternative pedestrian routes subtly integrated throughout the plan. These routes traverse buildings, blocks, and gardens, reflecting a clear focus and care for pedestrians (as can be observed in the original plan, where these routes correspond to the entire dotted layout), thereby enhancing safety, especially for children and the elderly (Figs. 3 and 4).

Some consider that Telheiras represents an acknowledgement of averageness, what the Swedes call the spirit of *lagom*, and that none of the buildings, considered individually, are significant for the contemporary history of Portuguese architecture.[15] However, the best assessment of the success of a neighborhood is that made by its residents—based on which, its achievement is difficult to deny: 85% of residents are

11 The Carnation Revolution ended the dictatorship in Portugal.
12 Designs by Augusto Pita; Duarte Nuno Simões and Maria João Cardoso; Leopoldo Criner.
13 Design by Sérgio Melo, Valmor Prize 1985.
14 Design by Gabriela Tomé.
15 Paulo Martins Barata, Telheiras: o espírito Lagom [Telheiras: the Lagom spirit], in: Jornal Arquitectos 205, 2002, pp. 60 f.

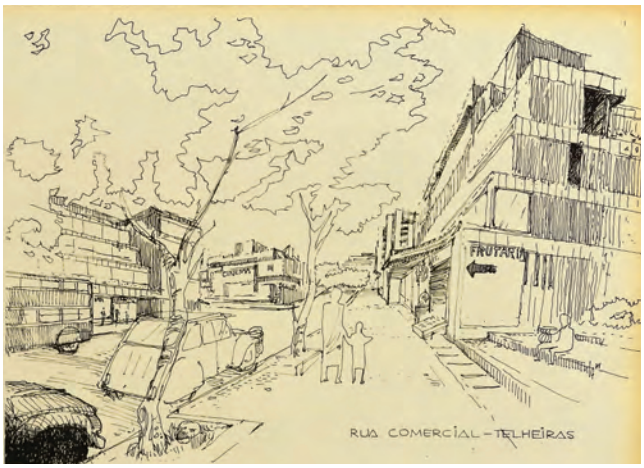


Fig. 3: Pedro Vieira de Almeida, Augusto Pita, Telheiras Sul detailed plan, 1973/74. Sketch of a commercial street



Fig. 4: Underpass pathway, photo 2021

satisfied or very satisfied with the neighborhood, and 77% consider it the best neighborhood in Lisbon to live in.[16] Among the reasons most commonly invoked[17] is the pleasant and enjoyable urban ambience resulting from the "*volume and aesthetics*" of the buildings, the combination of housing and services, the presence of green spaces and public areas for socializing and recreation, the coexistence of old and new areas, the quality of the facilities, its ease of access (augmented by good public transport infrastructure that was consolidated in 2002 with the arrival of the metro), and its ease of parking (the PPT envisaged there would be underground parking in each cell, although only half was built). But the most mentioned factor is the quality and quantity of street commerce.



Fig. 5: Commercial street with terraced housing buildings, photo 2021

The extensive traditional street commerce, including restaurants, cafés, bars, bakeries, butchers, fishmongers, and shops, as well as the proximity to hypermarkets and public and private schools—from daycare to the 12th grade—makes Telheiras a place where everything needed for a peaceful and safe life is within reach. Through a very regular and consistent connection to nearby services, the so-called Docas Secas at Rua Prof. João Barreira serves as a lively space, featuring a canal-like area lined with several cafés and bars side by side, which enliven the neighborhood's life (Fig. 5). It remains a family-oriented neighborhood full of children and domestic animals.

Cultural and Community Living. The Role of ART – Associação de Residentes de Telheiras (Telheiras Residents' Association)

The relative socio-cultural homogeneity of Telheiras has also contributed to the development of a strong local identity and a resilient community: "*[T]hose who live in the Telheiras neighborhood don't want to leave. You change your home, but you don't change your*

16 Infografia, Inquérito a seis bairros lisboetas, Lisboa. Da cidade para os Lisboetas, No. 26—Especial Bairros de Lisboa [Infographic. Survey of six Lisbon neighborhoods, Lisbon. From the city to the Lisboners, No. 26—Lisbon Neighborhoods Special], 2019, pp. 12 f. (Infografia 2019).

17 Carlos Meira / Guilherme Pereira, O ordenamento urbanístico de Telheiras visto pelos residentes: O plano de pormenor, a realidade actual e o futuro [The urban planning of Telheiras as seen by residents: The detailed plan, the current reality, and the future], in: Sociedade e Território 23, 1996, pp. 140–160.

neighborhood."[18] It so happens that, due to its proximity to several universities (Cidade Universitária) and the moderate prices offered at its launch by the EPUL, Telheiras attracted young graduates who settled and never left the neighborhood.[19] The idea that began to circulate in the late 1980s—that Telheiras had the highest educational level in the Lisbon metropolitan area—has remained true to this day,[20] being known as the "neighborhood of doctors".

The fact that 88% of the apartments are owned[21] and not rented is symptomatic of the residents' satisfaction with life in the neighborhood but also of their purchasing power (reinforced by the incentive to use credit, created in the late 1970s). It should be noted that a sense of self-preservation is necessarily linked to a culture of ownership: Residents are prepared to work on the conservation of something they are proud to own, which in 1988 led to the creation of the *Telheiras Residents' Association* (ART).[22] The association's acronym itself reflects the significance of art, connecting the creative spirit of the association while promoting artistic courses on music, visual and dramatic arts, as well as important policies for the neighborhood. ART's main activities include promoting the creation of infrastructure that directly supports the resident community (gardens, playgrounds, pedestrian walkways, public lighting, security, urban furniture, etc.); actively participating in municipal debates, such as the extension of the metro line to the neighborhood and the creation of one of the city's first bicycle paths; and, through initiatives, promoting cultural, social, civic, and physical improvement for residents—recently incorporating environmental concerns. ART's long-running publication ", *Jornal de Telheiras* also served as a means of bringing residents closer together, supporting social cohesion and the sustainable functioning of the neighborhood. Another example of ART's activities is the creation of a social network for information, training, and debate around the Transition Movement which promoted the creation of community gardens, regular markets for organic products, and periodic conferences. Taken as a whole, the activities undertaken by the ART contribute to consolidating community living, promoted by mobilizing and active social resources (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6: Guided tour through the neighborhood, photo 2024

Conclusion

Telheiras represents an important moment in the planned expansion of Lisbon. This is evident in the way it managed to surpass the intermittent and punctuated architectural housing production, promoting solutions to the housing question at the city scale. The proposals succeeded one another in time, inserted in an evolutionary path of the conception of the Western city, from the rejection of the traditional city lexicon to the reconciliation with history; from an initial period when society was divided between two extremes—a wealthy social group that held power, and an extremely poor, laboring or rural, working population—to a time when the middle class arose, alongside and in step with the democratization of access to higher education.

Telheiras is now the stage for discussions on the city's future, namely at the neighborhood's Orlando Ribeiro Library within the scope of an exhibition on housing held at the Museum of Lisbon in 2023; or as part of the 2024 "Open House" program, involving a half-day guided walk through the neighborhood involving residents

18 Infografia 2019.
19 Maria Assunção Gato, São as Pessoas que fazem o Bairro, Estudo Prévio [It's the People who make the Neighborhood, Preliminary Study], in: Revista do Centro de Estudos de Arquitectura [Journal of the Center for Architectural Studies], Cidade e Território da Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa 4, 2014.
20 Census 2011. Within the Lisbon metropolitan area, it has the largest percentage of residents holding higher university degrees.
21 Infografia 2019.
22 Mário Contumélias, Uma Aldeia na Cidade – Telheiras, o Que é Hoje e Como se Produz um Bairro? [A Village in the City—Telheiras, What it is Today and how a Neighborhood is produced], PhD thesis, ISCTE, Lisboa 2008.

and the general public, which was a very well-attended and successful event.[23]

Bringing together a curious catalogue of architectural tendencies, the series of projects demonstrated tremendous structural, formal, and spatial experimentation, which revealed the architects' concerns and search for "housing for the greatest number". Although the buildings were not pioneering in introducing formal and architectural vocabularies, Telheiras is a paradigmatic case of the search for modernity in building design, as an attitude that values universality, rationality, and a fair and effective response to new social and technological orders.

Telheiras has been assimilated and today is a consolidated part of the city. Designed and occupied in just over thirty years, its consolidation as urban territory, developing its own character and a recognizable identity in such a short time, is evidence of its coherent conceptual frameworks.

Incorporated in the broader ideology that we call the Modern Movement, Telheiras constituted important steps in the highly complex path of producing the city through a humanized approach to architecture and urbanism, in contrast to the anonymity of many of the mass housing developments commonly located on the outskirts of large cities.

23 The city's Garden Neighbourhood. Trienal de Arquitectura de Lisboa. https://www.trienaldelisboa.com/ohl/en/event/the-citys-garden-neighbourhood/ (24.07.2025).

Christina Schraml

Vienna's Lost Heritage of *Alte-Leute-Siedlungen*

Tracing Intangible Values of a Post-War Social Housing Experiment

Abstract

In the 1950s, the City of Vienna ventured an experiment in social housing, building one- and two-storey apartment blocks for elderly residents in more than thirty municipal housing estates—an innovative response to the post-war housing crisis and an ageing society. These Alte-Leute-Siedlungen *enabled barrier-free, self-determined living within the social fabric of the* Gemeindebau *(municipal housing), supported by open spaces that fostered social interaction and neighbourly care. Once seen as a model internationally, these settlements are now largely forgotten. Many no longer serve their original purpose, and only a few are protected as heritage. Yet their core idea—age-appropriate housing embedded in supportive urban communities—remains highly relevant. This article calls for renewed recognition of these settlements as a vital part of post-war social housing history and argues that the lessons they offer are essential for addressing today's and tomorrow's housing challenges.*

A Housing Experiment – *Gemeindebau* for the Elderly

Vienna's long tradition of municipal housing is deeply rooted in the legacy of "Red Vienna" (1918–1934), which redefined housing as a fundamental right rather than a commodity. This principle underpinned an ambitious municipal housing programme in the interwar period, aimed at improving the living conditions of the working class and fostering social equity. However, this era came to an abrupt end with the rise of Austrofascism in 1934, followed by Austria's annexation by Nazi Germany in 1938.

After World War II, Vienna lay in ruins, and the population faced a severe housing crisis.[1] Determined to build on the achievements of "Red Vienna", the new city government reaffirmed municipal housing as the cornerstone of the city's reconstruction. In response to post-war scarcity and influenced by international architectural and urban planning trends, the approach shifted towards greater functionality and pragmatism. The monumental superblocks with their enclosed courtyards gave way to the planning principle of the spacious neighbourhood unit. Dispersed buildings surrounded by open spaces typically ranged from linear blocks (*Zeilenbau*) to detached high-rises, becoming increasingly standardised with the advent of prefabricated construction in the 1960s.

Amid this period of reconstruction pressures and economic constraints, Vienna ventured a pioneering experiment within its municipal housing programme in the 1950s. Over two decades, the municipality built one- and two-storey apartment blocks as part of more than thirty new municipal housing estates. These *Alte-Leute-Siedlungen*[2] (old people's settlements) provided micro-apartments tailored to the needs of elderly residents. Designed to facilitate barrier-free, self-determined living, they included open spaces that fostered strong neighbourhood ties within the social fabric of the *Gemeindebau* (municipal housing) (Fig. 1).

The *Alte-Leute-Siedlungen* emerged as a response to the challenges of the post-war period. In the midst of widespread devastation, Vienna not only faced a severe housing crisis but was also challenged by its demographic profile. The city had one of the world's

1 21% of houses were destroyed and about 90,000 apartments uninhabitable; cf. Peter Marchart, Wohnbau in Wien 1923–1983, Wien 1984, p. 30.

2 Officially termed *Heimstätten für alte Leute* (old people's settlements), these complexes were commonly referred to as *Alte-Leute-Siedlungen* as well as *Alte-Leute-Stiegen*.



Fig. 1: *Alte-Leute-Siedlung* as part of the municipal housing estate Unter-Meidlinger Straße 16–22, 1120 Wien, photo 1961

oldest populations,[3] with its high proportion of elderly residents being especially impacted by the housing shortage. Overcrowded care homes with poor reputation,[4] along with authorities' concerns about "*growing isolation of elderly people in the metropolis*"[5] sparked public debate about housing solutions for these groups. It became clear that addressing this issue required more than the efforts of social institutions—it demanded a comprehensive urban development strategy. The *Alte-Leute-Siedlungen* were regarded as a viable solution.

The housing experiment soon gained international recognition as a showcase of independent housing for elderly residents. Today, however, this model is largely forgotten. Even though the buildings are still preserved, the original idea behind the settlements has faded from collective memory. However, their intangible qualities—i.e., adequate housing for elderly residents, surrounded by open spaces that fostered a caring neighbourhood—remain highly relevant today. This model thus offers a distinctive case for exploring the intangible qualities of built heritage—extending beyond physical considerations to include immaterial dimensions embedded within housing. This paper argues for the recognition of the *Alte-Leute-Siedlungen* as a key development of Vienna's post-war social housing. By tracing the settlements' original vision and development over time, the research aims to uncover their (im-)material values, thereby providing valuable insights for both reimagining their future and tackling today's housing challenges.

Micro Apartments in the Social Fabric of the *Gemeindebau*

The concept of the *Alte-Leute-Siedlungen* goes back to the architect Franz Schuster,[6] who—as a professor at the Hochschule für angewandte Kunst Wien (today's University of Applied Arts Vienna) and consultant to the City of Vienna—played a key role in post-war municipal housing and urban development. In 1952, Schuster designed the first *Alte-Leute-Siedlung* with 27 units as part of the Siemensstraße-Siedlung in Floridsdorf (Fig. 2). Influenced by the Garden City Movement, he envisioned a neighbourhood that would "*bring people together to form a community*"[7] by integrating infrastructure for daily life within walking distance.[8] The Siemensstraße-Siedlung featured a mix of functions, including a kindergarten, grocery store, healthcare facilities, and craft workshops, alongside diverse housing typologies and generous open spaces to accommodate 6,000 residents.[9] At the time, the press termed it a "*neighbourhood of generations*".[10]

Historical references suggest that the idea of the *Alte-Leute-Siedlungen* was inspired by rural traditions, where elderly farmers, after passing their farm to the next generation, would move into a small house

3 Low birth rates and increased life expectancy raised the over-65 population from 13.3% in 1951 to nearly 20% by 1971, cf. Statistik Austria, Stadt Wien MA23, https://wien1x1.at/bev-entwicklung-2/ (01.11.2024).
4 cf. Amtsblatt (1956/35), Paradies „zu ebener Erd"—Wiener Journalisten besichtigen Heimstätten für alte Menschen, in: Amtsblatt der Stadt Wien 35, Wien 02.05.1956, pp. 2 f.
5 Stadt Wien (Ed.), Jahrbuch der Stadt Wien 1964, Wien 1965, p. 177.
6 Schuster was never a member of the NSDAP, yet he was not an untainted figure during the Nazi regime; cf. Christina Wieder, Von der Kunstgewerbeschule zur Reichshochschule für angewandte Kunst 1938–1945, in: Bernadette Reinhold / Christina Wieder (Eds.), „Sonderfall" Angewandte, Wien 2024, pp. 171 f.
7 Franz Schuster; cf. MA7 – Kulturabteilung der Stadt Wien, Portrait eines Architekten – Franz Schuster, Wien 1972 (Jahn-Film production, black and white, 16 mm, 30:22).
8 The approach aligns with contemporary urban planning concepts, e.g., the "city of short distances" and the "15-minute city"; cf. Carlos Moreno, The 15-minute city: A solution to saving our time and our planet, New Jersey 2024.
9 cf. Franz Schuster, Wohnanlagen für die Gemeinschaft der Menschen, in: Rudolf J. Boeck (Ed.), Heimstätten für alte Menschen. Der Aufbau (29), 1956, pp. 5 f.
10 Arbeiter-Zeitung (Ed.), Wien zeigt sich seinen Freunden. Die schwedischen Gäste besichtigen Wiens Wiederaufbau, 181, Wien 08.08.1951, p. 3.

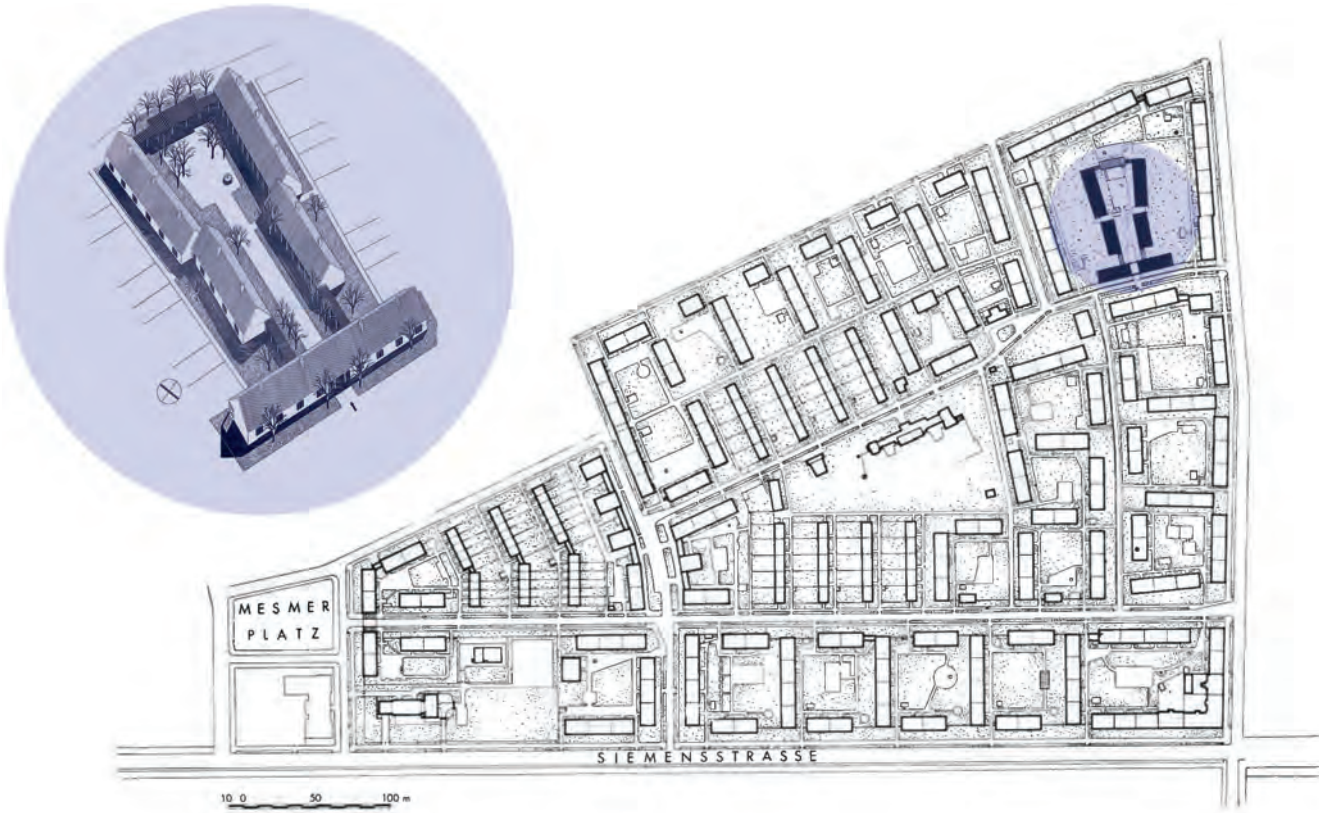


Fig. 2: Franz Schuster's design for the first *Alte-Leute-Siedlung* within the municipal housing estate Siemensstraße, 1210 Wien

nearby.[11] Schuster applied this idea to the city by integrating micro-apartments for elderly residents in municipal housing estates, enabling them to downsize their living space. As co-editor of the journal *Der Aufbau* on housing and urban development, Schuster was deeply engaged in international architectural discourse and thus likely also influenced by British council-housing practices, which allocated 12% of living space for elderly people.[12]

The housing experiment expanded rapidly, resulting in around 800 micro-apartments across more than thirty municipal housing estates between 1952 and the late 1960s, primarily in Vienna's outer districts—the key urban development areas at the time.[13] Strategically located across the city, they allowed elderly residents to maintain independence within familiar surroundings—aligning with today's "ageing in place" approach.[14] Initially, the units were given free of charge; later, they transitioned to standard rental contracts within the social housing scheme.[15]

In contrast to conventional municipal housing, the *Alte-Leute-Siedlungen* prioritized low-rise structures to minimize the need for stairs; later complexes, however, had two or even more storeys, likely for economic reasons. On average, each settlement had 20 micro-apartments, ranging from 28 to 38m^2, depending on whether they were intended for a single resident or a couple (Fig. 3). Units included a living area with a sleeping alcove, small cooking facilities, a washbasin, toilet, storage space, and—though not initially—a shower. Some settlements also had extra units for care workers or communal spaces.[16] Although realised by different architects, the *Alte-Leute-Siedlungen* shared a key characteristic: a seamless connection to the surrounding outdoor spaces, thereby extending the living area. Architectural elements such as loggias, verandas,

11 cf. Wiener Stadtbaudirektion, Nachbar im Herbst (Filmdokument VIII), Wien 1956 (Austria Wochenschau film production, colour, 35 mm, 09:22).
12 cf. Eduard Sekler, Wohnstätten für alte Leute, in: Wiener Stadtbauamt (Ed.), Der Aufbau, 02.1950, pp. 84–86.
13 cf. Stadt Wien (Ed.), Die Verwaltung der Stadt Wien Berichtsjahr 1970, Wien 1971, p. 152.
14 cf. World Health Organization (Ed.), Global age-friendly cities: A guide, Genf 2007.
15 cf. Stadt Wien (Ed.), Jahrbuch der Stadt Wien 1953, Wien 1954, p. 192.
16 cf. Arbeiter-Zeitung (Ed.), Gemeindewohnbau für Alte. Nun auch in Meidling, 248, Wien 23.10.1952, p. 3.

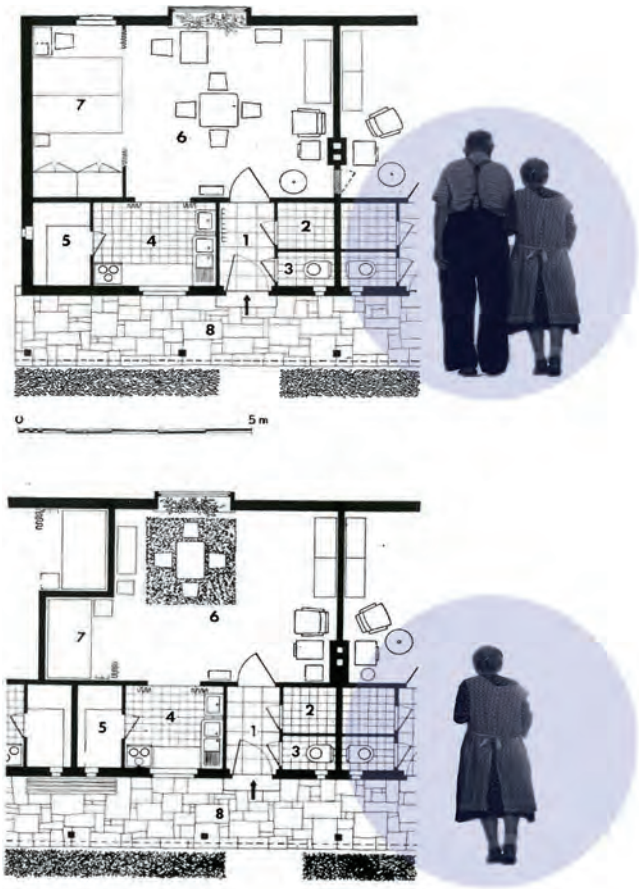


Fig. 3: Typical floor plan of a micro-apartment for elderly singles and couples, exemplified by the *Alte-Leute-Siedlung* in Siemensstraße, 1210 Floridsdorf

and balconies facilitated close ties to the ground level, fostering interaction with neighbours (Fig. 4).

The *Alte-Leute-Siedlungen* exemplify the post-war development of social housing, rooted in the "Vienna Model" of the interwar period ("Red Vienna"), which planning authorities described as a transition "*from social housing to social urban development*".[17] At the centre of this reorientation was the concept of the so-called "social green"[18]—i.e., the integration of generous green spaces accessible to all, intended to loosen up the city and improve urban living quality. Historical



Fig. 4: Seamless connection of the *Alte-Leute-Siedlungen* with outdoor spaces, extending the living environment, *Alte-Leute-Siedlungen* at Eisenbahnstraße, 1190 Wien, and Karplusgasse, 1100 Wien

images show how the *Alte-Leute-Siedlungen* embraced the social green, featuring extensive open spaces with wind- and sun-protected areas, and equipped with benches, tables, and, in some cases, small garden plots. These allowed residents to co-shape their surroundings, empowering a sense of agency and deeper connection to the neighbourhood.[19] The outdoor spaces functioned as micro-centres, cultivating informal networks of support and creating a "caring community" environment—as it would be termed today.[20] Witnesses recall that elderly residents cared for each other, describing the atmosphere as "*living in a village*".[21]

From Pioneering Model to Relic

The *Alte-Leute-Siedlungen* were promoted locally and internationally, highlighting their integration of social policy and urban planning, and soon gained recognition as a pioneering model of social housing for older resi-

17 Kurt Heller, Der Soziale Wohnungsbau der Gemeinde Wien nach dem Zweiten Weltkriege, in: Stadtbauamt Wien (Ed.), Der soziale Wohnungsbau der Stadt Wien, Der Aufbau 39, 12.1960, pp. 37–39.
18 Stadtbauamtsdirektion (Ed.), Soziales Grün in Wien, Der Aufbau 24, 3rd edition, 1963.
19 A study by sociologists Eva Köckeis and Leopold Rosenmayr, commissioned by the City of Vienna to evaluate the first four *Alte-Leute-Siedlungen*, highlights the positive impact of social green on elderly residents' well-being and neighbourly relations; cf. Leopold Rosenmayr / Eva Köckeis, Umwelt und Familie alter Menschen, Wien 1965, p. 97.
20 cf. the current discourse on caring communities, e.g., Angelika Gabauer / Henrik Lebuhn, New care arrangements and civic innovation, in: Angelika Gabauer / Sabine Knierbein / Nir Cohen / Henrik Lebuhn / Kim Trogal / Tihomir Vidermann / Tigran Haas (Eds.), Care and the city. Encounters with urban studies, New York 2022, pp. 165–170.
21 Interview with a resident of Hugo-Breitner-Hof, whose grandparents lived in an *Alte-Leute-Siedlung*, Wien 06.07.2023.

dents.[22] However, by the late 1960s, the development of the *Alte-Leute-Siedlungen* stagnated as Vienna gradually shifted its focus to large-scale elderly residential homes. Several factors contributed to the experiment's gradual decline: the settlements' limited capacity,[23] criticism from conservative circles advocating the family over institutional settings as the ideal home for elderly persons,[24] and the broader architectural trend towards pre-fabricated high-rise construction. By 1975, annual administrative reports ceased to record data on the *Alte-Leute-Siedlungen*, with the housing model fading into obscurity. Today, the settlements are treated like any other post-war municipal housing estates, with only their physical structures remaining as a distant echo of the original vision.

Tracing the Built Remains of *Alte-Leute-Siedlungen*

At the outset of the research project, no comprehensive records existed regarding the locations of the settlements. Neither the current managing authority of the properties (*Wiener Wohnen*) nor the municipal department responsible for their construction (MA19—Architecture and Urban Design) were able to provide detailed information, revealing a gap in the city's institutional memory. Research thus required extensive archival work to identify the settlements' locations and recover information fragmented across numerous municipal files, historical planning documents, housing authority reports, newspapers, and image archives. This was complemented by site visits during which the settlements' architectural features and current conditions were documented. The work culminated in the creation of an inventory, piecing together historical fragments and tracing the experiment's development over time.

Field research revealed that while all the objects remain physically present, their original purpose has largely been lost. They no longer serve as affordable housing specifically for elderly persons; instead, they have been opened to residents of all ages and reportedly attract younger tenants due to the small apartment sizes.[25] The condition of the buildings varies significantly across the sites. Most are in poor condition, sharing the typical fate of post-war architecture. They are nearing the end of their lifecycle and require updates to meet modern standards, especially regarding energy efficiency. Moreover, site visits revealed high vacancy rates, with some of the units converted from residences to private storage spaces. This adaptation is due to the small living area of the units, some of which no longer meet the minimum requirements of municipal social housing. However, exceptions exist: Some settlements have been renovated and upgraded, demonstrating their potential for transformation and continued use.

Only six settlements have received heritage protection, yet only as part of larger municipal housing ensembles rather than as independent entities. An example illustrating the complex and often conflicting dynamics involved in identifying, conserving, adapting, or ultimately the risk of losing housing heritage is the former *Alte-Leute-Siedlung* at Hugo-Breitner-Hof (Fig. 5). Built in 1957, this settlement, comprising 24 units around a garden, has been vacant since 2006. Initially part of the heritage-protected ensemble



Fig. 5: Former *Alte-Leute-Siedlung* at Hugo-Breitner-Hof in 1140 Wien, excluded from the listed ensemble in 2007 and increasingly falling into disrepair

22 Historical sources show that the housing model was promoted through local bus tours for Vienna's citizens, visits by international representatives, exhibitions at venues like Vienna's Messepalast and Washington's National Housing Center, and promotional films screened in local "Wochenschau" cinemas.

23 cf. Helmut Junker, Von der "Gemeindewohnung" zum sozialen Städtebau, in: Amtsblatt der Stadt Wien, Wien 1971, pp. 106–110.

24 cf. Lois Weinberger, Das beste Heim für alte Menschen ist die Familie! (Vortrag zur Geriatrietagung in Bad Hofgastein), in: Amtsblatt der Stadt Wien 34, Wien 27.04.1957, p. 3.

25 Interview with a representative of *Wiener Wohnen*, Wien 09.05.2023.

Hugo-Breitner-Hof, it was excluded from the ensemble in 2007 and has since deteriorated. In 2019, plans for demolition and new construction under the new municipal housing programme (*Gemeindebau Neu*) were announced in the local press, sparking opposition—particularly among the tenants' advisory board, which raised concerns about the impact of re-densification on living quality. The public administration has since provided no updates, leaving the future of the former *Alte-Leute-Siedlung* uncertain.[26]

The low appreciation of the *Alte-Leute-Siedlungen* reflects a general ambivalence towards post-war architecture—often dismissed as utilitarian and lacking aesthetic distinction. Built under the "*Schnellbauprogramm*"[27] (rapid construction programme) during the post-war housing crisis, these settlements prioritised economic efficiency over artistic expression. Acknowledging their value requires a holistic approach that extends beyond physical characteristics and considers the contextual constraints of their time.

Tracing the Intangible Remains of *Alte-Leute-Siedlungen*

Drawing on Swiss sociologist Lucius Burckhardt's notion that "*design is invisible*",[28] which emphasizes that design transcends the visible to include social, spatial, and cultural practices that define, transform, or sustain its meaning, this research frames housing as a form of "*living heritage*".[29] It shifts the focus from static, object-based perspectives on housing heritage to its intangible dimensions—everyday practices, memories, and narratives—, all of which are central to its essence.

Through this lens, the *Alte-Leute-Siedlungen* are evaluated not only for their architecture but also for the social practices and communal aspirations they embody. Despite their fading presence in the city's memory, traces of these practices can be found in both preserved and lost elements. Small residential units within communal settings enabled elderly residents to balance independence and privacy with participation in neighbourhood life. Features such as verandas and outdoor benches placed near front doors catered to mobility-impaired residents and encouraged intergenerational interaction. Open spaces, often with small garden plots, fostered engagement with nature. All these elements aimed to counter isolation and create a living environment based on social integration, neighbourly ties, and well-being. These intangible qualities are as integral to the significance of the *Alte-Leute-Siedlungen* as the architecture itself.



Fig. 6: Heritage-listed *Alte-Leute-Siedlung* in Steinitzhof (1130 Wien) with a deteriorated central open space that reflects lost communal life—yet holds untapped potential for revitalisation

However, site visits revealed a notable decline in these qualities. Once embedded in a network of public infrastructure, many local amenities have since disappeared, and the open spaces within the estates have fallen into neglect. The current state of the "social green" contrasts starkly with historical photographs showing the original vision of accessible green spaces for all residents. Key social infrastructure, such as urban furniture, has been dismantled—even among the listed ensembles (Fig. 6). A restrictive approach to regulating open spaces—evident for example in signs prohibiting access to green areas and zoning of spaces for specific user groups—contrasts with the original vision.[30]

26 The example highlights the need for transparent communication and active involvement of residents—as experts of their own environment—in identifying and transforming housing heritage.
27 Stadtbauamt Wien (Ed.), 14 Punkte für den Wiederaufbau. Kurzer Auszug aus den Hauptgerichtspunkten der Enquete für den Wiederaufbau der Stadt Wien. Juli 1945 bis Jänner 1946, Wien 1946.
28 Lucius Burckhardt, Design is invisible (1980), in: Jesko Fezer / Martin Schmitz (Eds.), Lucius Burckhardt writings. Rethinking man-made environments, Wien 2012, pp. 153–166.
29 cf. UNESCO, Intangible cultural heritage, https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention (01.11.2024).
30 cf. Christina Schraml, A plea for the right to conflict. Exploring (A-)social green for all in Vienna's municipal housing, in: MONU Magazine for Urbanism 37, 2024, pp. 98–104.

The loss of both tangible and intangible elements has created a void that weakens the social fabric once nurtured by these municipal housing estates. A careful approach to this housing stock therefore requires a critical re-evaluation of how intangible dimensions of housing can be preserved, reactivated, and adapted to contemporary needs. Such an approach is crucial not only for conserving the essence of the *Alte-Leute-Siedlungen* but also for informing future social housing strategies.

From Lost Heritage to the Future

The *Alte-Leute-Siedlungen* represent a largely overlooked yet significant chapter in Vienna's social housing history, marking a key phase in the development of the "Vienna Model". While post-war architecture often remains undervalued, these settlements hold intangible qualities that continue to resonate with contemporary housing challenges. In particular, they offer valuable insights into the principles of "ageing in place" and the significance of intergenerational networks of care and social infrastructure—all of which are essential to addressing contemporary issues such as demographic ageing, increasing social isolation, and the erosion of social cohesion. Thus, the *Alte-Leute-Siedlungen* not only constitute an important historical legacy but also serve as a source of inspiration for future social housing solutions.

The deteriorating state of many *Alte-Leute-Siedlungen*, coupled with high vacancy rates, presents both a challenge and an opportunity for their future adaptation. Instead of preservation efforts limited to physical conservation of the buildings, a more holistic approach—framed within the concept of "living heritage"—is necessary. Where the original function as residential space is no longer viable due to outdated living standards, new socially meaningful functions must be found. Particularly notable are the generous open spaces, originally conceived as "social green", which hold untapped potential for fostering resilient, climate-adaptive communities, especially amidst the climate crisis. Without an awareness of this intangible heritage, these entire settlements risk becoming hollowed-out, static relics. Involving residents in any transformation process is crucial to ensuring that adaptions reflect evolving needs. Reinterpreted as "living heritage", the *Alte-Leute-Siedlungen* can thus serve as a significant case for community-oriented social housing in the future. Rather than being dismissed as outdated and ripe for demolition, these buildings should be acknowledged as a valuable testing ground, demonstrating how a holistic approach towards housing heritage can inform adaptive reuse strategies, while also fostering caring communities for generations to come.

Liliana Iuga, Irina Tulbure, Oana Țiganea

Cold War Housing Heritage in the Making

The Case of Ștei/Oraș Dr. Petru Groza (Romania)

Abstract

Ștei, a town in western Romania built in the 1950s near a uranium mine, is a rare example of well-preserved Soviet-style urbanism and Socialist Realist housing. The construction materials and techniques employed, such as timber panelling, indicate an initially temporary settlement that subsequently evolved into a permanent town. Today, Ștei's built environment serves as a key historical source, as archival records are scarce. Despite changes following housing privatization in the 1990s, many buildings remain intact, and local terms like BW and DK still reflect the site's Cold War legacy. While the municipality seeks heritage recognition through networks like ATRIUM, *Romanian law offers little protection for residential heritage. This article explores how institutions and residents perceive transformation and care and asks how heritage policies can balance expert frameworks with local interests to support inclusive preservation of Cold War housing heritage.*

Ștei/Oraș Dr. Petru Groza[1]

The town of Ștei, locally known also as "orașul rusesc" (Ro.), the "Russian town", was built in the early 1950s to accommodate Soviet specialists, including technicians and military personnel who were involved in uranium exploitation at Băița Plai in western Romania. The town was built at approximately 17 kilometers distance from the mine.

At the end of the Second World War, the Soviets attempted to "catch up" on the nuclear race and searched for uranium ore in the countries under their control.[2] The exploitation of uranium at Băița Plai started in the early 1950s. A mixed Soviet-Romanian company called *Sovromquarțit* (or *Sovromkwarțit*)[3] was established under the guise of quartz mining to conceal the true purpose of its operations. This development integrated Ștei into the Soviet infrastructure for uranium exploitation. The extracted uranium was not processed locally but sent to facilities in the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR), specifically in Sillamäe.[4]

The Soviet specialists departed Ștei at the end of the 1950s, following the withdrawal of the Soviet army from Romanian territory in 1958. As a result, the administration of the uranium mine was transferred to the Romanian authorities.[5] In the following decades, the area experienced further industrial development, including industries related to uranium processing and mining industries in general, as well as light industries such as textiles and furniture production.[6]

The town was built on an orthogonal plan, with three parallel streets connecting the administrative and cultural center, defined by monumental buildings at one end, with sports facilities and a green area at the other end (Fig.1).[7] The area between the two centers of interest included various housing typologies such as duplex wooden dwellings, referred to by the locals as BWs (bungalows), and collective housing of two

1 Between 1958 and 1996, the town was named after the prime minister of the first Communist government in Romania, Oraș Dr. Petru Groza. This change of name demonstrates the strategic importance of the town, despite its small size.
2 Transnational histories of the topic rarely mention Romania. The most discussed cases are Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and East Germany; cf. Per Hogselius / Achim Kluppelberg, The Soviet nuclear archipelago, Budapest 2024.
3 Florin Banu, Asalt asupra economiei României. De la Solagra la Sovrom (1936–1956) [Assault on Romania's economy. From Solagra to Sovrom (1936–1956)], București 2004, p. 144 et seq.
4 Ibidem, p. 162, fn. 177. The existing literature references to the USSR in general, while members of the local community specifically indicate the town in the former Estonian SSR.
5 Ibidem, p. 166, pp. 170–173.
6 Ioan Simedre, Ștei, 500 de ani—monografie [Ștei, 500 Jahre Monografie], Oradea 2003, pp. 71–75.
7 The sports facilities included a "hot water" swimming pool, contributing to the wellbeing of the inhabitants.



Fig. 1: View of main street (formerly Lenin Street during communist era), Ștei, 2022

and three storeys (Fig. 2). At some distance from the "Russian town", on the other side of the Crișul Băiței river, the Petrileni cvartal (large-scale housing block)[8] was built, allegedly for the Romanian population.

The monumentality of the ensemble is still easily distinguishable in the administrative, social, and cultural buildings constructed in the Socialist Realist style, including the uranium mine headquarters, hospital, "House of Culture", sports hall with swimming pool and green area, and the "Russian school". This monumentality also appears at the urban level, through wide streets and main compositional axes, repetition of the housing models, and the design of the green areas.

Our fieldwork in Ștei highlighted that the town was built as a temporary settlement.[9] This is particularly evident in the quality of the construction materials such as timber panels and prefabricated wood conglomerates—a quite particular and distinctive construction feature within the overall Romanian context of the 1950s. During those years, numerous housing projects were completed in industrial towns connected to coal mining, steel, and mechanical industries, such as Reșița, Hunedoara, Jiu Valley, Brașov, and Bucharest. In these towns, Socialist Realist housing was constructed with more durable materials such as brickwork and the introduction of the first prefabricated concrete elements.[10] Those construction techniques would imply longer execution times and the need for more specialized workers on-site.

In 1990, after the fall of the communist regime, housing in Ștei was privatized at low prices, the initial

8 The urban layout of the cvartal ("kvartaly", Ru.) was developed during the 1930s in Soviet Russia and was based on the principle of collective housing. Blocks of flats framed the inner collective urban space through their spatial position, structuring the "neighborhood unit" in the urban layout. This layout laid the foundation of the new collective urban space. Through this approach, the socialist state showed its ideological interest in the urban community and the entire society; Alessandro De Magistris (Ed.), URSS anni '30–'50: Paesaggi dell'utopia staliniana, pub. Mazzotta, Torino 1997.

9 The first phase of the research (Ștei, the secret uranium city: Industrial legacy between ecology and architectural preservation, coordinated by Oana Tiganea) was developed during 2022–2023 and funded by the DAStU Department of Architecture and Urban Studies, Politecnico di Milano. The second phase of the research (Hidden legacies of the Cold War: Territories, architectures, and memory, coordinated by Oana Tiganea and Irina Tulbure) was developed during March 2023 and January 2025 and funded by the Romanian Architects Chamber. During these years, the researchers conducted built environment surveys, photographic recording, interviews with local community members, archival research (where possible), territorial surveys, and digitalization.

10 Irina Tulbure, Arhitectura și urbanism în România anilor 1944–1960. Constrângere și experiment [Architecture and urban planning in Romania between 1944 and 1960. Constraint and experiment], București 2016, pp. 158–168 (Tulbure 2016); Miruna Stroe, Locuirea între proiect și decizie politică. România 1954–1966 [Housing between project and political decision. Romania 1954–1966], București 2015 (Stroe 2015).



Fig. 2: Dwelling (known as DKs) in "Russian town", Ștei, 2023

buyers being the residents themselves. This led to alterations and transformations of different housing typologies according to the taste and financial means of the owners. Moreover, the transformation of urban space after privatization extends beyond housing. Green areas were also divided among multiple owners, altering the overall urban landscape and challenging the perception of the "Russian town" as a "garden city". From an aesthetic perspective, this shift disrupted the harmonious integration of the built environment within expansive green spaces.[11] Despite these changes—driven primarily by the need for more comfortable living spaces and access to essential utilities such as water, gas, and electricity—, the ensemble still retains its distinctive urban and architectural features of Socialist Realism. This argument supports an initiative by the local administration, which considers the town as a legacy of the totalitarian regime. However, the authorities' attitude concerning the historical significance of Ștei can best be described as ambivalent. On one hand, its association with uranium is regarded as problematic from the perspective of environmental impact and its toxic legacy—one that is perceived as detrimental and best forgotten, as it represents a potential obstacle to investment opportunities and redevelopment. On the other hand, Ștei has become a member of *ATRIUM*,[12] which indicates the local recognition of the "Russian town" as a "historical area" and acknowledging the need to protect specific urban and architectural values. Ștei is not officially recognized as a "historical area" under Romania's monument protection laws. Instead, its designation comes from a local council decision, lacking any official urban or architectural tools for intervention. Local authorities fear that listing the site as historically significant would likely delay the processes required to secure funding for infrastructure projects, particularly those supported by the European Union, which are subject to tight deadlines.[13]

Housing Heritage in Romania

Under the category of "housing heritage", Romania's post-1989 legislation considers a variety of typologies, encompassing both individual buildings (e.g., villas of exceptional architecture and by renowned architects), houses ("casa", Ro.), residential buildings ("imobil", Ro.), as well as area-based conservation such as "urban ensembles" ("ansamblu urban", Ro.) and parcelling ("parcelare", Ro.).[14] Two particularities are worth mentioning. First, buildings or areas developed after 1945 are not considered for listing, despite numerous recent studies that document the value of residential areas from this period—especially in Bucharest but also in some former mono-industrial towns developed largely during the socialist times.[15] Second, most of the listed residential heritage is located in Bucharest, with comparatively less in the rest of the country. Information on Bucharest's housing heritage is available, also online, with a consistent database recording all 98 protected historic

11 The reference is not to the Garden City Movement but should instead be understood as a city with a lot of greenery/gardens.
12 ATRIUM Route, ATRIUM—Architecture of Totalitarian Regimes of the 20th Century's in Europe's Urban Memory, https://www.atriumroute.eu/ (12.02.2025).
13 Currently, the local administration is dealing with more than 35 development projects funded at different national and international levels, also notably leveraging Ștei's newly acquired status as a "town with touristic potential".
14 Monuments Act (2001, republished 2006), accompanied by the National Register of Historic Monuments (1992, 2004, updated 2010 and 2015).
15 Mara Mărginean, Ferestre spre Furnalul Roșu. Urbanism și cotidian în Hunedoara si Călan, 1945–1968 [Windows onto the Red Furnace. Urbanism and everyday life in Hunedoara and Călan, 1945–1968], Iași 2015 (Mărginean 2015); Stroe 2015; Tulbure 2016; Juliana Maxim, The socialist life of modern architecture: Bucharest, 1949–1964, London—New York 2019; as well as the work of Cvartal—Patrimoniul cultural al cartierelor bucureștene [Cvartal—The Cultural Heritage of Bucharest's Districts], Studio Zona (public history project).

areas.[16] This highlights a discrepancy in housing listings (including in terms of the pre-1945 period) between the capital and the rest of the country.

This situation results from a shortage of specialized professionals in regional and local institutions who can monitor, identify, and manage this type of built heritage. The issue is exacerbated by the overall lack of research in the field. Additionally, the heritage protection system considers only particular types of values and disregards others, specifically those found in large mass-housing neighborhoods built during the communist era. These neighborhoods, characterized by standardized designs and prefabrication, underwent massive transformation in the post-1989 privatization process. They remain outside any local or national strategy of patrimonial acknowledgement and safeguarding.

One exception is Anina, a former coal-mining town in southwest Romania with a history that goes back to 1773 when the region was part of the Habsburg Empire. Even before the mine's closure in 2006, 19 historical monuments and sites in Anina were listed as part of a survey campaign in 1990–1992. Today, their number has increased to 45, following the guidelines stated in the "Nizhnyl Tagil Industrial Heritage Charter".[17] Moreover, the diversity of Anina's residential areas preserved as "historical areas" or "urban ensemble"' is regulated by current urban planning tools such as the "General Urban Masterplan" (PUG-Plan Urbanistic General, Ro.). Their listing is based on extensive research conducted by local historians throughout the 1970s and 1980s, under the influence of Volker Wollmann and his contributions to the Reșița County Museum.[18] The case of Anina demonstrates the successful listing of industrial and housing heritage in former mining towns in Romania, with the support of local actors and backed up by research. However, Anina's built environment dates back to a more distant era, making its heritage value more readily recognized. Ștei has the potential to become yet another exemplar for recognizing and preserving housing heritage in Romania. However, the local administration remains ambiguous on its status as a historic area.

Housing Heritage in Ștei

Currently, Ștei has no official heritage recognition nor formal designation under Romanian monument protection laws (*National Register of Historic Monuments 422/2001*). Additionally, there are no urban planning tools in place to safeguard and regulate its residential areas, as the "General Urban Plan" (PUG, Ro.) has not been updated since the 1990s. Arguably, the "Russian town" is considered a protected area through the decision approved by the local council, while still waiting for the new PUG to be properly drafted. Nevertheless, as mentioned previously, Ștei is part of the European *ATRIUM* initiative,[19] being described as a "*prosperous garden city*" and appreciated for its "*functional urban design*".[20] Besides a certain prestige resulting from being part of a European network, this designation seems to have little impact on how the heritage of Ștei is perceived locally. Meanwhile, the municipality is focusing on strategies for fostering economic revitalization through initiatives partially supported by European funding, such as a new industrial platform, a solar park, and mobility infrastructure projects.[21] Unfortunately, tourism investments imply significant alterations of the 1950s architecture and infrastructure, as demonstrated by the invasive renovation of the former "Russian swimming pool", sports hall, and green area.

This approach can be explained through the broader context of the town's deindustrialization, which has led to its decline in terms of territory, economy, and sociocultural dynamics. After 1989, the privatization of all industrial activities concluded with the cessation of uranium exploitation in 2008, which triggered a drop in the economic activity that had major consequences for the social and cultural life of the community. Simultaneously, the rapidity of housing privatization resulted in significant transformations of the built environment according to private owners' needs, financial means, and aesthetic tastes. The 2021 census indicated that Ștei's population counts approximately 5,400 inhabitants. This is about half of its population in the 1980s, reflecting significant demographic changes

16 Catalog București, https://catalogbucuresti.info/cb/ (INP, OAR, RERise) (13.03.2025); Zone construite protejate, https://112patrimoniu.ro/lmi/zone-construite-protejate/ (OAR București, INP, ProPatrimonio, ARCEN Catalog București) (13.03.2025).
17 Oana Țiganea, The conservation of the industrial heritage: Theoretical approaches and territorial experimentations in the case of Anina (Romania), in: ArcHistoR VII, Issue 13, 2020, pp. 342–379.
18 Ibidem.
19 Through the initiative of Prof. Ramona Novicov (University of Oradea) and the Ștei local administration (Mayor Iulian Balaj).
20 https://atriumviastei.wordpress.com/ (12.02.2025).
21 Approx. 35 projects with EU funding (various lines of funding).

due to emigration abroad, followed by local migration from neighboring villages to Ștei. These demographic shifts, along with an aging population, have also had an impact on local memory and perceptions of the recent past. Few residents remember the Soviet presence in the town during the late 1950s. Interestingly, the dominant local narrative revolves around the positive impact of the Soviets' presence in the area, emphasizing the amicable cohabitation of Romanians and Soviets in Ștei. However, many other perspectives are overlooked, particularly those of miners and the administrative and political machinery of the uranium mining industry, which are largely absent from collective memory. The relevance of interdisciplinary research in Ștei is justified by both the visible/hidden and tangible/intangible aspects of the town's legacy.[22] On one hand, Ștei's territorial, urban, and architectural legacy emerges from uranium exploitation in the early 1950s, initially under Soviet administration and later continued by the Romanian state. This development transformed Ștei into a "perfect socialist microcosm", shaping both its urban layout and social structure. The town can be considered a living archive of diverse housing typologies spanning the period 1945–1989, reflecting the evolution of socialist-era planning and community life. All these aspects were analyzed through an in-depth on-site documentation process, including geometric surveys, digital mapping of buildings, photographic records, interviews, and mental maps. Our goal was to identify the key values and main narratives that could support the official recognition of the town's patrimonial value and raise awareness of the potential for conservation, particularly of its residential areas.

Housing Typologies and Their State of Preservation/ Transformation

The BWs (likely derived from the term "bungalow") represent one of the most distinctive legacies of the 1950s, frequently mentioned by locals as a defining feature of the town and often associated with the idea of a "garden city" (Fig. 3). The only archival image found to date shows the BWs surrounded by greenery, without clearly defined private property boundaries.[23] Other details—such as the model, design, and builder—remain unclear. However, based on observations and analysis, it can be stated that these duplex houses were constructed from prefabricated wooden elements, resembling the more classical American balloon-frame system, patented in Chicago in 1833 and subsequently distributed across various geographical, social, and cultural contexts, including Europe.[24] From a different perspective, the BWs bear a resemblance to wooden houses found in the Baltic countries, with which Ștei was historically connected through the Soviets' Cold War uranium network.



Fig. 3: Prefabricated wooden houses (known as BWs), Ștei, 2022

Currently, the BWs clearly illustrate the variety of transformations that the housing in Ștei underwent during the privatization and deindustrialization processes of the 1990s and 2000s. Some transformations are complete, entirely altering the original structure and volume, while others are partial, preserving key elements but incorporating visible modifications to enhance living comfort. These partial changes—such as improved thermal insulation, expanded living spaces, or the addition of essential utilities like running water and electricity—are thoughtfully executed. These interventions have not yet affected the overall character of

22 Participants in the project come from different fields of expertise: architectural preservation, urban and architectural history, architectural photographic documentation, archaeology and monument digitalization, urban sociology, sociology, and photography.

23 Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale, Fond CC al PCR Albume foto, Dosar A 21 [Central National Historical Archives, PCR CC Collection Photo Albums, File A 21].

24 Sigfried Giedion, Spazio Tempo e Architettura, Milano 1941, p. 339; Ted Cavanagh, Balloon houses: The original aspects of conventional wood-frame construction re-examined, in: Journal of Architectural Education 51, Issue 1, 1997, pp. 5–15.



Fig. 4: Petrileni cvartal, 2023

the settlement and still manage to convey the story of the town's rapid construction and temporary character.

One such house, well preserved and owned by the local administration, is the focus of a project to transform it into a "house-museum" featuring a collection of objects donated by local community members. However, to prevent it from becoming a unique and isolated case of architectural preservation, now is the time to introduce urban planning regulations to coordinate future transformations of the overall housing stock, ensuring that the tangible legacy of history is not entirely lost. The conservation of the ensemble could be achieved through a coordinated and participatory transformation led by the local community. However, this would also require the active and continuous involvement of specialists, a prospect that is complicated by the town's relative geographical and economic isolation.

Petrileni cvartal (Fig. 4), separated from the main city structure by the Crișul Băiței river, presents a distinct local housing typology. Unlike the southern area of the city, where small apartment blocks and individual dwellings are alternately placed on plots, in the northern area, on land islands of the same size (approximately 0.80 hectares), only apartment buildings are placed at shorter distances from each other, more clearly shaping the typical image of a 1950s district. Sportului Street (today), with the sports hall, separates these two types of housing arrangements.

The very large area occupied by mass-housing is what makes Petrileni cvartal appear distinct from the rest. This construction method—with perimeter apartment blocks defining an inner courtyard, similar to military barracks—was used for housing construction in the 1950s in Romania. Similar examples can be found in Bucharest, in industrial cities, or for military accommodation. The size of a district, usually assembled into a larger urban composition, ranged from 0.5 to 1.50 hectares.[25]

Currently, the annexes dominate the residual space of the cvartal. Informally built annexes occupy considerable areas of land initially designed as public green spaces or leisure areas such as parks or playgrounds

25 Tulbure 2016.



Fig. 5: Petrileni cvartal, 2022

(Fig. 5). The annexes in the Petrileni cvartal reflect the continuous development and transformation of the area over time. Originally, the district featured individual pantries—one for each apartment—positioned along the perimeter of the designated sports field area. These were necessary due to the absence of basements and, consequently, the lack of traditional storage spaces such as cellars. Today, in addition to these "original" pantries, the district also includes garages, which have become a defining feature of post-socialist urban transformation. Built in a vernacular style, these garages showcase the creativity and personal imprint of their individual owners.[26]

In the 1950s, simultaneously with the BWs and cvartals, barracks were used for temporary housing in the peripheral areas of the city under construction. These were arranged in small groups or colonies, most of which were demolished as early as the 1960s. Today, the only remaining traces of these temporary structures are the access road to one colony and the roads that once served the barracks. After the barracks were dismantled, the area was repurposed as a training ground for a driving school. Little is known about the history of these temporary constructions. Archival records mention the use of the barracks in the 1950s for military personnel guarding the area, as well as for prisoners brought in as forced laborers, as the city was a classified military-industrial site.[27] Later, before their demolition, the barracks were used to house workers and miners.

The housing additions constructed in the 1960s were minimal and largely served to fill the remaining peripheral areas that were either unoccupied or had previously hosted temporary barracks that later became unsanitary and impractical. The arrangement of the apartment blocks built during this period follows the grid structure created by the rhythmic cvartals of the "Russian city". Nevertheless, the picturesque image of the settlement with low-rise dwellings remained dominant. Despite the aesthetic justifications provided by the planners and their intentions to create remedial solutions for the urban aesthetic, the collective housing blocks built in the 1960s did not establish a distinct architectural identity through unique designs but rather addressed a growing demand for housing.[28]

Law 9/1968 opened the possibility of building privately owned housing: apartments in blocks or individual houses on plots of land. In cities where land parcels had been designated during the interwar period, post-war housing developments were strategically located to fill the vacant spaces that had remained unused before the war. A notable example of this is the town of Beiuș, located near Ștei. In the absence of previously defined plot structures, it was necessary to identify areas for such housing through "*systematization*" projects[29] and to delineate new parcel divisions. Thus, in autumn 1968, *DSAPC Bihor*[30] designed two parcel divisions proposed for the town of Ștei: one of the areas was intended to complement the 1950s city and was bordered by the Băița stream. The project planned for twelve plots of 240 square meters each, and, ultimately, more than 24 houses were built. A second area was located between a furniture factory, the "Russian football pitch",

26 Extract from an interview with a local resident, May 2023:
"What I can tell you is that I had a special childhood, a dream that I wish today's youth could experience as well. (…) We moved here because my parents found jobs in the area (…) we lived in the apartments in Petrileni. We moved around a bit between different blocks because it was hard to find a place to rent. Life in the Petrileni was something special. There were a lot of kids, we were a big crowd. We used to steal walnuts, go apple-picking, and bathe in the Criș river. We would fight with the kids from the 'town'; there was always a rivalry between the 'town' kids and us. I went to kindergarten there; in Block 7, there was a kindergarten in one of the apartments. (…) I went to school here, high school here, and then I went to university in Petroșani. I came back in 1995. By then, the industry had started to decline … you know what happened."

27 OSA Archivum Budapest, HU OSA 300-60-1, Box 399, item 1284/63.

28 Local administration archives: Memoriu Justificativ, Proiect: 213 apartamente Oraș Dr. Petru Groza.

29 Dana Vais, Systematization: A key term in 20th-century Romanian urbanism, in: Urban Planning 7, Issue 1, 2022, pp. 207–222.

30 DSAPC: Direcția de Sistematizare, Arhitectură și Proiectare în Construcții [Department of Systematization, Architecture and Design of Constructions].

and the Băița stream. The project included 64 plots of 202 to 248 square meters,[31] allowing for the construction of individual housing. Recent research has shown that this type of housing, although never associated with the typical socialist housing model focused on mass-housing, has been quite common, especially in mono-industrial towns where there was a need for quick solutions for the housing issue.[32]

Although the housing in Ștei reflects all phases of urban intervention and development, the structures from the 1950s, often associated with the "Russian town" period, are most common. These are divided between individual and mass-housing units and have undergone transformations that, nevertheless, have not significantly altered the overall urban and architectural character of the town. Furthermore, housing represents the main built legacy of Ștei, constructed in a coordinated and centralized manner during the communist period. However, the houses are now undergoing transformations driven by individual initiatives, reflecting a significant shift in the roles and responsibilities of those managing and maintaining them. In the discussions we carried with local inhabitants about the possibility of officially safeguarding the built legacy of the 1950s, many showed interest and even excitement regarding this idea, also sharing their concerns regarding the transformations that some of the BWs have undergone.[33] In a system where heritage recognition is still guided by a centralized and top-down approach, it would be useful to understand whether private-public negotiations could trigger at least a coordinated management intervention plan that could take into consideration both urban and architectural preservation, as well as the inhabitants' needs.

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31 Local administration archives: File 34 / 1967–69.

32 Mărginean 2015; Diana Mihnea / Irina Tulbure-Moldovan / Oana C. Țiganea / Emilia Țugui, Approaching the rural abandonment in twentieth century Romania: Political decisions, strategies, and intervention projects, in: Annunziata-Maria Oteri (Ed.), Lost and found. Processes of abandonment of the architectural and urban heritage in inner areas. Causes, effects, and narratives (Italy, Albania, Romania), ArcHistoR EXTRA, Issue 13, 2024, pp. 398–449.

33 Extract from an interview with a local resident, May 2023:
"What do you think if [the town from the 1950s] were officially declared heritage?"
"I would be happy. Honestly. If it were up to me, especially the BWs, I wouldn't have allowed them to be modified. Even though I modified mine too. What's at P., half is plastered, half isn't. One side is one color, the other side is a different color. I wouldn't have allowed that. I would have intervened as a municipality, if we want to preserve some kind of heritage. And yes, I would have changed the tiles because maybe there aren't enough resources … for people to pay that much for them. I painted everything in the same color shade. Inside, I thermally insulated the rooms. My son worked somewhere in France and brought me some insulation, like a foil. (…) I lined the wall and put up drywall. I kept the timber wall structure, and on that structure, I added the insulation. You can feel at least 10 degrees warmer compared to the cold. The room downstairs is even cooler, being in the shade … you see, the sun doesn't reach here. It's cooler, and it needed thermal insulation. (…) Now, the veranda: for sure, I modified it, because it was very cold in the veranda. (…) I wanted, I intentionally wanted to preserve it. I said: I won't put plastic if the wood is good. I paint it every once in a while, every five years."

Aristotelis Antoniou

Becoming Historical or Smart?

Reasoning the Modernity of the Residential Complex at Aspra Spitia (Άσπρα Σπίτια)

Abstract

This article explores the modernist residential complex of Aspra Spitia in Paralia Distomou, Greece, designed in the 1950s by Constantinos Doxiadis for the Pechiney *aluminium company. It investigates how the settlement reflects and challenges modernist planning principles through phases of development—from its origins and forced expropriations to its vertical expansion, suburban growth, and recent transformation into a "smart city". Combining architectural analysis with resident interviews, the study examines tensions between modernity, class stratification, and heritage preservation. Aspra Spitia emerges as both a legacy of industrial modernism and a living site of spatial, social, and technological negotiation.*

Introduction

This study forms part of a broader investigation into the heterotopic configurations of the modernist landscape in Distomo (Δίστομο), Greece, exploring its intersections with the industrial culture, environmental dynamics, and societal configurations. Grounded in critical inquiry, the research examines the multiplicities of modernist traditions, questioning how these landscapes encapsulate the utopian formations, challenges, and realism of their time while offering possibilities for a contemporary reinvention and conservation of modernism today.

Within this framework, the article delves into the history of the Aspra Spitia (Άσπρα Σπίτια) settlement at Paralia Distomou (Παραλία Διστόμου), Greece, designed by the architect Constantinos Doxiadis during the 1950s for the French aluminium company *Pechiney*.[1] The planning reflects modernist principles while responding to their critiques and integrating local spatial identities. Today, it remains a privately owned, non-listed heritage site, raising critical questions about its condition, conservation, and historicity in the broader discourse on modernist legacy.

The Genealogy of a Modern Landscape

Located along the northern coastline of the Corinthian Gulf, approximately 5 km west of the present-day *ALUMINIUM S.A.* industrial complex and 10 km south of Distomo, the Aspra Spitia settlement has a precisely measurable geographic location. However, its spatial orientation extends beyond cartographic coordinates, engaging deeply with anthropological and historiographical narratives shaped by post-war urbanization strategies in Greece (Fig. 1).

The settlement emerges as a site of profound spatial and social transformation, marked by forced expropriations of prior inhabitants and migration flows of incoming workers, representing a transformative moment in this process and marking a transition from early modern industrial practices to the modernization of labor, economy, and living conditions. As a multi-scaled "*event*"[2] in the region's historical continuum, Aspra Spitia not only redefines the industrial landscape but also embodies a vision for modernization, linking the area's industrial past with its architectural and cultural

1 In 1960, the French aluminium company *Pechiney*, one of the top three producers and developers of aluminium products at the time, entered into a contract with the Greek government to establish the company *Aluminium of Greece S.A.* This contract was criticized by left-wing parties and organizations as a form of new French colonialism. Today, the company is under the ownership of *METLEN Energy & Metals*.

2 Michel Foucault, The archaeology of knowledge and the discourse on language, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith, New York 1972, pp. 3–6.



Fig. 1: Aspra Spitia settlement, Paralia Distomou, Greece, 2025

future. Thus, the act of naming, the designation "Aspra Spitia" (=*White Houses*), functions as more than a mere identifier, as it becomes a locus of contested meaning for the inhabitants, embodying tensions between displacement and rootedness, continuity and rupture, historicity and novelty, "tradition" and "modernity", raising the critical issue of "belonging" to a land, of origins and place.

To critically examine how this "event" unfolded and evolved over time, Aspra Spitia is examined through different layers of time, tracing its configuration processes and emergence as a "modern landscape". I use the term landscape as a primary concern for the act of urbanization processes which certainly affected the emergence of Aspra Spitia, human living, and the environmental impacts. Through this lens, five distinct phases can be discerned:

Pre-existing Phase – In-between Modernity

Understanding the pre-existing phase is crucial for interpreting how the concept of "modernity" was constructed in the Aspra Spitia settlement. According to several archival maps, the settlement's name derives from a nearby village that was renamed Αντίκυρα (Antikyra) in honor of the ancient city of the same name that once existed in the area.[3] This renaming strategy not only created a distinct identity for each community but also sought to establish a sense of historical continuity. The master plan, designed by Doxiadis, required the demolition of the small pre-existing settlement (around 50 homes and stores nestled within expansive olive groves) known as the Coastline of Distomo, following forced expropriation.

Notable among these properties was the Villa Zouisans which is now owned by the aluminium company. Today, traces of this era remain evident, while others, such as the old bauxite loading barge, once used to transport bauxite barrels onto boats, have been recently demolished.[4] What is worth mentioning is that a natural barrier, an old canal forming a narrow strip of land locally referred to as "*the private*",[5] managed to evade expropriation (hence its name). This strip continues to demarcate a social division: between those

3 John Cam Hobhouse, A journey through Albania and other provinces of Turkey in Europe and Asia, to Constantinople, during the years 1809 and 1810, e-book, London 1813, p. 217.

4 Δήμητρα Σκαύδη, Τα Άσπρα Σπίτια στην Παραλία Διστόμου, Εθνογραφία μιας τεχνητής κοινότητας [Dimitra Skavdi, The White Houses on Distomo Beach, Ethnography of an Artificial Community], Athens 2021, pp. 49–53 (Skavdi 2021).

5 Ibidem, p. 148.

who live and work in the settlement but are perceived as "*strangers*",[6] illustrating a Simmelian perspective on social boundaries; and those who feel a sense of belonging due to their ownership status.[7]

First Phase (1961) – The Creation of the Settlement

The Aspra Spitia settlement materializes Doxiadis' broader vision for a cellular, human-centered urbanism, diverging from the "Functional City" principles of the Athens Charter (1933).[8] Doxiadis' design values were rooted in his theories of "*ekistics*"[9] (the science of human settlement) and "*ecumenopolis*"[10] (a vision of a global city).[11] As articulated by Panagiotis Tournikiotis,[12] Aspra Spitia represents a paradigmatic application of Doxiadis' vision for the contemporary city, shaped between the 1930s and 1970s.[13] A central figure in post-war architectural discourse, Doxiadis engaged in global debates on the future of cities, positioning his *ekistics* theory—an interdisciplinary and parametric framework for human settlements—in opposition to the rigid zoning principles of modernist urbanism. His methodology, integrating qualitative and quantitative data, can be considered a prologue to parametric design and smart urban technologies. His theories found expression in the *Delos Symposium*, where he engaged with figures like Sigfried Giedion, Richard Buckminster Fuller, and Christopher Alexander.[14]

The primary cell in *ekistics* theory (and Aspra Spitia, respectively) was the neighborhood unit, conceived as a scalable, walkable, and organically expanding urban fabric. In contrast to the concentric urban growth patterns of the time, Doxiadis' model advocated a linear, network-based expansion, reinforcing pedestrian movement over vehicular circulation while prioritizing "*visual richness*"[15] and human-scale spatial order. The settlement's L-shaped plan, extending toward the neighboring village of Antikyra, exemplifies this principle.

Doxiadis' *ekistics* describes the "*natural community of walking man*",[16] in which spatial organization fosters proximity-based interactions. However, contemporary observations reveal a shift from this original vision, as automobiles now dominate the settlement's narrow streets, while abandoned masonry buildings have been repurposed into parking or storage spaces.

Originally conceived to accommodate a population of approximately 5,000 inhabitants, the settlement today sustains a reduced demographic presence, estimated between 2,000 and 2,500 residents.[17] This demographic variance reveals a critical divergence between the initial planning imaginaries—which envisioned the settlement as a central node within the national territorial and administrative network, aspiring to acquire formal public designations (such as community or municipal status) and to follow the developmental rates of neighboring urban nodes[18]—and the enduring condition of

6 Georg Simmel, The stranger, in: Kurt H. Wolff (Ed.), The sociology of Georg Simmel, New York 1950, pp. 402–408.
7 Skavdi 2021, p. 148.
8 Alexandros-Andreas Kyrtsis (Ed.), Constantinos Apostolou Doxiadis: Texts, design, drawings, settlements, Athens 2006, p. 22 (Doxiadis 2006).
9 Ibidem, p. 18.
10 Ibidem, p. 66.
11 Based on interviews with residents, Doxiadis' post-colonial urban planning designs in Islamabad and Baghdad emerge as pivotal reference points in shaping the perception of the "White Houses" urban model within their narratives. This interrelationship will be subjected to further analysis.
12 Professor of architectural theory and the director of the History and Theory Laboratory at the National Technical University of Athens (NTUA), School of Architecture.
13 Panayiotis Tournikiotis, Revised text, in: Panayiotis Tournikiotis, Aspra Spitia or the Legacy of C. A. Doxiadis, in: Georgia Kazazi (Ed.), Ο Κωνσταντίνος Δοξιάδης και το Έργο του [Constantinos Doxiadis and His Work], Vol. 2, Athens 2009, p. 210.
14 Doxiadis 2006, pp. 159–163.
15 Andreas Simeon, Aspra Spitia. A feeling of tradition in a modern community plan concept, in: DA Review 1, Issue 4, 1965, p. 8 (Simeon 1965).
16 Constantinos Apostolou Doxiadis, Introduction to the "human community", in: Ekistics 33, Issue 199 (Building a better future: Research projects of the Athens Center of Ekistics), 1972, p. 489.
17 This estimation draws on fieldwork practice, including interviews—conducted by the author with residents of the "White Houses" settlement between October 2024 and January 2025—and discussions with local authorities.
18 Ελένη Καλαφάτη, Άσπρα Σπίτια Βοιωτίας: Ζήτημα σχεδιασμού μιας νέας πόλης, in: Β. Πετρίδου / Π. Πάγκαλος / Ν. Κυρκίτσου (Eds.), Εργάζομαι άρα κατοικώ. Η περίπτωση του συγκροτήματος κατοικιών των μεταλλείων Μπάρλου στο Δίστομο Βοιωτίας, Πανεπιστήμιο Πατρών, Πάτρα 2012 [Eleni Kalafati, White Houses of Boeotia: The question of designing a new city, in: V. Petridou / P. Pangalos / N. Kyrkitsou (Eds.), I work, therefore I live. The case of the Barlou mines housing complex in Distomo, University of Patras, Patras 2012, pp. 22 f.].

private land and property ownership that continues to characterize the settlement's identity.

This discrepancy, however, cannot be understood solely through legal-institutional frameworks. It is equally embedded within the broader architectonics of industrial modernity, marked by shifts in economic geography, transformations in modes of production, revaluations of labor, and the socio-spatial consequences of post-industrial transition.[19] The lack of reliable, officially published data regarding the settlement's demographic evolution or current housing unit occupancy renders these changes difficult to quantify. Nevertheless, oral accounts from residents of the Aspra Spitia and the wider Distomo area suggest that under-occupancy has led to the leasing of residential units to subcontracted firms—signalling a reconfiguration of domestic space in response to contemporary industrial reconfiguring.

The settlement consists of 1,100 residential units of varying typologies: single- and double-storey dwellings, bachelor apartments, as well as commercial and communal infrastructure, including shops, a now-abandoned open-air cinema, a customs house, a school, and recreational facilities.[20] A notable omission is a cemetery, a reflection of the settlement's transitory circle: As a privately-owned company town, residency was linked to employment, most probably necessitating the departure of retired workers.

Second Phase (1971) – Vertical Expansion

By the 1970s, spatial and demographic pressures demanded reconfiguration of the master plan. The construction of additional dwellings, including four-storey residential buildings, an expanded public square by architect Christos Lempesis, and the Apollo Centre, responded to the growing workforce demands of the aluminium factory. This phase also sought to mediate class-based asymmetries in public life, introducing vertical stratification as a spatial response to evolving social dynamics.

A defining feature of this transformation was the construction of *The Tower*, an eight-storey building that punctuates the settlement's otherwise low-rise urban fabric. Erected during Greece's military dictatorship (1967–1974)—a period marked by relaxation of building height restrictions—*The Tower* evokes the feeling of a "*panopticon*",[21] reinforcing social hierarchies while simultaneously serving as a symbol in the new landscape. A scenographic statement that could resemble an old masonry tower and can be now "naturalized" aesthetically in-between the landscape (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2: Entering Aspra Spitia settlement, view of *The Tower*, 2024

19 As discussed in Ηλίας Κουρλιούρος, Διαδρομές στις Θεωρίες του Χώρου: Οικονομική Γεωγραφία της Παραγωγικής Αναδιάρθρωσης και της Άνισης Ανάπτυξης, Αθήνα 2011 [Elias Kourliouros, Pathways in Spatial Theories: Economic Geography of Productive Restructuring and Uneven Development, Athens 2011].

20 https://www.doxiadis.org/Downloads/aspra_spitia.pdf (18.01.2025).

21 Michel Foucault, Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison, trans. Alan Sheridan, New York 1977, pp. 200–228.

Notably, this vertical expansion stands in contradiction to Doxiadis' own critiques of high-rise architecture. In a 1973 treatise written during the dictatorship, he denounced the impact of skyscrapers on the urban environment, arguing that "*high-rise buildings work against Nature by destroying the scale of the landscape*".[22] This ideological dissonance underscores the tensions between Doxiadis' theoretical positions and the evolving realities of urban development in Aspra Spitia.

Third Phase (1984) – A new District

In 1977, architects Michalis Fotiadis and Pantelis Masouridis introduced a significant expansion of the Aspra Spitia settlement, integrating 162 new dwellings, two educational facilities, and a designated residence for the director of the aluminium industrial complex.[23] This intervention not only extended the spatial fabric of the settlement but also introduced an architectural language that, while maintaining formal consistency with the earlier phase, incorporated a more brutalist style and a wider range of apartment typologies. This shift signalled a broader socio-economic transformation within the settlement, as the new residences were designated primarily for middle- to upper-income tenants. Notably, 85% of the new units comprised three-bedroom apartments, 10% featured four bedrooms,[24] and many were strategically oriented to maximize "*freedom of view*",[25] a spatial privilege that reinforced socio-economic stratification within the working-class community.[26]

This phase of expansion, responding once again to the factory's labor demands, can be conceptualized through the notion of "*reterritorialization*",[27] whereby urban development strategies impose new spatial and socio-political structures upon an existing landscape. This transformation effectively generated a suburban extension of the previous configuration, further entrenching distinctions in class and urban form.

The Current Phase – "Smart City"

The present state of Aspra Spitia is characterized by its transition towards a "smart city" model, incorporating energy-efficient infrastructures, digital monitoring applications, and automated systems that reframe contemporary urban living. This framework unveils parallels between modernity's abstract framework, technological optimism, and present-day perspectives on sustainability and digital urbanism. However, this shift also raises critical concerns if legislative frameworks fail to define stakeholder roles, risking a shift towards purely financial perspectives on the living conditions, sidelining the knowledge embedded in the heritage considerations.

As articulated in *Utopia Computer: "Smart houses or smart cities (...) collect and analyze private and public data, which is then used to generate behavioral predictions and gain knowledge about sustainable urban planning, enabling economic decision-making*".[28] Within this paradigm, the Aspra Spitia settlement, now framed as a "*model community*",[29] foregrounds financial imperatives as key determinants of sustainability and environmental awareness. The pilot smart city initiative (proposed by the *METLEN Energy and Metals* group) envisions:[30]

- Smart homes equipped with interconnected IoT (Internet of Things) devices;
- Self-metering and net metering systems to optimize energy consumption;
- Extensive charging infrastructure for electric vehicles;
- The integration of photovoltaic parks within and around the settlement.

Despite these management plans, the intersection between modernization and heritage conservation remains unresolved. In 2019, the environmental impact assessment of the proposed expansion included a de-

22 Constantinos Apostolou Doxiadis, The great urban crimes that we permit by law, Articles paper for the World Conference on World Peace Through Law, August 1973, p. 3.
23 Άσπρη Πολιτεία, Διμηνιαίο Περιοδικό, εκδ. Αλουμίνιον της Ελλάδος,αριθμός φύλλου 12, Φθινόπωρο 1992, σελ. 11 [White State, Bi-monthly Magazine, published by Aluminium of Greece, issue 12, 1992, p. 11] (White State 1992).
24 https://www.photiadis.gr/aspra-spitia-housing-groups-beotia-aluminium-of-greece-company-town/ (25.01.2025).
25 White State 1992, p. 11.
26 As discussed in Max Horkheimer, Eclipse of reason, New York 1947.
27 Gilles Deleuze / Félix Guattari, A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia, trans. Brian Massumi, Minneapolis 1987, p. 195.
28 Chris Dähne / Frederike Lausch, Introduction, in: Nathalie Bredella / Chris Dähne / Frederike Lausch (Eds.), Utopia computer, The "new" in architecture? Forum Architekturwissenschaft, Vol. 6, Berlin 2023, p. 15.
29 https://www.metlengroup.com/what-we-do/metallurgy-sector/aspra-spitia-model-community/ (25.01.2025).
30 https://www.metlengroup.com/media/mk4g5gys/sustainable_development_report_2023_eng.pdf (25.01.2025).



Fig. 3: Unoccupied stone masonry dwellings, 2024

dicated section on cultural heritage strategies, recommending an investigation into designating Aspra Spitia as a "protected" settlement due to its architectural and historical value.[31] However, discussions between key stakeholders ultimately stalled, reinforcing the inherently political nature of heritage listing processes. The protection of cultural landscapes is not merely a matter of juridical recognition or epistemological legitimacy but is shaped by power dynamics and competing economic imperatives.

At present, the only consistent conservation measure applied to the settlement is the periodic whitewashing of facades, while maintenance of architectural elements such as wooden doors and windows remains the financial responsibility of individual tenants. More pressing, however, is the threat of abandonment: As automation reduces labour demand, a sizeable number of buildings remain unoccupied, underscoring the precarious balance between conservation and obsolescence in the evolving industrial landscape (Fig. 3).

Narratives, Myths, and Architectural Memory

An analysis of interviews with ten residents of the settlement reveals a complex interplay between architectural heritage, lived experience, and evolving urban cultures. The interviews illuminate the persistence of modern myths, the shifting perceptions of modernist design, and the impact of contemporary urban transformations, including technological interventions and economic restructuring. The resident narratives expose a tension between the historical significance of the settlement and its ongoing adaptation, raising a critical question in the context of utopian formations, challenges, and realism: Is the settlement best understood as a historical object, a fixed relic of post-war urbanism, or an ever-transferable[32] entity engaged in continuous socio-spatial "negotiation"?[33]

This tension mirrors the conceptual dialectic within Doxiadis' urban theories, particularly his notion of "*entopia*",[34] which straddles the line between utopian aspiration and pragmatic urban realities. Much like the settlement's residents, Doxiadis recognized the limitations of rigid urban paradigms, advocating for a parametric methodology that dynamically engaged with socio-spatial realities. The settlement thus becomes a microcosm of his broader theories on *ekistics* and *ecumenopolis*, a site where the negotiation between tradition, modernity, and social stratification plays out at an architectural and experiential level.

Building upon Bruno Latour's conceptualization of myths and modernism(s),[35] the settlement emerges as a discursive field where narratives of progress, nostalgia, and socio-spatial stratification merge. However, this discursive field is not merely theoretical but deeply materialized in spatial practices that reflect Doxiadis' formal principles. These principles, in turn, are embedded within broader urbanization processes and network

31 ΜΥΤΙΛΗΝΑΙΟΣ Α.Ε., Μελέτη Περιβαλλοντικών επιπτώσεων για την ανάπτυξη και λειτουργία νέου σταθμού παραγωγής Ηλεκτρικής Ενέργειας στο υφιστάμενο ενεργειακό κέντρο Αγίου Νικολάου Βοιωτίας [MYTILINEOS S.A., Environmental Impact Study for the development and operation of a new power plant at the existing energy center in Agios Nikolaos, Boeotia], 2019, p .62.

32 I use the term "transferable" as an abstracted expression of transformation, denoting a relational condition that binds time, object, and subject within a shared informational field. This condition, I suggest, resonates with the juridical and epistemological structure of the "contract" as elaborated by Michel Serres; cf. Michel Serres, The natural contract, trans. Elizabeth MacArthur and William Paulson, Ann Arbor 1995, p. 77: "*Perhaps we have nothing but law to transform time into history, or to canonize the former in the latter. Better still, history does not so much unfold by trials as act as a permanent tribunal itself.*"

33 "Negotiation" constitutes a key term in Bruno Latour's theory and philosophy of networks. As a mode of connectedness, negotiation arises with inherent political significance, particularly within the domain of science; cf. Bruno Latour, Down to Earth: Politics in the new climatic regime, Cambridge MA 2018; Bruno Latour, Politics of nature: How to bring the sciences into democracy, trans. Catherine Porter, Cambridge MA 2004.

34 Constantinos Apostolou Doxiadis, Building entopia, Athens 1975, pp. 49–54.

35 Bruno Latour, We have never been modern, trans. Catherine Porter, Cambridge MA 1993.

systems—what Doxiadis conceptualized as "*invisible geometry*",[36] a structuring framework through which urban cohesion and individual agency are dynamically negotiated. The unfolding of modernity within the Aspra Spitia settlement is thus articulated through a series of critical inquiries, as reflected below in the responses of its residents. Every inquiry tries to mirror a certain category, which I value as critical for the evaluation of Modern heritage.

I) Modern myths and the awareness of architectural intent—What do you know about the architecture of the settlement or the architect himself?

When questioned about their knowledge of the settlement's architectural origins, residents demonstrated general awareness of Doxiadis as its architect, yet displayed limited engagement with his broader theoretical contributions. A recurring mythic narrative suggested that the settlement was initially designed for an African context, reflecting a perception of its typological design as being generic and culturally detached. This perception aligns with longstanding critiques of inter-war modernist planning which often privileged universal design principles over site-specific adaptation. However, within Doxiadis' framework, this generic quality can be understood as an extension of his parametric methodology which sought to balance adaptive spatial planning with continental human-centred values.

The persistence of such myths signals a historical disjunction, a gap between architectural intent and the collective memory of its inhabitants. In his writings, Doxiadis recognized that the ideal city emerges not as an isolated utopian vision but as an iterative response to historical and environmental contingencies. As he asserted: "*The ideal city provides an escape from the social, physical, and aesthetic conditions in existing cities. Thus, the more man suffers in his city, the more he is interested in dreaming about new utopias: the cities that cannot be built.*"[37]

II) Modernist planning, class stratification, and perceived discontinuities—How did you feel coming to a settlement with such disciplined and organized planning?

Residents who migrated from agrarian communities in northern Greece during the 1960s experienced the settlement as an embodiment of modernity, characterized by its rigorous planning and spatial discipline. While Doxiadis envisioned the settlement as a prototype for the modern Greek city, residents instead interpreted its ordered urbanism as European or globally modernist in nature. This can be observed while tracing similarities between the vernacular tradition of modern architecture and its trans-national paths, resulting in critically examining whether modernity is a path initiated from the rural to the centre, from south to north,[38] or the opposite. This perception underscores a fundamental paradox in the planning framework: While *ekistics* and *entopia* promoted a sense of belonging, the resultant social fabric did not necessarily align with its theoretical intent.

The hierarchical organization of labor within the industrial complex was directly transposed into the urban fabric, reinforcing socio-spatial stratification that shaped both housing allocation and settlement dynamics. Executives resided in villas, mid-level employees occupied larger apartments, and workers were relegated to smaller units. This stratification was further institutionalized through a points-based allocation system wherein workers accrued points relative to their professional standing, translating occupational hierarchy into spatial privilege, transforming the living subject into a "*productive subject*".[39] As Georgios M. Sarigiannis observes,[40] this organizational model aligned Aspra Spitia with historical precedents of industrial settlements, reflecting Engels' critique of class-segregated urban planning.[41] However, the introduction of vertical housing typologies in the second phase, notably *The Tower* and apartment buildings, marked a shift in class representation, trans-moding social hierarchies into vertical spatial configurations. This adoption of

36 https://www.doxiadis.org/Downloads/aspra_spitia.pdf (18.01.2025).
37 Constantinos Apostolou Doxiadis, Chapter 7, in: Architecture in transition, London 1963.
38 Jean-François Lejeune, Built utopias in the countryside: The rural and the modern in Franco's Spain, Dissertation, Delft University of Technology 2019, https://doi.org/10.4233/uuid:105f2bd0-e35f-4047-bb6a-bb14ff118e5e.
39 Pierre Macherey, Φουκώ & Μαρξ Το παραγωγικό υποκείμενο, μεταφρ. Τάσος Μπέτζελος [Pierre Macherey, Foucault & Marx, The productive Subject], trans. Tasos Betzelos, Athens 2013.
40 Emeritus professor at NTUA.
41 Γεωργιος Μ.Σαρηγιάννης, Η Αριστερή Ιδεολογία στην Πολεοδομία στην Ελλάδα από το 1960 ως το 1990, Μέρος Β, Η αριστερή ιδεολογία στην Πολεοδομία στην «Άνοιξη του '60» [Leftist Ideology in Urban Planning in the "Spring of '60", in: Georgios M. Sarigiannis (Ed.) Leftist Ideology in Urban Planning in Greece from 1960 to 1990, Part B, https://www.greekarchitects.gr/gr/αρχιτεκτονικες-ματιες/η-αριστερή-ιδεολογία-στην-πολεοδομία-στην-ελλάδα-από-το-1960-ως-το-1990-μέρος-β-id6678 (18.01.2025).



Fig. 4: Left – View of the one-storey dwellings, first phase; Right – View of the transformation, 2025

polykatoikia, Greece's post-war vertical housing model, abstracted class distinctions into a modernist spatial logic, transforming socio-economic inequality into a verticalized form of stratification.

III) "Functionality" and critique of space—Were the stone masonry buildings functional?

A dominant theme in residents' critiques was the functional limitations of the settlement's spatial design. Complaints regarding insufficient kitchen space and inadequate sanitary facilities, particularly in two-storey dwellings, underscore the practical constraints of modernist "minimum space" principles. These critiques align with broader discourses on functionality as a class-inflected construct.[42] Five rows of the settlement's small-scale stone masonry housing, originally conceived as efficient units, were ultimately demolished due to widespread dissatisfaction (becoming a park and a small football court), further illustrating the disjunction between theoretical functionalism and lived spatial realities (Fig. 4).

IV) Conservation policies and the aestheticization of tradition—Are there any policies for conservation of the building fabric?

Conservation policies within the settlement are minimal and largely symbolic, restricted to the maintenance of whitewashed walls and blue-painted timber elements. While these measures reinforce a codified aesthetic identity, they fail to address deeper structural concerns, particularly regarding the deterioration of stone masonry buildings. It could be said that Doxiadis' urban scenography employed a scientific rationalization of tradition, aligning with Latour's theory that tradition functions not as a temporal relic but as a spatial reference system, a "*laboratory process*"[43] in which past elements are selectively recontextualized (Fig. 5).

The widespread application of whitewashed surfaces, often perceived as emblematic of Greek island aesthetics, further complicates this notion of tradition. The use of white can be dualistically interpreted: as a modernist abstraction, resonant with Le Corbusier's "*Law of Ripolin*"[44] and generic applications (such as the Weissenhof and Aspra Spitia model settlements) or as an institutionalized aesthetic, a prototype image rather than an authentic material.[45] This scenographic approach, akin to the state-driven aestheticization of Greek identity, reveals the paradox of modernist traditionalism: a selective "pastiche"[46] rather than a continuity of spatial practices.

V) Housing mobility—Which buildings or apartments did you prefer?

The settlement's points-based housing system wherein residents could upgrade their living conditions

42 Manfredo Tafuri, Theories and history of architecture, New York 1980.
43 Bruno Latour / Steve Woolgar, Laboratory life: The construction of scientific facts, New Jersey 1986.
44 Le Corbusier, The decorative art of today, trans. James I. Dunnett, Cambridge MA 1987.
45 Ανδρέας Γιακουμακάτος, Ο Νέος Αρχαιολογικός Νόμος και η Προστασία της Μοντέρνας Αρχιτεκτονικής [Andreas Giakoumakatos, The New Archaeological Law and the Protection of Modern Architecture, in: Panagiotis Tournikiotis (Ed.), Where is Modernism?], Athens 2006, p. 114, https://docomomo.gr/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/tetradiamonternou01.pdf (18.01.2025).
46 Fredric Jameson, The cultural turn, Selected writings on the postmodern 1993–1998, London – New York 1998, pp. 3–5.



Fig. 5: Model of a typical grouping of houses for Aspra Spitia by Constantinos Doxiadis

based on occupational status served as a mechanism of spatialized class distinction. Over time, older generations gravitated toward second- and third-phase apartments, citing their greater convenience, whereas younger residents expressed a renewed appreciation for the traditional aesthetics of the older stone masonry buildings.

This dynamic underscores a temporal shift in architectural valuation wherein spaces once deemed inadequate are later reinterpreted through a nostalgic lens. This paradox reflects broader debates on modernism's evolving legacy wherein functionalist paradigms are reassessed through the aesthetics of memory and cultural continuity.[47]

VI) Vacancy, automation, and the challenge of continuity—Why are so many buildings empty? Do you feel that you became rooted in this land and settlement?

Increased automation of the factory has led to a shrinking workforce, resulting in a surplus of uninhabited residential units. Despite continued operation of the mine and aluminium plant, significant portions of the workers' settlement remain vacant and unmaintained. This spatial redundancy reflects the broader trajectory of industrial settlements in the post-Fordist era[48] where technological advancements render earlier urban typologies obsolete.

At the same time, residents' profound emotional and historical attachments to the settlement are increasingly destabilized by policies that disincentivize long-term habitation. As one resident reflects, "*We lived, we worked, we grew up here, a lot of us got married in this settlement, so of course we feel connected.*" Yet, the high post-retirement rental costs force many to relocate, severing intergenerational continuity and reinforcing the settlement's status as a transient urban entity. The absence of a cemetery in the planning schema further underscores its function as a temporary living space within a larger globalized urban network.

Conclusion – Becoming Historical?

The resident narratives illuminate a settlement suspended between the forces of historicization and the imperatives of productive/automated adaptation. While modernist principles remain embedded in its spatial organization, evolving economic structures, shifting paradigms of technological governance, and transformations in the social fabric increasingly destabilize its initial urban vision. The ontological status of the settlement, whether it is to be conceived as a fixed historical artefact or as an urban entity in perpetual formation, remains an unresolved inquiry, one that encapsulates broader tensions between architectural heritage, socio-economic restructuring, and the fluid nature of modernity itself, ultimately raising the question of what the entopia means for a new modern landscape beyond the need for an inventive continuum.

47 Fredric Jameson, Postmodernism, or the cultural logic of late capitalism, London 1991, pp. 121–148.
48 David Harvey, The condition of postmodernity: An enquiry into the origins of cultural change, Oxford 1989.

Federica Fava, Giovanni Caudo

Reloading Modern Heritage in Rome

Emotional Health and City-Making in Vigne Nuove

Abstract

This article explores the concept of "mindscape" as a driver for heritage regeneration, addressing the growing mental health crisis exacerbated by urban isolation and environmental disconnection. Drawing on the Council of Europe conventions on "Landscape" (Florence, 2000) and the "Value of Cultural Heritage" (Faro, 2005), the research investigates how cultural and natural heritage can foster emotionally healthy and resilient urban districts. Focusing on Vigne Nuove, a 1970s public housing complex in Rome, the study employs the mindscape framework to analyze immaterial layers of heritage, integrating emotional, affective, and perceptual dimensions into urban transformation processes. By operationalizing mindscapes, the research aims to better understand heritage sites in their multiple dimensions, as well as to mitigate urban challenges, redefine spatial production, and create new urban commons, ultimately contributing to a topography of collective wellbeing and adaptive urban futures.

Reloading Heritage

Building on the principles of the European Conventions on "Landscape" (Florence 2000)[1] and, more importantly, the "Value of Cultural Heritage for Society" (Faro 2005),[2] the following investigation was driven by a quest to explore alternative ways of considering the social role that heritage might play in urban contexts. By introducing the concept of "heritage communities", the Faro Convention is widely regarded as a turning point in reframing how heritage is conceived and valued according to community and temporal variables. It sheds light on the prominent role of heritage relational values, opening novel perspectives on their integration in both architecture and urban planning.[3,4]

This contribution draws on the results of ongoing research that aims to advance urban strategies for integrating heritage discourses within cities' transitions toward healthy and resilient perspectives.[5] Increasingly, culture and cultural heritage are recognized as potential components supporting urban quality and wellbeing. Social cohesion, sense of belonging, and identity are examples of the potential benefits generated by heritage-driven transformation, that can nurture de-medicalized strategies to particularly address current emotional needs.[6] Conceived as a meaning-making

1 Council of Europe, Landscape Convention (ETS No. 176), https://www.coe.int/en/web/landscape/the-european-landscape-convention (05.09.2025).

2 Council of Europe, Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (ETS No. 199), https://www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage/faro-convention (05.09.2025).

3 Katia Fabbricatti / Lucie Boissenin / Michele Citoni, Heritage community resilience: Towards new approaches for urban resilience and sustainability, in: City, Territory and Architecture 7, 2020, Article 17, https://doi.org/10.1186/s40410-020-00126-7; Federica Fava, Ongoing adaptive reuse: Patterns of heritage resilience before and after COVID-19, in: Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development 14, Issue 4, 2024, https://doi.org/10.1108/JCHMSD-06-2021-0116.

4 Heike Oevermann / Levente Polyák / Hanna Szemzö / Harald A. Mieg, Open Heritage: Community-driven adaptive reuse in Europe: Best practice, Basel 2023, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783035626827.

5 This line of research was motivated by growing problems in regard to matters of mental distress emerging worldwide. During and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the rise of common mental conditions such as loneliness, depression, and anxiety have become epidemic; cf. https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3032ipote (05.09.2025); Caroline Hickman / Elizabeth Marks / Panu Pihkala / Susan Clayton / R Eric Lewandowski / Elouise E Mayall / Britt Wray / Catriona Mellor / Lise van Susteren, Climate anxiety in children and young people and their beliefs about government responses to climate change: A global survey, in: The Lancet Planetary Health 5, Issue 12, 2021, e863–873, https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196(21)00278-3.

6 cf. the concept of social prescribing, today part of the National Health Service England: https://www.england.nhs.uk/personalisedcare/social-prescribing/ (05.09.2025).

process, heritage implies an emotional work whose effects extend far beyond material objects,[7] affecting not only participants' feelings but also their agency. Following this evidence, it can be affirmed that for urban landscapes to be regenerated and cared for, a dual process of energization must act simultaneously on both the social fabric and physical structure of the city. In this perspective, heritage introduces key components of culture, education, and imagination, that help nurture—or even rebuild—those bonds which are increasingly important for preserving human and environmental life, contributing to advancing a dynamic and participatory idea of heritage conservation.

The psychological stance presented above has been developed as part of a European-funded research project titled "CHANGES" (Cultural Heritage Active Innovation for Sustainable Society), which complies with various missions and specific components of the Italian National Resilience Plan.[8] In this context, our work has grown according to the sub-project "RELOAD" (REpairing heritage Landscape, Originating ADaptive abilities), which hypothesizes that the activation of cultural and natural heritage—as understood in the abovementioned conventions—can play a crucial role in defining new dimensions of public health. The investigation thus proposes a focus on "*broken*"[9] contexts: those wounded by traumatic events, conditions of abandonment, or physical and social marginality. In other words: areas where both the territory and people can be considered subjects of repair. By linking mental and urban landscapes, our intention is therefore to propose "points of analysis" through which to consider community-based value and therefore foster a living idea of conservation, grounded in innovations[10] and the vitality of care.[11]

Our project benefitted from the collaboration with a regeneration project titled "We-Z" (emotional WEll-being of generation Z: reconnecting communities and spaces through imperfect health)[12] working on a similar topic and focusing on the same area of Vigne Nuove, a 1970s public housing district located in the northern periphery of Rome.

The next sections present the theoretical approach that has led the development of the objectives and of a methodological approach to heritage objects/sites, followed by the case study of Vigne Nuove. The article concludes with remarks that open the discussion towards further research directions.

From Embodied Heritage to Palimpsest via Mindscapes

"Wastescape", "drosscapes", and "walkscapes" are just some of the neologisms that in recent decades have accompanied the redefinition of the idea of landscape, supporting its shift from a static panorama to a dynamic and relational phenomenon. The concept of "mindscape", introduced in 2017 by the Italian psychiatrist Vittorio Lingiardi, adds a further interpretation that is necessary to orient vital and healthy territorial developments. For Lingiardi, mindscapes are defined as "*landscapes collected in the psyche and psyches immersed in landscapes. Visual perceptions that become mental visions.*"[13] Beyond sight, therefore, the mindscape expresses an intimate relationship with the body, involving a sensory participation that entangles affects and memories of the land. Blurring the line between natural and cultural matters, the co-evolutive dimension of the (mind)landscape pairs with the performative heritage stance introduced above. The concept of mindscape is therefore instrumental to investigate other "*hidden dimensions*"[14] that shape the territory, considering the relationalities between space, values, and behaviors. On the other hand, it can be paired with "supplement"—a

7 Laurajane Smith, Emotional heritage: Visitor engagement at museums and heritage sites, London 2021.
8 Italian National Resilience Plan, Rome 2021, https://www.italiadomani.gov.it/content/dam/sogei-ng/documenti/PNRR%20Aggiornato.pdf (05.09.2025).
9 The research includes emblematic case studies such as the former Borgo Sabotino nuclear power plant (Latina) and the Nazzano hydroelectric power plant (Rome). Along with Vigne Nuove, they are instrumental to addressing issues characterizing urban peri-urban territories, stemming from modern ways of production and living.
10 OMA, 'CRONOCAOS' (Venice Biennale, 2010), https://cdn.sanity.io/files/5azy6oei/production/27a57c22474166b447b389f2c2660ba99182f711.pdf (05.09.2025).
11 Elena Pulcini, Care of the world: Fear, responsibility and justice in the global age, Dordrecht 2013.
12 The project is funded through the first call of the European Urban Initiative—Innovative Actions in Support of the New European Bauhaus (NEB). The two authors jointly coordinated the project for Roma Tre University, Department of Architecture. For further details see: https://www.urban-initiative.eu/ia-cities/roma/home (05.09.2025).
13 Vittorio Lingiardi, Mindscapes. Psiche nel paesaggio, Milano 2017, p. 17.
14 Edward T. Hall, The hidden dimension, New York 1990.

surplus of imagination, which Corbotz[15] identifies as a fundamental part of the long-lasting stratification process that shapes the land, defined through his apt metaphor of the *palimpsest*. It is in the relationship between subject and object—psychic and physical—that Corbotz's *palimpsest* is configured as a continuously open figure, a subject continuously in motion. The use of the *palimpsest* metaphor in contemporary design thus entails a critique of modernist planning. It introduces a reflection on the tension between time and history and the organizational structures that have shaped urban and territorial development. The *palimpsest* represents the result of a continuous stratification of transformations. This process is particularly evident in unintentional monuments[16]—places that emerge from the overlapping of disconnected intentions and become episodes of collective history, contributing to the construction of our shared space. The focus on unintentional monuments and complex and problematic heritage represents a crucial area for contemporary experimentation—a domain of particular interest to the authors of this article. The radical nature of these sites, which lack the pathos of beauty that often obscures the perception of transformation, positions them as genuine laboratories for experimentation and innovation.

As the philosopher Silvano Tagliagambe[17] points out, the semantic shift from landscape to mindscape identifies landscape in an interim space between two worlds, the physical and the psychic, which becomes meaningful not only on a cognitive (rational) basis but also on an emotional and affective one. For the landscape to be collectively appropriated, cared for, and enhanced, such sensibilities assume a pivotal role. If the landscape is an "event", resulting from the common intelligence, Tagliagambe insists that it becomes necessary to consider personal and collective stories of everyday life, usually marginalized, in order to recognize what the landscape truly is. It is evident that this openness requires new approaches and articulations, aimed at discovering what values, imaginaries, and meanings imbue the contemporary city.

It needs to be said that, among these values, that of conservation is certainly put under tension in the duality between preserving and losing; a duality that is no longer viable if the objective is to project into the future, starting from what already exists, rather than merely bearing witness to the past. This understanding, therefore, becomes the prerequisite for orienting heritage and planning actions towards emotionally healthy urbanities, drawing on a subjectification process which is both singular and collective.

Vigne Nuove – An Interim Field

Since the nineteenth century, hygienic principles have matched with the need to guarantee a house for all. Post-World War II in Italy, the approval of Bill No. 43 ("Measures to increase blue-collar employment by facilitating the construction of workers' housing") opened up a peculiar urban discourse, firmly connecting housing, spatial production, work, and welfare. The Vigne Nuove complex is one result of this season of great public investments in the housing sector (Fig. 1), built during the late 1970s in the northeastern periphery of Rome and remaining largely unfinished. Designed under the coordination of Lucio Passarelli, today it is characterized by a diffuse sense of neglect and isolation. Inhabited in 1979, the complex originally housed approximately 3,300 residents and still retains a significant proportion of publicly owned properties. It concludes a sequence of public housing neighborhood, developed in the 1920s (Valmelaina), 1950s (Tufello), and the 1990s (Valmelaina Nuova), defining a territory where multiple actions of social, historical, and architectural valorization coexist.

Along with Corviale and Laurentino, Vigne Nuove is part of an experimental design initiative funded by



Fig. 1: Inner view of the Vigne Nuove complex (inner paths)

15 André Corboz, The land as palimpsest, in: Diogenes 31, Issue 121, 1983, pp. 12–34, https://doi.org/10.1177/039219218303112102.
16 Paola Viganò, Palimpsest metaphor: Figures and spaces of the contemporary project, in: Urban Planning 5, Issue 2, 2020, p. 167–171, https://doi.org/10.17645/up.v5i2.3251.
17 Silvano Tagliagambe, Il Paesaggio: Glossario, Melfi 2021.



Fig. 2: External views of the Vigne Nuove complex (south-east side)

GESCAL (Gestione case per i lavoratori resources) (1969),[18] which aimed to combine residential solutions with collective facilities.[19] The creation of an "urban effect" was entrusted to a central equipped axis that ideally completes the triangular layout of the complex, organizing a series of spaces of various types (both open and closed) to host common services of urban scale (including a mental health service, now devoted to minors). The monumental character of the project is justified by its role as an urban hub (Fig. 2), with Vigne Nuove envisioned as a futuristic landmark,[20] a quality perhaps more evident from the never-realized roadway section of the Eastern Directional System that was planned to accompany the settlement according to the 1962 urban development plan. Today, it is listed in the *National Census of Italian Architecture of the Second Half of the 20th Century*, promoted by the Ministry of Culture, and becoming a symbol of Italian Modernism. Nevertheless, considering the interconnections described above, Vigne Nuove allows reflection on the complex urban landscape of the area, far beyond individual buildings.

Objectives and Methodological Results

Following the argumentations cited above, the research adopts the concept of mindscape to develop "points of analysis" (Table 1) that are useful for understanding the immaterial layers of an object or site. Due to the convergence of experiences, the Vigne Nuove district offers an experimental ground to test and further advance such tools. In this view, for instance, interviews collected through the oral history methodology[21] in the "We-Z" project can be considered as both an operational instrument and a

18 *GESCAL* was a national fund dedicated to the construction of public housing for workers.
19 Piero Ostilio Rossi, Roma: Guida all'architettura moderna 1909–2011, Roma – Bari 2012.
20 Michela Esposito, Il Piano Di Zona n.7 'Vigne Nuove' a Roma. Analisi e Strategie per La Riqualificazione, in: Benedetto Todaro / Federico De Matteis (Eds.), Il Secondo Progetto. Interventi Sull'abitare Pubblico. Linee Guida per La Riqualificazione Dei Quartieri Innovativi Nell'Italia Centromeridionale, Vol. 2, Roma 2012, pp. 49–62.
21 One of the project outputs is the realization of a Digital Memory Archive. This will be composed of video-recorded contributions from Vigne Nuove residents, inhabitants of the surrounding area, professionals, activists, and scholars engaged at different levels in the district.

reservoir of information to be processed through the mindscape framework.

The overall aim is to illuminate a territorial reality, sometimes anectodical, made of perceptions, feelings, and affects, making them operational in the valorization process. Despite their central role in fostering the capacity to act and engage in the urban discourse, such immaterialities are usually underrepresented. Unlike traditional approaches, the definition of cultural heritage proposed by the Faro Convention shifts the focus to "*constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions*"[22] that people recognize in their environment. Drawing on an anthropological perspective, this framework highlights the need to acknowledge everyday aspects as part of the cultural legacy through which the value of certain places or objects is defined. Therefore, the recognition of this kind of stratification becomes a first step in representing vernacular histories and meaning, placing them at the center of the process of regenerating human and urban bodies.

Beyond site-specific objectives, this attention also becomes a way to reinterpret, make operational, and thus "save" one of the main objectives (or, rather, an "*obsession*" in Colomina's words[23]) of the Modern Movement: that of physical and mental health. Our investigation, indeed, is grounded in the conviction that technical solutions, even those that are nature-based, are insufficient to address the challenges of the present.

Accordingly, Table 1 identifies six analysis domains, each associated with specific questions deemed crucial for identifying the values and disvalues that communities and individuals attribute to a selected

ANALYSIS DOMAINS	DESCRIPTION	QUESTIONS	VALUE DOMAINS
1) Elective Places	Privileged spaces or contexts with strong symbolic value. They represent specific values or meanings, often tied to individuals' primary experiences and central to defining identity, culture, or social practices.	· Can you say that the object/site is a significant place for you? Why? · Is there a particular story or anecdote you associate with the object/site? · What do you like or dislike about the object/site?	Subjective experience values
2) Orientation	Consideration of the object/site in one's daily path; geographic and orientational significance.	· Is the object/site a notable point in your landscape? · Is the object/site relevant for orienting yourself in the territory?	Symbolic and identity value
3) Movement, Crossing	Perceptual considerations of the object/site while crossing the territory, taking into account the different evolutionary phases of the individual.	· How do you (not) cross the object/site? · What meaning does the object/site have in your evolutionary growth experience? · What feelings, perceptions, and emotions prevail in relation to the object/site?	Comfort value

22 Art. 2, Faro Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society 2005.
23 Beatriz Colomina, X-ray architecture, Zurich 2019.

ANALYSIS DOMAINS	DESCRIPTION	QUESTIONS	VALUE DOMAINS
4) Images, Metaphors, Feelings	Exploration of the (dis) affective bond that individuals establish with the object/site, identifying references, metaphors, and associations that traverse the common sphere.	· What images does the object/site evoke for you and also in the collective imagination? · What names does it take in common jargon? · What territory/perimeter do you associate with the object/site?	Creative and imaginative value
5) Attractors, Detractors	Considerations of aspects that encourage or discourage the use, visitation, and participation in the object/site.	· What attracts you to the object/site? Why do you visit it? · What pushes you away from the object/site? What is missing?	Use and functional value
6) Daily Life, Rituals, Care	Considerations of identity based on the daily, ordinary, and ritual relationships that characterize the object/site.	· What makes you feel at home in the object/site? · What role does the object/site play in your daily experience? How do you (not) take care of it? · What symbols and/or rituals do you associate with the object/site?	Comfort value

Table 1: Analytical points of the mindscape

heritage object or site. As an open tool, it facilitates the emergence of immaterial layers that compose the mindscape, by connecting emotional, affective, and perceptual aspects to the land.

Conclusion

This article explores the concept of "mindscape" as a potential driver for heritage enhancement and regeneration. By healing the divide between the environment and human subjects, Lingiardi's neologism offers a framework for focusing on the "normality" of relationality that shapes both the minds and the lands of contemporary cities. The "analytical points of the mindscape" serve as the foundation for a research endeavour that seeks to place human imagination and memory at the core of urban transformation and management processes, thereby contributing to the creation of healthy and resilient territories.

Like other modern interventions across Italy and Europe, the case of Vigne Nuove will provide an experimental platform to test and further develop the ideas presented above. By operationalizing mindscapes, it is believed that at least some of the challenges affecting such contexts can be mitigated and/or prevented. In our view, this represents the first step toward a novel approach to spatial production, one that involves the creation of new urban commons to define a topography of affects.[24]

24 Project PE 0000020 CHANGES – CUP F83C22001650006, NRP Mission 4 Component 2 Investment 1.3, Funded by the European Union – NextGenerationEU.

Heike Oevermann

20th Century Housing Heritage
Conserving, Adapting, Participating

Abstract
Important residential buildings and estates from the early 20th century are recognized as housing heritage. Five (former) workers' housing estates in Austria (Eysnfeld, Steyr; Knappensiedlung, Hüttenberg) and Germany (Fritz-Schumacher-Siedlung, Hamburg; Ernst-Thälmann-Park Siedlung, Berlin; Piesteritz in Lutherstadt Wittenberg) together illustrate a complex field of conservation, adaptation, and participation regarding the management of change. The article argues for a sincere need for negotiation between different actors such as residents, owners, heritage authorities, and urban development authorities. Within this complex constellation of actors, we must weigh up heritage values and conservation practices, possible and necessary changes, as well as private, communal, and public interests. Thus, conservation and adaptation require broad participation if heritage protection is to exist not only on paper but in practice.

Conserving, Adapting, Participating

Important residential buildings and estates from the early 20th century in Austria and Germany are recognized as housing heritage. This designation has also been extended to more recent developments, including settlements from the 1960s to the 1980s. Living in a listed building means residing in a home that is considered to be of outstanding value, which forms part of the recognized cultural heritage of a city, region—or may even be listed as *UNESCO World Heritage*. At the same time, listed architecture and ensembles are constantly being remodelled, upgraded, or adapted. Statutory protection is substance-based, defining housing ensembles as objects. The intangible, living dimensions—comprising the ideas, concepts, and practices of a place—are not part of a listing and hence might be at risk, including characteristics such as affordability.

Housing estates are objects both of design concern and also a factor in urban and real estate development, as they serve daily needs and identification as a home and contribute to the housing market. Furthermore, ownership models, actors, and policies have great impact on the protection, use, and appropriation of the historical built structure. Hence, our most private space intersects the public sphere of a settlement's wider community-building and the legally defined public interest of heritage protection laws and policies.

Conservating, adapting, and participating in the housing heritage of the 20th century connects to an overarching field of academic studies, particularly from planning and social science disciplines, which are associated with social issues, questions of management, and aspects of sustainability.[1] In this broad context, the following arguments are particularly relevant: living in a listed building might serve as a mark of distinction for culturally inclined members of the middle class; and in the international property sector, heritage designation reinforces rising land and rental prices and corresponding gentrification processes,[2] especially in cities facing development pressure. These two factors have an exclusionary effect, thereby changing the character of residential estates that were originally intended to house working-class communities and to serve broader socio-political intentions. In contrast, we

1 Cf. Frank Eckardt / Sabine Meier (Eds.), Handbuch Wohnsoziologie, Wiesbaden 2021, pp. 25–38; Barbara Schönig / Lisa Vollmer (Eds.), Wohnungsfragen ohne Ende?! Ressourcen für eine soziale Wohnraumversorgung, Bielefeld 2020; Maren Harnak / Natalie Heger / Matthias Brunner, Adaptive heritage re-use. Strategies for post-war modernist housing, Berlin 2020; Heidi Sinning / Guido Spars (Eds.), Sharing-Ansätze für Wohnen und Quartier: Nachhaltigkeitstransformation, kollaborative Konsummodelle und Wohnungswirtschaft, Stuttgart 2019.
2 Frank Eckardt, Gentrifizierung: Forschung und Politik zu städtischen Verdrängungsprozessen, Wiesbaden 2018.

are seeing housing vacancies in structurally weak regions or peripheral districts; some residential ensembles are considered too inconvenient to live in (no garden, no car park). Instead of conserving, modifying, and enhancing historical residential buildings in line with heritage requirements, new developments are purported to present a simpler answer to current housing needs, especially for smaller municipalities struggling to attract residents. However, this approach prevents the sustainability-focused and climate-friendly structural changes that are much-needed in urban and regional development policy.[3]

Communities and civil society provide many examples of securing heritage through initiatives and action-taking, and community engagement is widely discussed in the international heritage context.[4] Could we conceive of participatory conservation or "*co-caring*"[5] for buildings and settlements? Planning theory and practices address issues of participation, but in heritage conservation in Germany, Austria, and other countries there remains little progress to establish understanding, assessing, and managing heritage as a form of "*doing together*".[6] Participation is a vague concept and is understood here in its broad sense—ranging from passive participation in receiving information, through communication, to active action such as shared decision making.

Within this complex field of conservation, adaptation, and participation there is, first of all:

- A sincere need for negotiation between different actors such as residents, owners, heritage authorities, and urban development authorities.
- Within this complex constellation of actors, we must weigh up heritage values and conservation practices, possible and necessary changes, as well as private, communal, and public interests.
- Conservation and adaptation require broad participation.

Case studies of community-driven adaptive heritage reuse in several European countries show that communal values and participation strengthen the use and conservation of built heritage, as well as awareness-raising and identification.[7] Other scholars argue that participation is an approach to assess social values which provides opportunities for diverse forms of knowledge and better understanding the heritage's complexity—based not least on the relationship between architectural significance and residents' daily practices.[8]

The article is informed by the initial findings of the three-year research project "Living in a Listed Settlement".[9] The project focuses on 24 case studies in Germany and Austria (some introduced in this chapter), which correspond to the German/Austrian culture of planning codes and their policies and practices. The project aims to achieve a better understanding and insights into the mutual interdependencies of value attributions, heritage conservation practices, and instruments such as the "Denkmalpflegeplan" (Conservation Management Plan). Three main perspecti-

3 Bundesstiftung Baukultur, Baukulturbericht 2018/19 Erbe – Bestand – Zukunft; Bundesstiftung Baukultur, Baukulturbericht 2022/23 Neue Umbaukultur, https://www.bundesstiftung-baukultur.de/publikationen/baukulturbericht (12.12.2024).

4 Cf. VdL-Tagung Denkmalpflege und Partizipation, Mannheim 09.–12.06.2024; Heike Oevermann / Eszter Gantner (Eds.), Securing urban heritage: Agents, access, and securitization, London – New York 2019; Gill Chitty (Ed.), Heritage, conservation and communities, London – New York 2017.

5 Thanks to Barbara Schönig for this expression.

6 Heike Oevermann / Johanna-Theresa Günzel / Kirsten Angermann, Partizipative Denkmalpflege?, in: Forum Stadt, 2023/3, pp. 222–238.

7 Heike Oevermann / Levente Polyák / Hanna Szemzö / Harald A. Mieg, Open Heritage. Community-driven adaptive reuse in Europe: Best practices, Berlin – Boston 2023.

8 Cf. Elizabeth Robson, Assessing the social values of built heritage: Participatory methods as ways of knowing, in: Architecture, 3, 2023, pp. 428–445; Harriet Bell, Listing, 'significance' and practised persuasion at Spa Green housing estate, London, in: Social and Cultural Geography, 2011, 12:03, pp. 223–242.

9 Heike Oevermann / Barbara Schönig, Wohnen im Denkmal: Erhaltung und Gestaltung von denkmalgeschützten baulichen Realisierungen zentraler Wohnkonzepte des 20. Jahrhunderts, 2023–2026, https://gepris.dfg.de/gepris/projekt/511804015 (03.09.2025). The team comprises Prof. Barbara Schönig and Lena Hecker from the Bauhaus University Weimar and Luisa Omonsky, Johann Gallis, and Heike Oevermann from the Technical University Vienna. The project is funded by the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft: DFG 511804015).

ves—institutionalized heritage conservation, residents respectively owners, and urban planning—were partly examined through document analysis, site visits, and interviews to date.[10]

20th Century Housing Heritage: What are we Talking About?

Housing settlements are embedded within a greater area—a city, town, village, or landscape—and are functionally connected to it. They are architectural ensembles consisting of multiple buildings and open spaces whose primary use is residential. Other functions such as retail, education, etc. may also be present but play a minor role; this differentiates residential estates from mixed-used constructions that shaped European villages, towns, and cities for centuries.

Built settlements make a difference to their surroundings in having their own texture, image, and recognizability. A designed plan—comprising certain housing types and their variations, as well as green areas and gardens—characterizes the estate and creates a kind of visible "neighborhood".

Twentieth-century history provides manifold intentions, concepts, and built manifestations of housing estates.[11] With industrialization, companies were in need of creating living space for workers; concepts ranging from the garden city to the superblock estates of 1920s "Red Vienna" contributed significantly to architectural history through understanding planning and design as a social responsibility; in the post-war period, housing estates in both eastern and western Europe reflected the need for shelter and the setting of new standards on a massive scale, and individual pioneering projects manifested utopias of progress, with examples found in Berlin, such as the highway superstructure of the Schlangenbader Straße, and elsewhere. Last but not least, new forms of ownership, namely shared ownership, and community-building were established through cooperatives (Genossenschaften), becoming a milestone in 20th century housing heritage; cooperatives in Germany are recognized by *UNESCO* as intangible heritage.[12]

Two examples of listed workers' housing in Austria—namely Eysnfeld in Steyr (Upper Austria) and the Knappensiedlung in Hüttenberg (Carinthia)—illustrate the challenges of conserving, adapting, and participating in more detail. Eysnfeld is listed as part of the ensemble: "*Die patriarchale Industriedenkmal-Anlage von Josef Werndl und der Österreichischen Waffenfabriksgesellschaft 1870 bis 1920–21*"[13] (The patriarchal industrial complex by Josef Werndl and the Austrian Arms Factory Company, 1870 to 1920–21), together with other residential architecture, buildings for production, and technical infrastructure (Fig. 1). The row houses which are listed today are situated on Steyr's river island and were organized in four rows in a rectangular position to each side of the only through street within the estate. The row houses consisted of two rooms for a family,



Fig. 1: Eysnfeld, Steyr, client Josef Werndl and the Austrian Arms Factory Company, 1870 to 1920/21

10 Analyzed documents comprised listing notices (Denkmalbescheide, 10), databanks, and archive material (3) or the ISEK (integrated urban development concept, 8). Interviewees comprised employees of the heritage administrations (13), employees of housing associations, cooperatives, or other forms of ownership (9), residents (12), and from urban politics (1). The material was collected and interviews conducted by Luisa Omonsky, Lena Hecker, and Johann Gallis. Site visits to Eisenfeld/Steyr and Knappensiedlung by the author and students and explorative interviews with residents (4 in Steyr; 4 in Knappensiedlung), the housing association in Steyr, and representatives of the heritage authorities (2 in Steyr, 1 in Knappensiedlung) in October (Steyr: 28–29; Knappensiedlung: 30–31) 2024.

11 Cf. Vittorio-Magnano Lampugnani, Die Stadt im 20. Jahrhundert. Visionen, Entwürfe, Gebautes, Berlin 2010.

12 UNESCO, Idea and practice of organizing shared interests in cooperatives, 2016, https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/idea-and-practice-of-organizing-shared-interests-in-cooperatives-01200 (03.09.2025).

13 Denkmalbescheid vom 18. Juni 2019, Aktz. BDA-60911.obj/0011-RECHT/2018.



Fig. 2: Knappensiedlung, Hüttenberg, S. Theiss / H. Jaksch, 1921–23

four units per each two-storey house section, and an area of greenery for each family unit.[14] They are mostly used as small, two-room apartments of 40–45 square meters and now incorporate bathrooms. The estate is mainly owned by a regional housing association and lacks energy-efficient upgrades as well as simple renovation works. This workers' housing is still affordable for low-income groups—although heating costs have become problematically high—and is surrounded by an exceptional environment along the riverside facing the historic center. It remains to be seen if and how this concept and rent levels of basic housing, the careful renovation of the architecture, maintaining substance and appearance, and some enhancement of climate-friendly energy performance might be balanced in the future.

The Knappensiedlung is a rural, peripherally situated settlement that was originally erected for house miners and their families, designed by S. Theiss and H. Jaksch in 1921–23 (Fig. 2); unlike Eysnfeld, the houses have been privately owned since the 1970s. The settlement consists of 108 small and basic row houses in five typological variations, which are smartly designed with few, repetitive elements such as windows and doors.[15] What characterizes the settlement is its unifying appearance through the loose three rows that follow the slope and which are divided into four, six, or eight adjoining houses with a light-coloured brick base storey and a dark upper floor made of a wooden construction and a conjoined roof. The main challenges today are the many changes in construction and appearance due to extensions and new construction; another challenge is the dwindling feeling of "neighborhood" (with some newcomers using the properties only as holiday homes). Most changes seem to be do-it-yourself constructions which are driven by personal interests only, which displeases other residents because open spaces are blocked and individual design choices such as differently colored roofing disrupt the perceived aesthetic unity. These weaknesses overlap significantly with the concerns of the heritage authorities, although, on a general level, they are not well regarded for their prescriptive policies. The balance between private, communal, and public interests in conservating and adapting the housing heritage in Hüttenberg seems to be lost, and no instruments have yet been established to agree on a "doing together", concerning standards of protection and conservation.

Values and Common Ground

The interlinkages between the heritage values that are defined in inventories and those that are defined by the various actors who live in, use, develop, and/or own these properties, are thematized in a larger discourse, especially within the English-speaking countries, and—referring to the Burra Charter—several scholars highlight the importance of assessing social values.[16] John Pendlebury and colleagues ask the following in an article on social housing in Byker (Newcastle upon Tyne): "*Is this valorization part of wider democratic and inclusive ideas of how society might collectively think about heritage, or is it purely a top-down construction of a cultural elite, part of an 'Authorised Heritage Discourse' imposed on residents?*"[17] Indeed, the authors noticed a shift in understanding housing heritage not only as "brick and mortar" but also as home and

14 Anna Schmid / Christiane Weber, Die gebaute Geschichte des Arbeiterwohnens. Die Arbeitersiedlung Eysnfeld, Ennsleite und Münichholz in Steyr, in: Michael John / Herta Neiß (Eds.), Arbeit, Wohlstand, Macht, Oberösterreichische Landesausstellung Steyr 2021, pp. 202–217.

15 Denkmalbescheid vom 24. März 1992, Aktz.14.343/10/91.

16 Cf. James Lesh, Social value and the conservation of urban heritage places in Australia, in: Historic Environment, 31/1, 2019, pp. 42–62.

17 John Pendlebury / Zim Townshend / Rose Gilroay, Social housing as heritage: The case of Byker, Newcastle upon Tyne, in: Lisanne Gibson / John Pendlebury (Eds.), Valuing historic environments, Farnham – Burlington, 2009, pp. 179–200, quote p. 182.

place. Listing can be understood as a management instrument that might change residents' perceptions but also enable a more complex understanding for all involved actors if the process is sensitive and well-communicated.

The *Austrian Heritage Act*, and similarly many German ones, defines listed buildings as objects of historical, artistic, and other cultural significance, and protects the existing fabric, so-called substance (Substanz), the historical—evolved—appearance (Erscheinungsbild), and the artistic effect and perception (Wirkung) of the object;[18] however, unlike the Burra Charter, it does not explicitly define that social values contribute to the cultural significance.[19] However, the Austrian heritage authority has set a (national) standard for integrating extended heritage values in the context of listing ensembles.[20] With this tool, cultural significance can be assessed through understanding the individual and communal reception of the place and built heritage, thereby specifically strengthening the awareness and acknowledgement of listed objects for users and the public. Consequently, historical values can be extended to the significance of history in lifetime, storytelling, and communal living. Architectural and artistic qualities and spatial values provide orientation, familiarity, and offer a richness of form by keeping a unifying experience of place. Social values can also correspond to the built formation of a neighborhood and comprehensible areas of identification for residents. Emotional values such as the sense of belonging or rootedness are highly persuasive. Furthermore, sustainability and careful development are recognized as possible interests that may strengthen and protect the heritage values of housing ensembles.[21]

Indeed, our initial research findings indicate that justifications and arguments in urban planning and statements by the habitants connect to the significance of the ensembles as defined by the authorized heritage institutions. Urban planning documents mention aspects such as identification, while other documents indicate branding or urban image arguments. Few documents refer to the innovative or experimental concepts of the housing heritage. The assessments of owners and residents vary slightly. Both groups emphasize the value of location and setting, as well as green spaces, and smart layouts of the ensemble's and apartments' architecture. Residents also emphasize the value of neighborhood.

This means that we can think of participation as a value in heritage by assessing processes that contribute to a multifaceted and resident-related understanding of place. Through the aforementioned broader approach to listed buildings and ensembles, we can not only refer to the aforementioned understanding of social and communal values in English-speaking countries but can also bridge the gaps between residents' value-based assessment and the understanding and practice of authorized heritage institutions. Despite the existence of conflicts between the differing interests, the argument highlights that an extended, value-based approach[22] to the assessment and management of heritage sites provides a common and also complex basis for negotiation. It serves to connect private, communal, and public interests.

Housing Concepts

When it comes to concepts such as affordability, things are getting more complex: How do we conserve housing heritage as architecture and places that manifest and represent not only tangible but also conceptual heritage values?

The Fritz-Schumacher-Siedlung in Hamburg (1919–21, initiator and client F. Schumacher) is an example of the simplest housing provision (Fig. 3). The settlement was constructed with substitute building materials and individual gardens for self-sufficiency but also with a design concept of color by Otto-Fischer Trachau. The settlement was initiated by the senate of Hamburg and aimed to reduce homelessness in the "bad years" after the First World War. Most of the repair and modernization was done by the residents to save costs. The variety of houses and the size and form of open spaces and gardens enable slightly different appropriations in form, color, and material without detracting from the

18 Gesamte Rechtsvorschrift Denkmalschutzgesetz, §1 1.(1), §4 2 (2), https://www.jusline.at/gesetz/dmsg/gesamt (16.12.2024).
19 ICOMOS Australia, Burra Charter, 2013 [1st Ed. 1979], Art. 1, §1.2, portal.iphan.gov.br/uploads/ckfinder/arquivos/The-Burra-Charter-2013-Adopted-31_10_2013.pdf (13.12.2024).
20 Bundeskanzleramt / Bundesdenkmalamt, Standards für Ensemble-Unterschutzstellung, Vienna 2013, https://www.bmkoes.gv.at/dam/jcr:cbc729d3-bfbd-4a8d-870c-5a42f9916333/Ensemble-Unterschutzstellungen-2013-nb.pdf (12.12.2024).
21 Bernd Euler-Rolle, Erweiterte Begründungskontexte für Ensembles, in: Bundeskanzelramt, Bundesdenkmalamt, Standards für Ensemble-Unterschutzstellungen, pp. 26 f.
22 Ingrid Scheurmann, Historic preservation as change management: Methods in context, in: Jens M. Gurr / Rolf Parr / Dennis Hardt (Eds.), Metropolitan research, methods and approaches, Berlin 2022.



Fig. 3: Fritz-Schumacher-Siedlung, Hamburg, initiator and client F. Schumacher, 1919–21



Fig. 4: Ernst-Thälmann-Park-Siedlung, Berlin, VEB Wohnungsbaukombinat Berlin, general planner: H. Stingl, 1984–86

designed unity. The estate was recognized as a listed ensemble in 2013. The atmosphere created by the single-storey houses with half-hipped roofs set in huge gardens is still outstanding, creating a rural charm in a metropolitan region characterized by development pressure.

The historical intentions for affordable housing or even housing for the minimum subsistence level cannot be preserved by heritage law but by land and rental policies and shared-ownership models only, and the Fritz Schumacher settlement has been organized as a cooperative since 1920, allowing management of its own property and financial affairs. However, the owners and residents may no longer belong to the basic socioeconomic class and might no longer meet the former intention to reduce homelessness—but nevertheless, the right to keep one's place of residence also weighs heavily.

Heritage status can prevent re-densification of garden or park areas within built ensembles and thus protect the social, environmental, and health-related dimension of housing estates. As a side effect, this also precludes gentrification on-site through private investment. The Ernst-Thälmann-Park Siedlung in Berlin (1984–86, *VEB Wohnungsbaukombinat Berlin*, general planner: H. Stingl) provides such an example (Fig. 4). Planned as a conversion of a former gasworks site, the estate is considered a showcase project for the capital city of Berlin during the GDR era in the 1980s, with buildings of eight floors, additional skyscrapers up to 12 storeys and place for several other functions such as retail, sports, and education. Notable features include a Thälmann monument, the site's park landscape of 16 ha, and a new type of prefabricated high-rise apartment block that was developed for the estate by M. Zumpe (WHH GT 84/85 ETP). In the context of high development pressure in Berlin, the Ernst-Thälmann-Park Siedlung is valued not least for the green parkland setting, and the listed status granted in 2014 offers a way of protection.

Heritage laws and policies in Germany and Austria protect built architecture and (external) appearance but might struggle to accommodate the intentions and concepts behind them. Similarly social values such as a good neighborhood or economic values such as affordability are not regulated by heritage laws; nevertheless, they highly influence the belonging to a settlements' community in the long-run. We have to understand whether planning and policymaking, or ownership-models might effectively interact with heritage conservation to address these impacts.

Negotiation and Appropriation

From a heritage perspective, we want to examine how forms of securing, care-taking, and careful adaptation can be organized under different forms of ownership such as residents as owners, private owners leasing apartments, housing associations, or housing cooperatives—to better understand if and how owners and tenants organize themselves and support heritage



Fig. 5: Piesteritz, Wittenberg, O.R. Salvisberg / P. Schmitthenner / G. Haberland, 1916–1919



Fig. 6: Knappensiedlung, Hüttenberg, S. Theiss / H. Jaksch, 1921–23

practices; and, conversely, what kinds of heritage instruments address and enable community engagement.

Scholars thematized repair, built intervention, or other forms of construction work as highly relevant issues to be negotiated.[23] These processes of communication and management also, as well as participation, depend on ownership constellation. Initial findings suggest that tenants are often excluded or else informed via top-down mechanisms, whereas owners are partners in negotiations with the authorities; however, involvement of a large number of private owners might multiply the need for communication and negotiation. Furthermore, findings indicate a need to address several issues concerning the uses of heritage: car parking, green areas, and do-it-yourself appropriation practices, next to repair and modernization.

Parking

Piesteritz, a rural workers' housing district of Lutherstadt-Wittenberg, was erected from 1916 to 1919 and designed by the architects O.R. Salvisberg, P. Schmitthenner, and G. Haberland. Formally inspired by "reform architecture", the types of housing on the estate reflected the company hierarchy of the adjacent nitrogen production factory (Fig. 5). The settlement is connected to a railway station. Today, as elsewhere, parking is an issue. In contrast to case study sites where cars are parked literally in front of the residences, blocking the small streets and green spaces, Piesteritz residents agreed on and use a shared parking lot on the main square and outside the settlement only, thereby maintaining the spatial qualities of the historic environment. However, what does it mean for community-building when the only square, the center of the village, is used solely for parking? Parking is not the main issue regulated by heritage laws, but it can negatively affect the intangible and tangible characteristics and restrict the future use of open and common spaces. Again, we have to understand whether planning and policymaking of urban development authorities, or housing associations and similar effectively interact with heritage conservation to address issues.

Do-It-Yourself

Alongside cars, open spaces, gardens, and views are a matter of negotiation concerning the use, appropriation, and adaptation of heritage. In the Knappensiedlung, residents complain about neighbors' self-built interventions—newly made roofs in red, or white plastic entrances doors are an issue of dislike; as are built structures such as fences, canopies, and garden shelters, arguing that they block views and access (Fig. 6). A common agreement on possible and necessary changes is wanted in order to ensure the survival of the settlements'

23 Cf. Reinhard Matz / Andreas Schwarting, Das Verschwinden der Revolution in der Renovierung. Die Geschichte der Gropius-Siedlung Dessau-Törten, Berlin 2011; Stuart Tappin, Living in the Brunswick Centre, in: Journal of Architectural Conservation, 2007, 13:2, pp. 175–190.

architectural unity; but, in practice, the authorities' prescriptive policies are ignored and the do-it-yourself approach without any agreement is seen as a self-given right since the residents are also owners.

Changes in lifestyles, local needs, and in residential demographics have obvious impacts on the use of housing settlements and might weaken or strengthen an ensemble's architectural qualities through adaptations. At the same time, there is the need to understand that top-down practices secure these qualities on paper but—if not accepted—do little to help in practice. We have to understand better if and how participatory approaches, dealing with what people call home, contribute to securing architectural qualities and acceptance for protection and care-taking. Housing heritage is more than "brick and mortar" conservation; it includes people and places.

Actors and Instruments

One hypothesis to emerge from the initial findings is that conservation and adaptation require participation. However, the constellation and actions of the actors, the instruments used, and the conservation practices show a different picture. In Germany and Austria, we see communication between owners and authorities, processes involving representational groups, and sometimes also engagement with initiatives on the one hand; but on the other hand, almost no direct communication between authorities and tenants, and also ongoing conflicts in negotiations with various private owners of housing settlements concerning do-it-yourself appropriations of the existing fabric. In this context, heritage authorities search for instruments to manage such complexities, and we note growing interest in the use of instruments such as conservation management plans (in German: Denkmalpflegepläne).

Revisiting James Semple Kerr's definition of a conservation (management) plan,[24] this tool provides common ground and a basis for agreement on balancing management for conservation versus careful development. Key to this is the process of understanding the place, assessing its significance and identifying issues, developing conservation policies, and preparing an action plan; or put more simply: understanding (verstehen), assessing (bewerten), and action-taking (handeln).[25] Although Kerr addresses several approaches for the value-based assessment, such as maps, plans, and surveys, there is little mention of explicitly plural voices as sources to understand what makes a place valuable to us and society. This is the same for Denkmalpflegepläne, which vary in structure and function between federal states in Germany and Austria due to different laws, institutions, and planning policies; however, Denkmalpflegepläne aim to secure approval for measures and interventions to carefully change and develop an ensemble, and also support awareness-raising and information about the cultural significance for all stakeholders. In some states, they are part of informal planning, whereas in others this instrument is integrated to varying degrees into municipal planning codes, e.g., in North Rhine Westphalia or Thuringia.[26] In Austria, these agreements are legally binding for six years, meaning that these interventions are not subject to any further steps in the formal planning approval process.[27]

Berlin's heritage authorities argue: "*The Denkmalpflegeplan (…) has proven to be very successful with different private owners, especially of course from the point of view of equal treatment and residential peace. (…) to be conserved collectively*".[28] However, to what extent can we really ensure residential harmony using heritage instruments, especially when dealing with heterogeneous groups of residents who do not form a community? The case study of the Knappensiedlung suggests that equal enforcement of the heritage protection requirements is closely monitored by the community and leads to complaints if there is a perception that a neighbor's intervention is being treated differently. The aforementioned challenge of many changes in structure, substance, and appearance has led to an increasing loss of the original aesthetic unity and subsequent criticism by local residents; but,

24 James Semple Kerr, The Conservation Plan, 2013 [1st edition 1982], https://openarchive.icomos.org/id/eprint/2146/1/ICOMOS-Australia-The-Conservation-Plan-7th-Edition.pdf (12.12.2024).
25 Maximilian Eisenköck / Ulrike Matzer / Michael Rainer / Wolfgang H Salcher, Villa Rezek. Conservation management plan, Kufstein 2023.
26 Volkmar Eidloth / Gerhard Ongyerth / Heinrich Walgern, Handbuch Städtebauliche Denkmalpflege, Petersberg 2019, pp. 256–258.
27 Bundesdenkmalamt, Leitfaden Denkmalpflegeplan, 2024, https://www.bda.gv.at/themen/publikationen/standards-leitfaeden-richtlinien/leitfaden-denkmalpflegeplan.html (13.12.2024).
28 Anna-Maria Odenthal, Denkmalpflegepläne. Ein Steuerungsinstrument in der Baudenkmalpflege, in: Landesdenkmalamt Berlin, Sechs Siedlungen der Berliner Moderne, Berlin 2021, pp. 63–70, quote p. 63.

surprisingly, were mostly criticized when interventions were done by unknown neighbors.

Conclusion

Listing in the public interest should not only protect the historical, architectural, and cultural significance of buildings together with their material layers and appearance but also raise awareness of the communal and socio-political significance of the housing concepts—such as affordability—that such sites embody, not least in order to learn from historic models for further innovations, and maintain places of home. If taking into consideration not only the narrow legal definition but also the broader understanding of the housing heritage as ensembles with incorporating extended values, this allows us to grasp objects and places that are used and understood as people's homes. In concrete terms, this means that plural voices of valuing serve to enrich authorized statements of cultural significance and listing notices (Denkmalbescheide).

One main line of conflict between heritage authorities, residents, and owners lays in the experienced dominance and top-down practices of the heritage authorities. Protection seems to be a statement on paper, without the involvement and engagement of residents. What could we learn about assessment, acceptance, and decision-making processes from the experience of participation in planning? Can we together establish instruments that may foster forms of "co-caring", encourage social activities that support protection and maintenance, and provide guidance on how to adapt homes and gardens? The historic, architectural, and cultural significance which manifests itself in spatial and social qualities which are stated by plural voices might provide the common ground for participation and enjoyment of the settlements' qualities.

Hande Tunç

Comparative Analysis of Socio-Economic Transformations in Affordable Housing Projects

A Case Study of Koşuyolu and Selamsız in Istanbul

Abstract

Following the Second World War, rapid and economical housing production emerged as a key challenge for Istanbul's growing population. In the 1950s, municipal efforts resulted in the construction of affordable housing in Koşuyolu and Selamsız, two neighboring districts. Built with similar aims and designs, these settlements shared common features in their plan layouts, building sizes, and massing characteristics. However, the transformation of these housing projects and their surrounding areas has followed divergent trajectories over time, shaped by distinct socio-economic dynamics. Changes in land use, demographics, and functional or commercial differentiations have altered spatial arrangements, settlement character, and building usage patterns in both districts, with Selamsız largely retaining its original character, while Koşuyolu has undergone significant transformations. This study examines these transformations, highlighting how economic and societal dynamics in both districts and their surroundings influence the preservation of 20th century modern housing heritage.

Introduction

Following the Second World War, Istanbul faced a significant housing crisis, exacerbated by rapid urbanization and population growth. In response, low-cost housing settlements were established in key locations to balance affordability and accessibility. Among these initiatives, Selamsız and Koşuyolu stand out as notable examples of mid-20th century housing projects. Despite their geographic proximity and common roots as affordable housing projects, these neighborhoods have undergone divergent transformations over the decades, shaped by contrasting socio-economic, spatial, and demographic dynamics.

By examining Selamsız and Koşuyolu within the broader framework of Istanbul's urban history and the challenges of preserving modern housing heritage, this study highlights the intersections of socio-economic dynamics, physical transformations, and cultural identities. Through a comparative lens, it investigates how these factors have shaped the trajectories of the two neighborhoods and draws attention to critical aspects of the preservation and transformation of 20th century housing settlements in rapidly changing urban environments. While there are separate studies on both areas, the main focus of this article is to analyze the socio-economic transformations that have led to their differing trajectories, while also exploring the variable dynamics shaped by their immediate surroundings and offering a comparative perspective for the preservation of 20th century modern housing heritage.

Historical Context and Architectural Development

Selamsız and Koşuyolu, although geographically close, are situated in different districts—Üsküdar and Kadıköy, respectively—, and both benefit from strategic locations near major transport routes, connecting them efficiently to central areas. Comparing historical maps from before the housing projects began with more recent ones highlights 60 years of urban transformation in the urban fabric, providing insight into both the strategic positioning of these settlements and the broader changes observed in their surrounding urban context

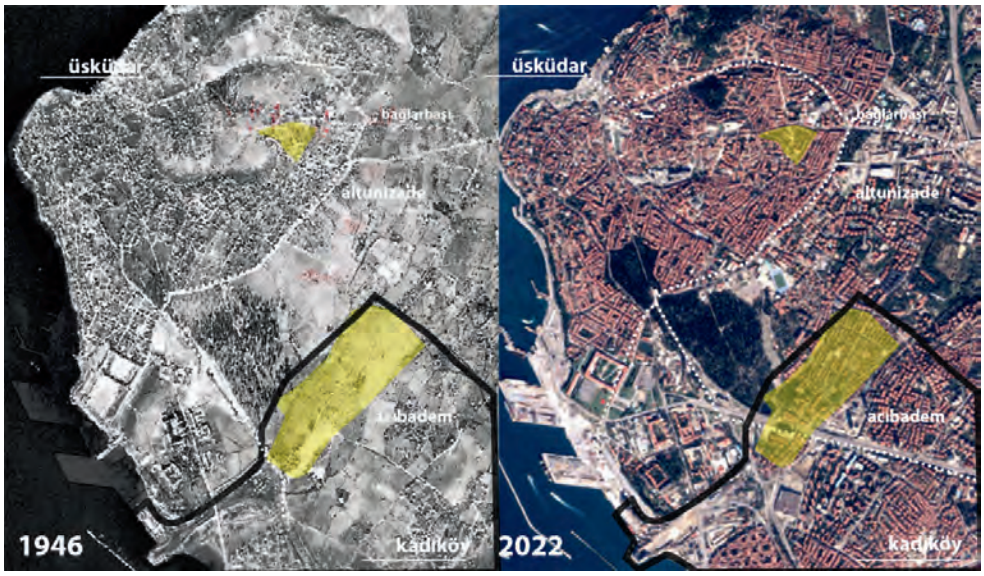


Fig. 1: Location of Koşuyolu and Selamsız before and after the housing projects. Left: orthophoto 1946; Right: satellite image 2022

(Fig. 1). Early 20th century maps depict Selamsız[1] as a distinct area, marked by churches, schools, and cemeteries. Aerial photographs reveal rapid urbanization following the construction of low-cost housing developments. Today, Selamsız' low-cost housing is situated in Üsküdar-Bağlarbaşı, surrounded by notable landmarks such as the Bağlarbaşı Congress and Culture Center, a historical police station, and a high school. This area, which is integrated into Üsküdar's historical urban structure, comprises single- and two-storey houses, each with private gardens. In contrast, Koşuyolu, which takes its name from Ottoman-era horse tracks, began appearing on maps as "Koşuyolu Street" in the early 20th century, gradually evolving into a residential area. Aerial photographs reveal the settlement's well-defined boundaries and the rapid development of surrounding areas. Currently, Koşuyolu, located in Kadıköy, spans both sides of the D100 highway, and the neighborhood is characterized by its organized settlement pattern amidst dense urban development. Major roads such as Koşuyolu Avenue have shaped its growth and continue to serve as key transport axes.

In fact, the settlements and transformations observed in Selamsız and Koşuyolu are the results of a process that began in the 1940s. By the late 1940s, Istanbul was confronted with a housing crisis, with deteriorating wooden structures and increasing in-migration from rural areas.[2] The growing demand prompted affordable housing initiatives near the city center. During this process, vacant lands in Koşuyolu and Selamsız were identified for residential development. In 1950, the Istanbul municipality convened to address housing and urban planning issues, establishing commissions and passing laws to facilitate affordable housing production. The first plans, announced in 1951, included 100 houses in Koşuyolu, 50 in Selamsız, and another 50 in Fatih (the latter project was later cancelled), with the construction of Selamsız low-cost housing beginning in 1951 and the houses being completed and allocated via lottery by 1952.[3] Subsequent phases involved housing co-

1 Although the neighborhood is officially named Selami Ali Mahallesi, it is more commonly known as Selamsız, meaning "without a greeting" or "without peace". This name originates from Sheikh Selami Ali, a 17th century Sufi Sheikh of the Celveti Order, who was known for not greeting people in public. His dergah (lodge) was located in the area, and his tomb remains there today. Mustafa Kara, Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar Tarihi [History of Sufism and Sufi Orders], Istanbul 1990 (Kara 1990); Mustafa Tatçı, Selâmi Ali Efendi. Hayatı, Tarîkat-Nâmesi ve Vakfiyyesi [Selâmi Ali Efendi. His life, his order's writings and foundation charter], Istanbul 2006 (Tatçı 2006).

2 Burak Öztürk, Selamsız Ucuz Evleri [Sozialwohnungen in Selamsız], in: Uluslararası Üsküdar Sempozyumu XI Bildiriler I [Proceedings of the 11th International Üsküdar Symposium I], 2023, pp. 601–603 (Öztürk 2023).

3 Newspapers: Ucuz evler [Social housing], Milliyet, 26.04.1951, p. 2; Ucuz Evlerin Kurası Çekildi [The Lottery for Affordable Homes Has Been Held], Cumhuriyet, 27.09.1952, p. 6.



Fig. 2: Phases of Selamsız low-cost housing, satellite image 2022



Fig. 3: Phases of Koşuyolu housing settlement, satellite image 2022

operatives which constructed single- and two-storey homes based on standardized designs.[4] In contrast, the Koşuyolu project is divided into three sections, including "Municipality Houses" (which also include the "Workers' Houses" and "Dock Workers' Houses"), "Credit Edifice Fund Houses", and "Bank Houses". Later phases[5] of the "Municipality Houses" were developed at various stages by housing cooperatives. These areas accommodated over 400 units and incorporated social amenities such as parks, school, nursery, cinema, and marketplaces. Subsequent phases were executed by housing cooperatives, with construction completed by 1958 (Figs. 2 and 3).

Both settlements are highly valuable in terms of their architectural characteristics, the needs they addressed, and the purposes and qualities they embodied during their respective periods, making them significant for Turkey's 20th century housing heritage. Selamsız, for instance, reflects the early attempts to address housing needs in Istanbul, showcasing a minimalist architectural style with repeating row-house typologies due to the need for lower construction costs.[6] By contrast, Koşuyolu reflects the urban planning ideals of its time by integrating housing with social and commercial spaces, while its architectural simplicity was conceived alongside this planning approach to meet the housing

4 After the construction of the initial 50 houses by the Istanbul municipality, the process was carried out by housing cooperatives. In 1957, the *Electricity, Gas, and Motor Vehicle Workers Union Construction Cooperative* published a tender for the construction of 13 single-storey and 12 two-storey houses. In 1958, the *Istanbul Union of Workers Construction Cooperative* announced its plan to build 56 two-storey houses. In the second and third phases, the buildings constructed by housing cooperatives followed identical plan types. The single-storey houses were designed as single-family homes, while the two-storey houses were arranged so that the ground and first floors were designated for different users; Burak Öztürk, Selamsız Ucuz Evler Yerleşimi [Selamsız Low-Cost Housing Settlement], in: Betonart 65, 2020, pp. 18–28 (Öztürk 2020).

5 The "Municipality Houses" part of Koşuyolu includes over 400 houses of various sizes, constructed using mixed building techniques to serve lower- and middle-income groups. The smaller houses within the "Municipality Houses" are referred to as "Workers' Houses", and construction of these houses was completed in 1955. The "Dock Workers' Houses", located on Cenap Şahabettin Street, were built in 1962 by the *Istanbul Dockers' Labour Union Cooperative*. These two-storey houses, in line with the affordable housing purpose, consist of simple prismatic masses with gable roofs and are accessed by a few steps. The third and smallest part, the "Credit Edifice Fund Houses", is located to the south of the "Municipality Houses". They were completed and delivered in June 1958; Hasan Şener / Dilek Yıldız, Dünden Bugüne Koşuyolu [Koşuyolu – From Yesterday to Today], in: Mimarlık, 2000, pp. 26–37 (Şener / Yıldız 2000); Yıldız Salman, Koşuyolu: Istanbul'da Bir Modern Mahalle [Koşuyolu: A modern neighborhood in Istanbul], in: Dosya 43, 2019, pp. 164–172 (Salman 2019); Yeşim Erdal / Huriye İlke Alatlı / Aslı Kırbaş / Yıldız Salman, Kadıköy'ün Genişleyen Sınırları: Koşuyolu [The growing borders of Kadıköy: Koşuyolu], in: Betonart 65, 2020, pp. 6–17 (Erdal / Alatlı / Kırbaş / Salman 2020).

6 Mehmet Rıfat Akbulut and Zafer Akay describe the Selamsız affordable houses as a "*neighbourhood protected from transit traffic by its residential scheme, like an oasis in an otherwise densely populated area*"; Mehmet Rıfat Akbulut / Zafer Akay, Halk İçin Tasarlamak: Seyfi Arkan'ın Şehirciliği ve Ucuz Konut Projeleri [Designing for the People: Seyfi Arkan's Urban Planning and Affordable Housing Projects], in: Ali Cengizkan / Müge Cengizkan / Derin İnan / Seyfi Arkan (Eds.), Modernist Açılımda Bir Öncü: Seyfi Arkan [A Pioneer of Modern Progress: Seyfi Arkan], pub. TMMOB Mimarlar Odası Yayınları, 2012, pp. 231–248.

needs of low- and middle-income groups.[7] The involvement of housing cooperatives in both settlements further emphasizes their importance in the history of social housing.

However, data compiled from research conducted between the early 2000s and 2021 reveals striking impacts of negative physical and functional transformations in both areas. By 2019, 81% of buildings in the Selamsız low-cost housing project area remained, with 80% still in residential use and 15% in commercial use. However, by 2021, demolitions had escalated, leaving only 71% in residential use. Adapted buildings such as cafés, clinics, and kindergartens became concentrated along the main streets. In Koşuyolu, in 2000, 28% of buildings retained their original state, but this declined to 21% by 2018. Residential use decreased from 79% to 49%, while commercial use rose from 17% to 40%.[8] Over 230 houses lost their residential function within 18 years, reflecting rapid and uncontrolled transformation.[9]

Analysis of the Transformation Dynamics

When examining the causes and dynamics of these transformations through the lens of structures that have retained their residential function, two similar yet distinct socio-economic scenarios emerge (Figs. 4 and 5). The transformations in Selamsız housing are primarily related to evolving household needs. Constructed nearly 70 years ago, during a period when household appliances such as refrigerators and washing machines were uncommon, the original designs lacked space for modern amenities. Over time, residents added extensions to backyards and constructed additional floors. Entrance canopies, absent in the original designs, were widely added. New heating systems were installed, and wooden windows were replaced with PVC frames and steel doors to meet modern performance requirements.[10]

In Koşuyolu, by contrast, the transformations are more closely linked to the changing resident profile. Originally built for lower- and middle-income groups, Koşuyolu has transitioned into a residential area for higher-income groups, leading to extensive modifications. Original features have undergone significant alterations, with front gardens converted into parking spaces, balcony enclosures becoming widespread, and façade cladding frequently applied. Many houses have been replaced with new buildings or extensively renovated, rendering the original 1950s designs unrecognizable.[11]

The socio-economic dynamics and underlying processes behind the transition of structures from residential to commercial use also exhibit notable differences. In Selamsız, buildings have increasingly been adapted for



Fig. 4: Transformation of Selamsız housing, residential and commercial uses, 2025

7 In various brochures prepared by Emlak Bankası during that period, the Koşuyolu housing was described as: "*Built in a beautiful natural setting [...] Amidst fresh air and natural beauty [...] beautifully designed buildings with scenic views, arranged in a way that will offer their residents the opportunity to live in tranquillity and happiness*". Şener / Yıldız 2000, p. 28.

8 Moreover, data shared by MAYADER in 2019 further confirms this pattern of uncontrolled transformation. According to their findings, residential use in Koşuyolu had declined to 34%, while commercial use had surged to 49%. The proportion of original buildings stood at just 17%, with newly constructed buildings making up 67%; Nükhet Eren / Nermin Ketenci, Koşuyolu Hatırası [Memories of Koşuyolu], pub. Kadıköy Belediyesi Kültür Yayınları, Istanbul 2023 (Eren / Ketenci, 2023); MAYADER (Neighbourhood Life Association).

9 The analysis used statistical data from research conducted at different times and by different groups, Şener / Yıldız 2000, pp. 33–35; Salman 2019, p. 169; Öztürk 2020, pp. 25 f.; Erdal / Alatlı / Kırbaş / Salman 2020, p. 14; Hatice Yasemin Çakır / Nabi Volkan Gür, Examination of interventions and defects on façades: The case of Selamsız low-cost mass housing in Istanbul, Türkiye, in: Journal of Architectural Sciences and Applications 8, Issue 2, 2023, pp. 847–864 (Çakır / Gür 2023).

10 Öztürk 2023, p. 610; Çakır / Gür 2023, pp. 857–860.

11 Şener / Yıldız 2000, p. 37.



Fig. 5: Transformation of Koşuyolu housing, residential and commercial uses, 2025

commercial purposes, hosting preschools, dental clinics, and cafés. This trend is particularly noticeable on Gazi and Yeniocak Street, where detached houses provide favorable conditions for small businesses. In Koşuyolu, however, the shift is closely tied to infrastructure investments in the surrounding area. The construction of the Bosphorus Bridge in the 1970s integrated Koşuyolu into Istanbul's broader urban fabric. On old mansion lands in its vicinity, such as Validebağ and Acıbadem, dense apartment complexes began to develop. Rising land values and increased demand for commercial activities, driven by a growing population, accelerated the shift from residential to commercial functions, especially along Koşuyolu Avenue. Today, the area is dominated by small-scale businesses, including offices and preschools, with commercial activity spreading deeper into the neighborhood. Unfortunately, throughout this process, due to the lack of legal protection, the preservation of original structures and attempts to control urban development pressures have been achieved through zoning regulations only.[12]

Impact of Surrounding Context on Urban Change

However, to fully understand these processes, it is essential to examine not only the area itself but also the dynamics of its surrounding context. Historically, Selamsız has been recognized as a neighborhood predominantly inhabited by Romani communities. While rapid urbanization has transformed much of the area's traditional fabric, the neighborhood and its surroundings retain the character of the original Romani settlement, despite the declining Romani population.[13] For centuries, Selamsız has been known as one of Istanbul's Romani settlements, with its origins believed to date back to the mid-18th century.[14] Although there is no clear information about why the Romani people settled in this area, demographic data found in court records indicates that the neighborhood has a heterogeneous structure in terms of religious affiliation and ethnicity. Before the Romani settlement, this area was historically inhabited by Armenians and Greeks during the Ottoman period, and this diversity is still reflected in the remaining churches and schools. It is probable that this heterogeneous environment influenced the Romani's choice to settle in the area.[15]

Over time, Selamsız became recognized as a Romani slum. Although mass housing projects such as the Selamsız low-cost housing were intended to improve living conditions, they ultimately failed to fully resolve the underlying issues. Today, the Bağlarbaşı region continues to be home to a Romani population facing urban decay, unhealthy houses, insecure land tenure, and ongoing challenges. However, the area's low educational

12 In Selamsız, zoning limits imposed by the Üsküdar municipality restrict new constructions to a maximum height of 6.5 meters, mitigating profit-driven development despite the absence of legal protection. However, the loss of structures highlights ongoing risks. In Koşuyolu, while the 1997 zoning plans limited building heights to 6.5 meters in interior parts, they allowed additional storeys along Koşuyolu Avenue, contributing to the loss of original structures. The 2022 plans now aim to limit commercial uses to preserve the neighborhood's character, Öztürk 2020, p. 26; Yıldız / Şener 2000, p. 33; Kadıköy district 1/5000 scale revised master zoning plan for Koşuyolu, Acıbadem, and Hasanpaşa neighborhoods, approved in 2022, https://sehirplanlama.ibb.istanbul/kadikoy-ilcesi-acibadem-kosuyolu-ve-hasanpasa-revizyon-nazim-imar-plani-ibb-meclisince-onaylandi/ (21.01.2025).

13 Tuna Baltacıoğlu, Bağlarbaşı, in: Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi [Encyclopaedia of Istanbul from Past to Present], Vol. 1, Istanbul 1993, p. 534.

14 Mehmet Nermi Haskan, Yüzyıllar Boyunca Üsküdar [Üsküdar in the course of the centuries], Vol. 1, Istanbul 2001, p. 448.

15 Fatıma Kübra Akyüz, Üsküdar Mahkeme Kayıtları Işığında XVII. Yüzyıl İstanbul'unda Çingeneler [Die Roma im Istanbul des 17. Jahrhunderts im Licht der Gerichtsakten von Üsküdar], Marmara Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Istanbul 2020.

and income levels, combined with its associations with drug abuse and crime, have contributed to its isolated character and negative public perception. Considering the community profile and user dynamics in the area, this situation explains why, despite its advantageous location, Selamsız did not become a speculative investment hub and managed to maintain its cultural identity as one of the established Romani neighborhoods in Üsküdar, with vibrant street weddings and outdoor social activities. On the other hand, as most buildings (with the exception of historical structures) are illegal and ageing, the displacement of the Romani community due to upcoming physical transformations appears inevitable.[16] With expected changes in the surrounding area, Selamsız faces the risk of becoming a new site for profit-driven development.

In Koşuyolu, the dynamics of the surrounding area progress along a different axis. The Koşuyolu housing settlement emerged as a distinct neighborhood amidst wheat fields and meadows in the early 1950s, subsequently transforming the area into a residential settlement. Before infrastructure developments triggered urban growth, nearby areas such as Validebağ and Acıbadem had vacant lands and old mansions. The Acıbadem area, once known for its meadows, vineyards, gardens, and mansions, was revitalized with the settlement of Koşuyolu and the construction of houses in the 1950s. This development accelerated after the mid-1960s with the opening of new roads and the Bosphorus Bridge, raising land and rent prices.[17] By the 1980s, the expansion of Acıbadem Street and rapid development transformed the area into a densely populated residential region. After the 1990s, increasing apartment complexes and gated communities further altered the area's social structure. Many Koşuyolu residents moved away, and commercial activities replaced housing functions. In recent years, buildings originally meant for residential use have been converted into offices and commercial properties due to increasing commercial demand. The settlement, now surrounded by multi-storey blocks, rapidly transformed to accommodate the growing service sector. Over the past 50 years, building density has increased, green spaces have diminished, land use has changed, and the social profile has shifted from lower-income to higher-income groups.[18] As a result, street patterns, building types, and architectural styles have evolved.

Following these intense and powerful influences, Koşuyolu faces a much more profound transformation compared to Selamsız. The shift from residential to commercial use, with buildings being converted into offices, cafés, and restaurants, has irrevocably altered its architectural character. Enhanced transportation and the influx of higher-income residents attracted by new functions have led to increased land and rent prices, as well as a shift in the social profile. Koşuyolu's emergence as a central point in the city has increased its commercial value, resulting in the conversion of residential buildings into profitable commercial properties. This transformation has displaced lower-income residents and attracted new investors, particularly around major transportation routes. An interesting fact is that, like Selamsız, Koşuyolu also had an old Romani neighborhood dating back to the Ottoman period. However, with the area's rapid transformation, the Romani residents were displaced in the 1990s due to concerns that their presence would lower property values.[19] This highlights the different paces of transformation in both areas and also offers insights into the potential future of Selamsız.

Current Realities and Conservation Challenges

In the aftermath of all these developments, it is hardly possible to refer to any comprehensive study of the current residents (owners or tenants) of either Selamsız or Koşuyolu. Information about the initial inhabitants of the low-cost housing in Selamsız is limited, and there is a lack of data on the current residents and building uses. However, certain elements become apparent when attempting to understand the social classes in these areas. Field observations reveal that most residents belong to low-income groups, as indicated by the

16 Gökhan Gelişen / Duygu Bircan, Kentsel Dönüşüm ile Sürdürülebilir Kent Önerileri ve Selamsız Örneği [Proposals for a Sustainable City in the Context of Urban Transformation: The Example of Selamsız], in: Kent Akademisi 12, Issue 3, 2019, pp. 501–518.

17 Mehmet Rıfat Akbulut, Koşuyolu, in: Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi, Vol. 5, Istanbul 1994, p. 79.

18 Reyhan Suoğlu, Koşuyolu Yerleşiminin Oluşumu ve Gelişimi [The Formation and Development of the Koşuyolu Settlement], Istanbul Teknik Üniversitesi, Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Istanbul 2009.

19 Gamze Bayhan Ihringer / Nermin Ketenci, Sekenesi Şen Bir Mahalleydi Koşuyolu [Koşuyolu was a lively neighborhood], in: İstanbul Dergisi 58, 2007, pp. 128–131; Egemen Yılgür, İstanbul Çingeneleri: Karşılıksız Bir Aşk Hikayesi [Istanbul's Roma: An Unrequited Love Story], in: İstanbul Dergisi 57, 2007, pp. 34–39.

condition of the building façades, construction materials, and added garages. While the area increasingly assumes a mixed-use character with the emergence of small-scale businesses such as preschools, dental clinics, and cafés, the fact that these businesses primarily serve low-income clientele reinforces assumptions about the area's socioeconomic profile.

In Koşuyolu, by contrast, middle- and low-income residents[20] have moved away, replaced by more profitable commercial functions such as cafés, bars, and offices, which has driven up land and rent values. The nature of structural and material modifications to residential buildings further confirms their appropriation by higher-income groups. The proliferation of high-rise complexes in Koşuyolu and its surrounding areas has led to an increase in commercial establishments, while the changing social fabric and the growing needs of higher-income residents have driven the rise of large-scale chain stores in the region.

On the other hand, it is undeniable that these class-based transformations and mobilities present both advantages and disadvantages. Analyses of preservation and deterioration reveal significant insights when considering both residential and commercial functions. Selamsız's reputation as an "unsafe" and isolated area has served to limit external interventions, in turn keeping land and rental values low. This has attracted lower-income residents, whose limited resources result in fewer structural alterations and thus a slower transformation of the original architectural fabric.

In contrast, Koşuyolu's increasing demand for commercial spaces has led to rising land values, attracting middle- and high-income groups. These wealthier residents, with greater economic power, have made extensive structural modifications, accelerating architectural transformations. This situation defines an interrelated relationship between rising rents, high-income groups, commercial activities, and the pace of architectural modifications. Thus, Koşuyolu's visibility and desirability can be seen as disadvantages, driving rapid physical changes. Meanwhile, Selamsız's marginalized status has kept it largely unchanged, as the lower-income groups have limited capacity for major modifications, thereby helping preserve its architectural character. This outcome presents a remarkable and noteworthy observation.

Conclusions and Further Considerations

As a swift and decisive measure, legal mechanisms may be considered as a means of preserving these areas, such as declaring them protected sites. To secure legal protection, these areas could be designated as urban conservation sites with specific conservation approaches for existing buildings, along with new detailed regulations and restrictions for any new construction in these areas.

However, beyond such proposals, these areas invite us to consider deeper questions regarding the preservation of modern housing settlements in conjunction with their social and economic dynamics, not only within the settlements themselves but also in their broader contexts. For instance, what socio-economic turning points has Koşuyolu experienced, and how have these turning points affected the preservation of its modern housing heritage, its residents, and its immediate surroundings? Alternatively, how has its surrounding environment played a role in Koşuyolu's transformation? Has the resident profile of Selamsız and the social perception it generates (which might be deemed unattractive by profit-driven investors) contributed to the preservation of the area?

Moreover, has Selamsız's self-contained character, by preventing or delaying its transformation, turned into a form of advantage? Engaging with these questions can provide critical insights into the future trajectory of these neighborhoods. Moreover, such discussions emphasize that conservation and intervention efforts should extend beyond the physical structures to encompass the broader socio-economic and cultural dimensions of these settlements.

20 The original inhabitants of Koşuyolu houses included middle-income groups such as teachers and civil servants, as well as lower-income worker groups who became homeowners, particularly through processes managed by cooperatives. Insights into both the lifestyles and class characteristics of these early residents can also be gleaned from the content of the study titled "Koşuyolu Hatırası" (Memories of Koşuyolu), which features the recollections of the area's first residents; Eren / Ketenci 2023, p. 93.

Natalie Heger, Ruth Schlögl

The Red Tower

At the Centre of Speculation[1]

Abstract

This article examines the decline of the Red Tower and shopping centre in the Schelmengraben housing estate in Wiesbaden, Germany. Once a vibrant focal point of social and commercial life, the site has suffered from neglect, rising vacancies, and repeated ownership changes driven by speculative real estate investment. Through historical analysis and local narratives, the authors trace how urban decay, lack of accountability, and political inaction have eroded this key piece of post-war modernist infrastructure. The study raises critical questions about monument protection, urban policy, and the social consequences of private-sector urbanism.

Introduction

Anyone familiar with the Schelmengraben housing estate in Wiesbaden (Germany) will know the Red Tower (Rotes Hochhaus). It is a landmark visible from afar and at the same time the centre of the neighbourhood. This central building of the 1960s estate has changed hands several times in recent years and has struggled with vacancy, vandalism, and building damage ever since. This affects the entire neighbourhood and its residents. When the lively centre of a housing estate falls into disrepair and is avoided by residents, the social interaction and quality of life[2] of local people also suffer.

An Architectural Landmark with History

The Schelmengraben housing estate was designed and built between 1961 and 1971 by Ernst May (1886–1970), the planning commissioner of the city of Wiesbaden.[3] The developers (Bauherren) were *Neue Heimat Südwest, Neue Heimat Hessen*, and *Volksfürsorge*. Today, the majority of the approximately 2,500 residential units are owned by the housing association *GWH Wohnungsgesellschaft* (Fig. 1).[4]

The commercial centre of the development is located in the middle of the estate—a building complex



Fig. 1: Schelmengraben housing estate, Wiesbaden, 2019

1 The research on the Red Tower in the Schelmengraben housing estate in Wiesbaden is part of the research project "Lebensqualität in Großwohnsiedlungen" at the Post-War Modernist Housing Research Lab of the Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences and funded by the *Zukunftspreis des Großen Frankfurter Bogens 2022*, cf. www.frankfurt-university.de/nachkriegsmoderne (23.01.2025).

2 Maren Harnack / Natalie Heger / Ruth Schlögl, Lebensqualität in Großwohnsiedlungen. Studie zur Verbesserung der Bewertung der Wohn- und Lebensqualität in Großwohnsiedlungen, Forschungsbericht Forschungslabor Nachkriegsmoderne, Frankfurt am Main 2022.

3 Ernst May, Das neue Wiesbaden. Stadt Verkehr Struktur, Wiesbaden 1963.

4 Maren Harnack / Matthias Brunner / Natalie Heger (Ed.), Wohnen in der Nachkriegsmoderne. Siedlungen in der Region Rhein-Main, Berlin 2020.
The *GWH Wohnungsgesellschaft* is a housing association based in Frankfurt (Rhine-Main region) with a nationwide housing stock with approximately 53,000 residential units.

consisting of a tower block and a row of stores. The characteristic wine-red façade, made of corrugated fibre cement panels with rounded corner elements and white windows, defines its architectural appearance.

The building complex is an early work by architect Udo Nieper,[5] who saw the idea of the pedestrian street as a connecting element and a fundamental urban planning principle. The row of stores served as a transitional space, connecting the upper and lower parts of the estate. In addition to its function as a central shopping facility, Nieper designed the centre of the estate as an important social meeting point.

Until a few years ago, there were two doctors' surgeries and a range of everyday services here, from a pharmacy and post office, to local stores and restaurants. After multiple changes of ownership in recent years, the retail spaces are today largely empty. As a result, there is a lack of shopping facilities and medical care in the estate. Vacancy and vandalism have led to the gradual deterioration of what was once a lively meeting place. The current owners are largely inaccessible to the tenants, building defects are not rectified, and rents continue to rise. After former tenants such as the district office and the pharmacy vacated the shopping centre, only a small grocery store and a pizza snack bar remain on site alongside empty displays and boarded-up stores.

From a Bustling Centre to an Object of Speculation

How did a flourishing centre gradually become vacant? What are the various reasons behind this, and what does it mean for the future development of the estate? One thing is clear: The journey of the Red Tower and the neighbouring shopping centre is closely linked to a series of ownership changes in recent years.

After the Schelmengraben estate was completed and the first apartments were occupied in 1973, *Neue Heimat* announced a limited architectural competition for a shopping centre and high-rise residential building around the chimney of the combined heat and power plant. The young architect Udo Nieper won this competition with the *Wiesbaden Schelmengraben* consortium (*Keppler Architekten/Hoffmann-Müller-Nieper*). Nieper designed a row of stores, spatially angled to provide oversight and thereby make the route to school safer for children. At the same time, it was to function as a meeting and supply centre for nearby residents. The Red Tower block, which was originally intended to enclose and thus "conceal" the chimney of the combined heat and power plant, was erected at some distance from it, after a long struggle between architect and client, and remains the most striking part of the estate.

"We still know the flower store.
That's where I had my wedding bouquet made"[6]

When it opened in 1977, the shopping centre offered residents a wide range of shopping options, including a pharmacy, shoe shop, flower shop, restaurant, supermarket, and much more (Fig. 2). However, just five years later, the building's ownership structure underwent its first drastic change. Europe's largest housing construction company, the trade union group *Neue Heimat*, was declared bankrupt. The non-profit company, with subsidiaries abroad and a complicated corporate structure of commercial subcontractors, had amassed a mountain of debt amounting to hundreds



Fig. 2: Historical view of the shopping centre, 1977

5 Interview by the authors with Udo Nieper, Frankfurt 14.08.2023.
6 Quotes from interviews by the authors, conducted on site with residents and experts for the Schelmengraben, Wiesbaden, 07.2023.

of millions German marks and had enriched itself from its tenants for years.[7]

In the mid-1980s, in the wake of the *Neue Heimat* scandal, the Schelmengraben estate became a property of *GEWOBAG Süd* (which is today the *GWH Wohnungsgesellschaft*). Almost exactly ten years after completion, *GWH* sold the shopping centre in Schelmengraben, while the apartments in the Red Tower remained in the possession of the housing company. If one interprets the construction files of the shopping centre correctly, the new owner is the company *GIA Gewerbeimmobilien-Anlage GmbH* in Darmstadt.[8] At this time, the shopping centre was a popular meeting place for many Schelmengraben residents, and the local grocery store was thriving.[9]

In the early 2000s, the shopping centre was purchased by a closed real estate fund comprising over 200 individual owners,[10] which was managed by the real estate management company *C.P.* (Augsburg). The Russian grocery chain *Teremok* attracted many customers from both the neighbourhood and surrounding area, and the *Penny* supermarket chain, also located in the shopping centre, was planning to expand its retail space. However, because the administrative effort of checking all the owners in the real estate fund was too great for the banks, *Penny* did not receive a loan for the store expansion and so closed shortly afterwards in December 2004.[11]

"Flags up for our shopping centre"

With the play "Wolkenkuckucksheim" by the Wiesbadener Staatstheater,[12] a very special piece of "life" came to the heart of the Schelmengraben estate—shortly before the opening of a new supermarket[13] at the entrance of the estate. With this new building further down the estate and the simultaneous closure of the *Schlecker* drugstore, the shopping centre was further weakened.[14]

In 2012, Schelmengraben was included in the Urban Development Support programme "Soziale Stadt", and the new district office deliberately moved into the shopping centre in 2014[15] in order to bring new activities into the centre of the Schelmengraben and to strengthen social life among residents. However, while many activities took place in and around the shopping centre, and the establishment of a job and qualification centre was being driven forward, the *GWH* housing association decided to sell the Red Tower. The buyer (which paid around 6.7 million euros) was the company *Minai, Lipinski, Ehrlich Objekte Wiesbaden*,[16] which shortly thereafter also acquired the shopping centre in a forced sale (at around 960,000 euros). The existing store tenants such as the grocery store, pharmacy, and district office were subsequently given notice of termination of their existing leases by the new owner and offered lease renewals at higher rent.[17] As a result, many of the former tenants gave up their stores in the shopping centre. (Fig. 3)

In 2015, comprehensive planning began for the redensification of up to 1,000 apartments in Schelmengraben. Within this process, residents also campaigned for the reactivation of the shopping centre.[18] At the same time, the vacancy rate in the shopping centre continued to rise, and residents of the Red Tower increasingly complained about the owner, who—according to press reports—did not issue utility bills and rarely responded to residents' inquiries such as reports of damage.[19] In the following months, the local press

7 Gut getarnt im Dickicht der Firmen. Neue Heimat: Die dunklen Geschäfte von Vietor und Genossen, in: Der Spiegel, 6/1982, pp. 92–104.
8 Bauaufsichtsamt / Landeshauptstadt Wiesbaden, Bauakte, W.-Dotzenheim, Karl-Marx-Straße 55/57, No. 63322, p. 38.
9 Interview by the authors with a former shop tenant, Wiesbaden 07.2023.
10 Penny-Markt schließt im Dezember. Umbaupläne scheiterten an Banken, in: Wiesbadener Kurier, 28.7.2004; Einkaufen wie in Mütterchen Russland. Spezielle Läden und Lokale ziehen nicht nur Spätaussiedler an, in: Frankfurter Rundschau, 14.07.2005.
11 Eigentümer sind desinteressiert, in: Wiesbadener Kurier, 19.07.2004.
12 "Wolkenkuckucksheim" was a cultural theatre piece that was performed in various shops in the shopping centre, in which Schelmengraben residents together with professional actors told personal stories. Source: Kultur-Theater im Supermarkt. Bei dem Projekt „Wolkenkuckucksheim" erzählen Bürger von ihrer Suche nach dem Glück, in: Frankfurter Rundschau, 22.06.2007.
13 Neue Jobs mit Lebensmittel. Langzeitarbeitslose sollen nach SPD-Idee in speziellen Märkten qualifiziert werden, in: Allgemeine Zeitung, 01.12.2010.
14 Wie ein Immobilienfonds ein Einkaufszentrum in Wiesbaden zugrunde richtet, in: Frankfurter Rundschau, 28.07.2022.
15 Ansprechpartner bei Sorgen des Alltags – Zentrum Vernetzung im Schelmengraben, in: Wiesbadener Tagblatt, 24.03.2014.
16 A real estate investment and development company based in Hessen with several subsidiary companies. Source: In der Abwärtsspirale, in: Wiesbadener Kurier, 16.08.2017; „Eigentum verpflichtet" gilt auch hier, in: Wiesbadener Kurier, 06.06.2017 (Wiesbadener Kurier 06.06.2017); Eigentümer reagiert nicht, in: Wiesbadener Kurier, 26.04.2017.
17 Interview by the authors with owners of the local grocery store, Wiesbaden 07.09.2023.
18 Unzufrieden mit Rahmenplan, in: Wiesbadener Kurier, 27.10.2017.
19 Wiesbadener Kurier 06.06.2017.

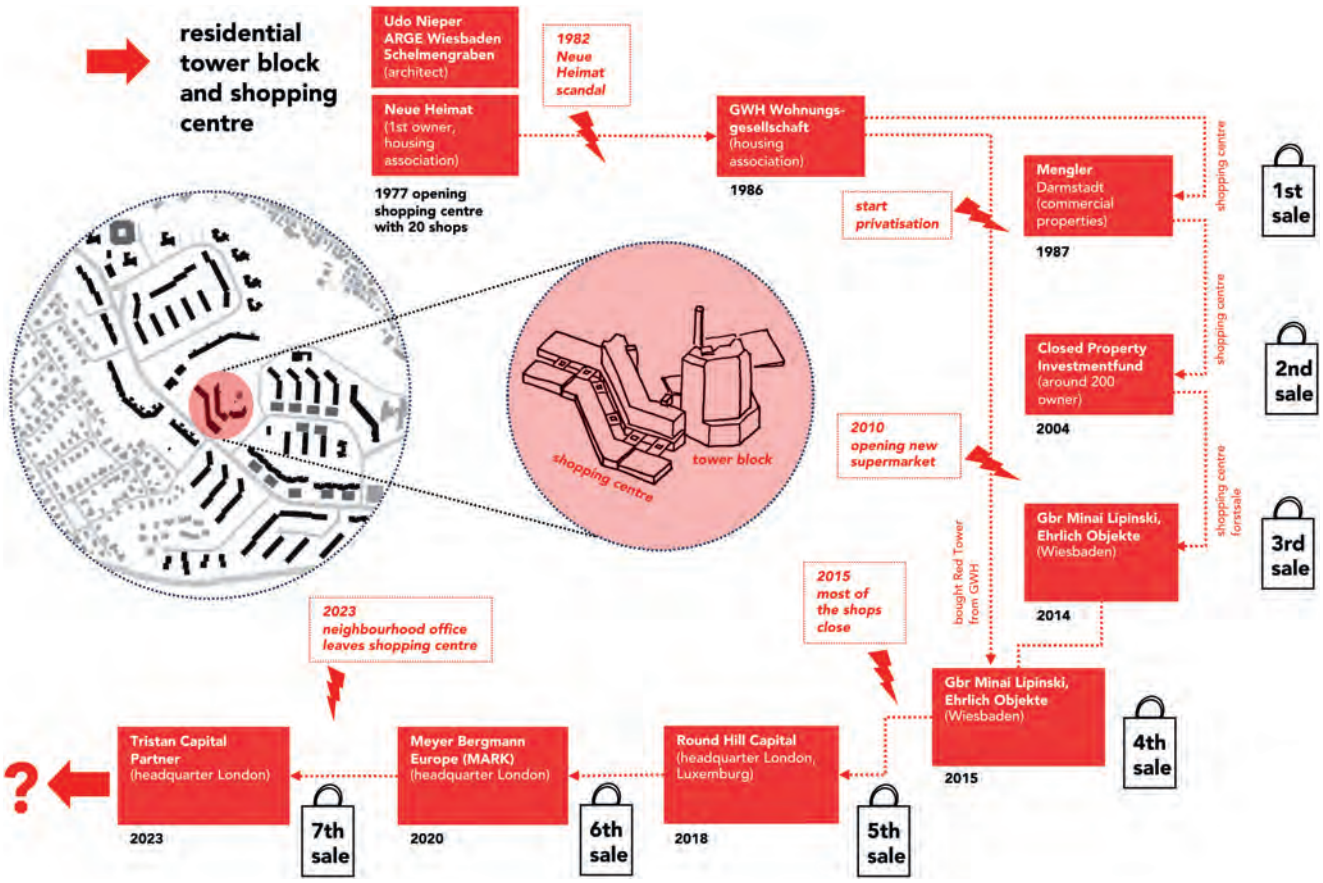


Fig. 3: Chronology of ownership changes, 1977–2023

reported for the first time on the shopping centre in Schelmengraben as a place "*where drugs are openly traded*".[20] Shortly before insolvency[21] proceedings against *Minai Lipinski Ehrlich Objekte Wiesbaden* in 2017–18, the owner changed again, three years after the previous sale. The new owner was *Round Hill Capital*, a pan-European accommodation investor with offices including Berlin, London, Luxembourg, and New York that manages assets valued in excess of 20 billion euros.[22] It acquired the company *Karl-Marx-Straße 53–57* from *Minai, Lipinski, Ehrlich Objekte Wiesbaden*, transferring ownership of the Red Tower and shopping centre. A short time later, *Round Hill Capital* founded the company *H. Main 4*, which then acquired ownership of the Red Tower and shopping centre. The purchase price was around 10 million euros including taxes.[23]

While the owners of the shopping centre changed in the background, little positive happened in the shopping centre itself. Vandalism and drug dealing were on the rise, and the condition of the building continued to deteriorate, with water leaking through the ceiling and no heating for months. Residents, the district office, and the planning office attempted to make improvements, and the *SPD* political party investigated whether the city of Wiesbaden would have a right of a pre-emption in the event of a new change of ownership (Fig. 4).[24]

> *"Older people have to take the bus to go shopping. That is more than three stops. You have to have 6 or 7 euros to buy a single loaf of bread"*

Similarly to the earlier construction of a supermarket at the entrance of the estate, another construction project brought major changes to the shopping centre in June 2019, namely the topping-out ceremony for a new Schelmengraben District Centre, which is located

20 Lösung für Hochhaus gesucht, in: Wiesbadener Kurier, 23.03.2018.
21 Steuerbetrug in Millionenhöhe, in: Frankfurter Rundschau, 05.01.2019.
22 Endlich neue Eigentümer, in: Wiesbadener Kurier, 13.04.2018, p. 12.
23 Annual Accounts H. Main 4 S.à-r.l., Numéro RCS: B217797, Référence de depot: L210137703, Déposé et enregistré le 09.07.2021, as at 31.12.2020, p. 11.
24 Hochhausbewohner sind sauer, in: Wiesbadener Kurier, 25.05.2018, p. 12 (Wiesbadener Kurier, 25.05.2018).



Fig. 4: View of the shopping street, showing *Phönix* pharmacy prior to closure, 2019

on the edge of the estate away from the centre.[25] One year later, in 2020, *Round Hill Capital* sold *H. Main 4*, including the shopping centre and the Red Tower, to the pan-European real estate investment manager *MARK* (formerly *Meyer Bergman*) with offices in Frankfurt am Main, Guernsey, Luxembourg, and New York. For the time being, the new owner changed little in the shopping centre and Red Tower. The owner appointed a property management company in Wiesbaden, used its newly acquired property to service a 13-million-euro loan from *Morgan Stanley*, and signed a share pledge agreement with the real estate investment and project development company *SITUS Germany*.[26]

Commercial activity in and around the shopping centre has continued to decline in recent years. The pharmacy closed at the end of 2021. At the beginning of 2023, the district office relocated to the first floor of the new District Centre at the entrance of the estate. A short time later, the Red Tower and shopping centre were sold again, to *Tristan Capital Partners*—a real estate investment company based in London and owned by *New York Life*, one of the largest investment and insurance companies in the world.[27]

"My children used to walk to school through the shopping centre. Today I ask them to walk along the street"

A Lost Heart

Due to vacancy, security concerns, and lack of maintenance and refurbishment, the commercial centre has become a place that residents avoid. The situation is even more difficult for tenants in the tower block, as they are often dependent on keeping their current apartment: affordable alternatives are rare, and they are afraid to enter into a dispute with the property owner.

Even though legislation provides various tools to enforce the maintenance of buildings through measures such as substitute performance, modernisation requirements, and powers of intervention under housing law, these tools can only be enforced at great expense and with the appropriate human resources—and in some cases not at all.[28]

The striking building ensemble of the Red Tower and shopping centre has lost its significance as a central supply centre and meeting place that created a collective identity. In addition, the preservation of a cultural asset is in danger due to increasing decay.

Monument or Object of Speculation?

In the context of real estate speculation, the question arises: to what extent would protected status have supported a more sustainable use and the preservation of the building complex? Would the centre still be a lively place today if it had been listed as a monument under protection years ago?

25 Wiesbadener Kurier, 25.05.2018.
26 Wohnzimmer der Siedlung, in: Wiesbadener Tagblatt, 26.06.2019, p. 12.
27 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_Life_Investments#cite_note-Fortune_500_2016-3 (23.01.2025).
28 Bundesministerium für Verkehr, Bau und Stadtentwicklung (BMVBS) / Bundesministerium für Bau-, Stadt- und Raumforschung (BBSR) (Ed.), Leitfaden zum Einsatz von Rechtsinstrumenten beim Umgang mit verwahrlosten Immobilien. („Schrottimmobilien"), Bonn 2009.



Fig. 5: Vacant shopping centre with boarded storefronts, 2024

The research shows the following aspects:

- Development for the common good is difficult to reconcile with exclusively private-sector interests.
- Owners without a local connection often have no sense of responsibility or deeper interest in the location.
- Monument protection can make speculative practices more difficult by preventing investors from deliberately downsizing buildings.
- In principle, monument protection has the potential to increase the appreciation of a settlement and the self-confidence of residents in their neighbourhood.
- The issue of vacant commercial centres in large housing estates is widespread, influenced by size, integration, diversity of use, and competition from supermarkets and online retail.
- Already back in the 1980s, there were discussions concerning the Schelmengraben shopping centre. The struggle for the heart of the estate is not a new development.
- Transparent ownership structures and local support measures are crucial for the maintenance of social infrastructure (Fig. 5).

Outlook: What will Become of the Red Tower?

The coming years will show which of the following scenarios will materialise:

- The Red Tower continues to decay.
- The city takes action and decides on comprehensive urban redevelopment measures.
- The Red Tower is placed under a preservation order. An owner develops the shopping centre further, e.g., through partial demolition and renovation.

The history of Schelmengraben's Red Tower and shopping centre exemplifies the challenges faced by many large housing estates in the post-war modern era. A lack of transparency in the ownership structure, combined with economic interests and political restraint, has allowed an identity-forming neighbourhood centre to fall into disrepair. The crucial question is whether and how a revival is still possible.



Denkmal erforscht



Markus Santner

Im Windschatten italienischer Pioniere

Abnahme und Übertragung von Wandbildern in Österreich (1900–1970)[1]

In the Wake of Italian Pioneers: The Removal and Transfer of Wall Paintings in Austria (1900–1970)
This study examines the practice of detaching and transferring wall paintings in Austria between 1900 and 1970, tracing its technical, institutional, and ethical dimensions in the shadow of Italian pioneers. Drawing on archival sources and case studies—from early adoptions of stacco and strappo methods to post-war collaborations with the Istituto Centrale in Rome—, it charts a shift from stylistic restoration to conservation-oriented approaches. The paper explores motivations for removal, from urgent preservation to problematic "routine" transfers, and the evolving debate over authenticity, integrity, and the loss of context. By situating Austrian practice within international discourse, it highlights both technical advances and the lasting conservation challenges posed by these interventions.

Vorgeschichte

Die Abnahme von Wandbildern spielte vor 1900 in der österreichischen Denkmallandschaft keine große Rolle.[2] In Mailand, das damals unter österreichischer Verwaltung stand, überlegte man um 1800 aufgrund des schlechten Erhaltungszustandes eine Abnahme des „Letzten Abendmahls" Leonardo da Vincis in der Kirche von Santa Maria delle Grazie. Da dies jedoch nicht umgesetzt wurde, beauftragte man 1807 den Künstler Giacomo Raffaelli, der in Mailand eine Schule für Mosaikkunst führte, mit einer 1:1-Kopie aus Mosaik.[3] Berichte über einzelne Translozierungen von Wandbildern sind aber schon viel früher bereits aus der Antike[4] und Renaissance[5] überliefert. Vermutlich beeinflusst durch die Übertragungen von Mosaiken im 17. Jahrhundert, gelingen dann in der ersten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts[6] bedeutende Fortschritte in der

1 Dieser Artikel erschien bereits unter dem Titel „Sulle orme dei pionieri italiani. Distacco e trasporto dei dipinti murali in Austria (1900–1970)", in: Chiara Facchin / Lucia Giovannini / Francesca Raffaelli (Hg.), L'arte che visse due volte. Il distacco dei dipinti murali in Trentino, Provincia autonoma di Trento, Trento 2024.

2 Die Monarchie der Habsburger umfasste damals einen ausgedehnten Länderkomplex und bestand bis 1918 aus mehreren Territorien. 1850 wurde die staatliche Denkmalbehörde „k. k. Central-Commission für die Erforschung und Erhaltung der Baudenkmale" gegründet.

3 Die Mosaikkopie war ursprünglich für den Louvre bestimmt gewesen. 1847 wurde sie dann aber in der Minoritenkirche in Wien angebracht; vgl. Manfred Koller, Zur Geschichte der Restaurierung in Österreich, in: Geschichte der Restaurierung in Europa, Akten des internationalen Kongresses „Restauriergeschichte" in Interlaken 1989, Bd. 1, Worms 1991, S. 65–83, hier: 79 f.

4 „*[I]n Sparta wurden aus gewissen Wänden Gemälde herausgeschnitten, dadurch, dass man die Ziegel durchsägt hatte. Sie wurden in hölzerne Rahmen eingeschlossen und […] weggebracht*". Vitruv, de Architectura, Buch 2, 8; vgl. auch Plinius d. Ä., Naturalis Historia, Buch XXXV, 154, 157 und Volker Schaible, Historisches und ethisches zur Abnahme von Wandmalerei, in: Historische Technologie und Konservierung von Wandmalerei, Bern 1985, S. 143–150 (Schaible 1985).

5 Bekannt ist das 1474 im „Stacco a massello"-Verfahren übertragene Wandbild „Die Auferstehung Jesu Christi" von Piero della Francesca im Saal des Palazzo Comunale in Sansepolcro, vgl. Nadia Thalguter, Untersuchungen zu abgenommenen Wandmalereien aus dem Nürnberger Rathaussaal. Ein Beitrag zur Restaurierungsgeschichte, Konservierung und Präsentation exemplarisch dargestellt an ausgewählten Beispielen, unveröffentlichte Masterarbeit, FH Hildesheim/Holzminden/Göttingen 2015, S. 73 (Thalguter 2015). Vasari berichtet von zwei Abnahmen im 16. Jahrhundert, u. a. Wandbilder von Ghirlandaio und Botticelli in Ognissanti im Jahr 1564, vgl. dazu Giorgio Vasari, Leben der ausgezeichnetsten Maler, Bildhauer und Baumeister, von Cimabue bis zum Jahre 1567. Deutsche Ausgabe von Ludwig Schorn und Ernst Förster, neu herausgegeben und eingeleitet von Julian Kliemann, Bd. 2, Nachdruck der ersten deutschen Gesamtausgabe Stuttgart und Tübingen 1832–1849, Darmstadt 1983, S. 201 und 237.

6 Isabelle Brajer, The restoration of a transferred fresco mounted on canvas with oil casein adhesive, in: Zeitschrift für Kunsttechnologie und Konservierung 1, 2000, S. 88–96, hier: 88 mit weiteren Literaturangaben.

technischen Entwicklung der Stacchi-Methoden[7] Stacco a massello[8], Stacco[9] und Strappo[10], womit drei wichtige Abnahmetechniken zur Auswahl stehen, die dann auch durch „Restauratoren als Spezialisten“[11] ausgeführt wurden. Sie lösten die bis dahin mit der Abnahme von Wandbildern zuständigen Bildhauer oder Maler ab.

Wie haben sich nun diese Techniken verbreitet? In Italien beginnt Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts die Zeit der sogenannten „Estrattisti“, die auf die Abnahme von Wandmalereien spezialisiert waren und die über Generationen – nicht zuletzt im Auftrag für den Kunsthandel oder von Sammlern – viele Kunstwerke abnahmen.[12] Damit verbreiteten sich die Techniken auch außerhalb Italiens in Frankreich,[13] in der Schweiz[14] oder in Deutschland,[15] wobei in Mittelfranken vor allem die Stacco-Methode Anwendung fand.[16] Die Estrattisti wurden aber auch für Aufträge im Ausland engagiert.[17] Manche deutsche Restauratoren wie Paul Rößler um 1900 in Sachsen hatten überraschend gute Fachkenntnisse und setzten die italienischen Abnahme- und Übertragungstechniken sehr professionell um.[18] Für Österreich ist 1895 eine Übertragung eines Wandbildes aus dem Portaltympanon des Wiener Neustädter Doms im Rahmen der Turmerneuerung überliefert.[19] Frühe schriftliche Aufzeichnungen über das Stacco-Verfahren findet man bei Hampel 1846 in seinem Handbuch *Die Restauration alter und schadhaft gewordener Gemälde in ihrem ganzen Umfange nebst einer Anleitung zur Frescomalerei*[20] und für das Strappo-Verfahren im *Manuale ragionato par la parte meccanica dell´arte del ristauratore dei dipinti* von Giovanni Secco Suardo von 1866 bzw. 1894 (2. Auflage).[21] In den für die öster-

7 Vgl. Guido Botticelli, Metodologia di restauro delle pitture murali, Centro di Firenze, 1992, S. 112 f. (Botticelli 1992); Paolo Mora / Laura Mora / Paul Philippot, Conservation of Wall Paintings, London 1984, S. 251–261 (Mora / Mora / Philippot 1984); Thomas Schneider, Methoden der Freskoübertragung, o. J., S. 4–15, hier: 16 f.

8 Die Abnahme der Bildschicht, der Putzschichten und des Trägers – eine Art Blockbergung.

9 Die Abnahme der Malschicht mitsamt der folgenden Putzschicht und anschließende Übertragung auf einen neuen Träger. Eine frühe Abnahme ist 1720 durch Alessandro Majello in der Kirche des Hl. Josef in Neapel überliefert, vgl. Schaible 1985, S. 144; Ivo Hammer, La stagione degli stacchi, oder: die Geister, die wir riefen. Zur Zweitübertragung des Totentanzes von Metntiz, in: VDR Beiträge zur Erhaltung von Kunst- und Kulturgut, 2019, S. 47–61, hier: 47 f. und dort mit weiterem Verweis auf Gino Piva, L´arte del restauro, Mailand 1959 (Hammer 2019).

10 Die Abnahme der Bildschicht und anschließende Übertragung auf einen neuen Träger. Die Entwicklung der Strappo-Technik wird mit Antonio Contri aus Ferrara in Verbindung gebracht, vgl. Girolamo Baruffaldi, Vite de´pittori e scultori ferraresi, Bd. II, Ferrara 1846, S. 348–357 (Baruffaldi 1846); Bettina Achsel, Das Manuale von Giovanni Secco Suardo von 1866/1894. Ein Schlüsselwerk zum Verständnis der Restaurierungsgeschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts – Kommentierte Übersetzung von „Il manuale ragionato par la parte meccanica dell´arte del ristauratore dei dipinti“ (1866) und „Il Restauratore dei dipinti“ (1894), Göttingen 2012, S. 233–235 (Achsel 2012). In der 2. Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts perfektioniert dann Giacomo Succi diese Abnahmetechnik, sodass er vom Apostolischen Palast zum päpstlichen Wandmalereiabnehmer ernannt wurde, vgl. Alessandro Conti, Storia del restauro e della conservazione delle opere d´arte, Mailand 1988, S. 219 (Conti 1988).

11 Schaible 1985, S. 144.

12 Conti 1988, S. 219–227; Luca Ciancabilla / Cristiano Giometti (Hg.), Stefano Bardini „estrattista“. Affreschi staccati nell´Italia Unita fra antiquariato, collezionismo e musei, 2019; Ivana Giangualano / Bernardo Gallizioli, „Estrattista“, The history of the strappo technique of transferring wall paintings in Northern Italy during the first half of the nineteenth century, in: Zeitschrift für Kunsttechnologie und Konservierung 19, H. 1, 2005, S. 59–74.

13 Schaible 1984, S. 143–150.

14 Vgl. Katharina Zürcher, Wandmalereiabnahmen von Guiseppe und Franco Steffanoni. Ausgewählte Schweizer Beispiele im Zeitraum von 1886 bis 1936, Technologie und Restaurierungspraxis, unveröffentlichte Masterarbeit, HKB Bern 2011.

15 Schaible 1985, S. 144–147; vgl. Thalguter 2015; Torsten Nimoth, Zur Restaurierungsgeschichte und dem Umgang mit Wandmalereiabnahmen in Sachsen, in: VDR Beiträge zur Erhaltung von Kunst- und Kulturgut, H1, 2012, S. 41–53, hier: 41; Susann Förster / Katja Matauschek / Carola Möwald, „Die Geschichte lehrt dauernd, aber sie findet keine Schüler.“ Zwei Erfahrungsberichte im Umgang mit historischen Wandbildabnahmen, in: VDR Beiträge zur Erhaltung von Kunst- und Kulturgut, H1, 2020, S. 99–111, hier: 101 (Förster / Matauschek / Möwald 2020).

16 Ursula Schädler-Saub, Gotische Wandmalereien in Mittelfranken, Kunstgeschichte, Restaurierung, Denkmalpflege, in: Arbeitshefte des Bayerischen Landesamtes für Denkmalpflege 109, München 2000, S. 58 f.

17 Als Beispiel seien hier der aus Rom stammende und in Sachsen tätige Künstler und Abnahmespezialist Ermenegildo Antonio Donadini genannt; vgl. Thomas Danzl / Carola Möwald, Lost in translation. Zur Dekontextualisierung und Mobilisierung des mittelalterlichen Putzritzbildes aus Klösterlein Zelle bei Aue (Sachsen), in: Hans-Christoph Dittscheid / Doris Gerstl / Simone Hespers (Hg.), Kunst-Kontexte. Festschrift für Heidrun Stein-Kecks, Schriftenreihe des Erlanger Instituts für Kunstgeschichte, Bd. 3, 2016, S. 316–332, hier: 324 (Danzl / Möwald 2016).

18 Danzl / Möwald 2016, S. 324.

19 Manfred Koller, Romanische Wandmalerei in Österreich. 100 Jahre Restauriergeschichte, in: ÖZKD LI, 2, 1997, S. 355–365, hier: 360.

20 Johann Carl Gottlieb Hampel, Die Restauration alter und schadhaft gewordener Gemälde in ihrem ganzen Umfange nebst einer Anleitung zur Frescomalerei, Nachdruck nach dem Original der 1. Auflage Weimar 1846, Hannover 2000, S. 89–92; vgl. Thalguter 2015, S. 77.

21 Achsel 2012, S. 223–263. Das Manuale wird jedoch erst 1929 von Wilhelm Seiler auszugsweise ins Deutsche übersetzt; vgl. Förster / Matuauschek / Möwald 2020, S. 101.

reichischen Restauratoren ab 1883 wichtigen Richtlinien *Rathschläge in Betreff alter Wandgemälde in Kirchen und Schlössern etc.*, die von der k.k. Zentralkommission herausgegeben wurden und einen Meilenstein für das methodische Vorgehen in der Restaurierung von Wandmalerei darstellen, werden Abnahmetechniken nicht näher besprochen.[22] Für die Restauratoren in den deutschsprachigen Ländern sind die von Adolf Keim ab 1884 herausgegebenen *Technischen Mitteilungen für Malerei* wohl eine der wichtigsten Informationsquellen zu neuen Restaurierungstechniken. Über Abnahmeverfahren wird hier bereits im ersten Jahr berichtet.[23]

Kritische Stimmen gegen Abnahmen waren eher selten. Leopold Cicognara, Präsident der Accademia di belle arti in Venedig, beklagt 1825 den Verlust und die technischen Mängel.[24] Ulisse Forni schreibt in seinem *Manuale del Pittore Restauratore* 1866 hingegen, dass eine Abnahme durchaus gerechtfertigt sei, wenn das Kunstwerk durch äußere Einflüsse stark beschädigt ist. Forni verweist aber auch gleichzeitig auf den Missbrauch durch die Abnahme gut erhaltener Wandbilder.[25] Der Wiener Architekt Camillo Sitte forderte 1892 für die bedeutenden Wandmalereien im Dom zu Gurk in Kärnten die allergrößte Zurückhaltung, für einige „*Fresco Reste*" unterbreitete er jedoch den Vorschlag, dass man diese von der Wand „*[ab]sägen*" und sie im Museum wieder ausstellen könnte.[26] Damit würde man sie der nachteiligen Stil-Restaurierung entziehen und für die „*wissenschaftliche Bearbeitung […] erschließen*".[27] Weit verbreitet war nach wie vor die Annahme, dass Wandmalereien keine lange Bestandsfähigkeit besitzen. Bezeichnend für diese pessimistische Einstellung ist die Aussage des Wiener Architekten und Dombaumeisters Friedrich von Schmidt 1874 über die angefertigten Aquarellkopien der bekannten Wandbilder aus der Burg Runkelstein in Bozen: „*[E]he ein Jahrzehend vergeht, wird von den bezeichneten Überresten wenig mehr vorhanden sein. Erfahrungsgemäß gibt es kein wirksames Mittel, um den [sic] Lauf der Zeit in dieser Richtung Einhalt zu gebieten.*"[28]

Paradigmenwechsel um 1900

In der Restaurierung von Wandmalerei nach 1900 fand eine Abkehr von den historisierenden Stil-Restaurierungen und eine Umgewichtung von der restauratorisch-wiederherstellenden hin zu einer konservatorisch-bewahrenden Linie statt. Der Paradigmenwechsel in der österreichischen Denkmalpflege war verbunden mit strukturellen Umstellungen innerhalb der Zentralkommission, einer neuen Generation an verantwortlichen Denkmalpflegern und mit der Veröffentlichung neuer denkmalpflegerischer Leitlinien wie dem 1903 von Alois Riegl[29] veröffentlichten Gutachten *Zur Frage der Restaurierung von Wandmalerei*.[30] Riegl erwähnt die Abnahme nur kurz und die „*Versetzung der Originale in eine öffentliche Sammlung*" als eine mögliche Alternative gegenüber dem noch weit verbreiteten Wunsch der „*kirchlichen Behörden*" auf eine wiederherstellende Restaurierung.[31] Dabei weist er auf die technischen Abnahmemöglichkeiten der „*Übertragung der Malereien samt Mörtelschicht*" (also im Stacco-Verfahren) und der „*Übertragung der Malereien auf Leinwand*" (also im Strappo-Verfahren) hin.[32] Riegl muss also die beiden Abnahmetechniken gekannt haben. Für Österreich sind in der Zeit nach 1900 nicht viele Beispiele bekannt. Im Falle der Wandbilder in der Burg Lichtenberg im Vinsch-

22 Vgl. Markus Santner, Bild versus Substanz. Die Restaurierung mittelalterlicher Wandmalerei im Spannungsfeld zwischen Theorie und Praxis (1850–1970). Entwicklungslinien in Kärnten und Österreich (Studien zu Denkmalschutz und Denkmalpflege 14), Wien – Köln – Weimar 2016, S. 46–55 (Santner 2016).

23 In den folgenden Jahrgängen in den Technischen Mitteilungen wird ebenfalls über Abnahmen berichtet: 1884 (Jg. 1, Nr. 3); 1886 (Jg. 3, Nr. 18, 19); 1906/07 (Jg. 23, Nr. 18, 19); 1911/12 (Jg. 28, Nr. 13); 1927 (Jg. 43); 1939 (Jg. 55, Nr. 8); 1940 (Jg. 56, Nr. 1–3); 1942 (Jg. 58, Nr. 11–12).

24 Ugo Procacci, Fresken aus Florenz, Ausstellungskatalog, Haus der Kunst München, 11.07.–24.08.1969, München 1969, S. 37–39 (Procacci 1969). Thalguter listet noch weitere Abnahmetechniken für Stacco und Strappo auf, vgl. Thalguter 2015, S. 77–81.

25 Vgl. Ulisse Forni, Manuale del Pittore Restauratore, Florenz 1866.

26 Camillo Sitte, Ueber die Erhaltung des Gurker Domes und seine Malereien, in: Mitteilungen der k.k. Zentral-Kommission für Erforschung und Erhaltung der Kunst- und historischen Denkmale, NF XVIII, 1892, S. 75–80; Santner 2016, S. 98. An dieser Stelle sei erwähnt, dass viele der heute sichtbaren Wandbilder im Dom damals noch nicht freigelegt waren.

27 Barbara Kienzl, Denkmalpflege. Die Anfänge im 19. Jahrhundert und der Geschichtsverein, in: Carinthia I, Jg. 184, 1994, S. 319–353, hier: 348.

28 Ernst Bacher (Hg.), Mittelalterliche Wandmalerei in Österreich – Originale, Kopien, Dokumentation, Ausstellungskatalog, Wien 1970, S. 126.

29 Riegl war Kunsthistoriker, ab 1894 Professor für Kunstgeschichte an der Universität Wien und ab 1903 Generalkonservator für die k.k. Zentralkommission.

30 MZK 3, 2, 1903.

31 MZK 3, 2, 1903, Sp. 24; vgl. Santner 2016, S. 248–251.

32 MZK 3, 2, 1903, Sp. 24.



Abb. 1: Einzelne Teilstücke des Beethovenfrieses im Depot des Unteren Belvedere, Aufnahme 1977

gau konnten für die Erhaltung der im äußerst desolaten Zustand befindlichen Burgruine keine Gelder aufgebracht werden, was zu massiven Verlusten führte. Was noch erhalten war, wurde 1908 durch den italienischen Maler und Restaurator Antonio Mayer aus Rovereto[33] im Strappo-Verfahren abgenommen und auf Leinwand übertragen.[34] Nicht unerwähnt bleiben soll die in acht Teilstücken erfolgte Abnahme des Beethovenfrieses von Gustav Klimt 1904 in der Wiener Secession.[35] Dabei handelte es sich nicht um eine Abnahme mit einer der traditionellen Techniken, sondern der ursprünglich aus drei Teilen bestehende Fries musste aufgrund seiner Größe von ca. 65 m² (circa 30 Meter Länge und circa 2 Meter Höhe) in acht Teilstücke zersägt werden, um überhaupt transportiert werden zu können (Abb. 1). Klimt malte seinen ephemeren Zyklus auf eine hölzerne Sparschalung mit vertikalen Kanthölzern mit dazwischenliegenden horizontalen Holzlatten, worauf Schilfrohre mit Drähten befestigt waren. Eine circa 2 cm dicke Kalk-Putzschicht bildete dann den Träger für die Bemalung und die teilweise Stuckierung.[36]

Zwischenkriegszeit

Die kunsthistorisch geprägte Handlungsweise der Denkmalpflege nach 1920 richtete den Blick verstärkt auf das entstehungszeitliche Original in seiner unberührten Gestalt. Alois Riegl und Max Dvořák[37] forderten bereits eine Einbindung von Kunsthistorikern in den restauratorischen Prozessablauf, um nicht zuletzt die restauratorische Zielsetzung verstärkt mitzubestimmen.[38] Noch keine sehr große Aufmerksamkeit wurde der Untersuchung von Wandbildern, der Beurteilung über deren Erhaltungszustand oder der Frage nach den Schadensursachen entgegengebracht bzw. wurden die anzuwendenden Freilegungs- und Restaurierungsmethoden nicht ausreichend hinterfragt. Die Entwicklungen in der Restaurierungstechnik hinkten den progressiven Entwicklungen in der Denkmalpflege hinterher. In den 1920er Jahren kommt es zu einem Generationenwechsel. Besonders der Kunsthistoriker Franz Walliser[39] wird die österreichische Restauratorenlandschaft bis in die 1960er Jahre stark prägen.

33 ÖBL 1815–1950, Bd. 5 (Lfg. 25, 1972), S. 418 f.

34 Manfred Koller, Mittelalterliche Wandmalereien in Österreich – 150 Restaurierung, in: Matthias Exner / Ursula Schädler-Saub (Hg.), Die Restaurierung der Restaurierung, Bd. 5, München 2002, S. 103–118, hier: 111. Auch für Spanien ist eine Abnahme aus ähnlichen Gründen aus einer kleinen abgelegenen Kirche in den Pyrenäen überliefert, für die man dann eigens ein Museum eröffnete. Der Kunsthistoriker Hans Tietze kritisierte diese Art der Einrichtung damit, dass die Wandbilder die kontextuelle Bedeutung verloren hätten und darüber hinaus viele Schäden aufwiesen; vgl. Julia Feldtkeller, Wandmalereirestaurierung, Eine Geschichte ihrer Motive und Methoden, Wien 2008, S. 193 f.

35 Klimt malte seinen Zyklus ursprünglich für die in der Wiener Secession vom 15.04. bis 27.06.1902 stattfindende 14. Ausstellung der Vereinigung Bildender Künstler.

36 Zur weiteren abwechslungsreichen Geschichte nach der Abnahme des Frieses vgl. Christina Gschiel, „Transport der Teile ohne zu schneiden". Die Bergung des Beethoven-Frieses aus der Sammlung Lederer in Schloss Thürnthal, in: Pia Schölnberger / Sabine Loitfellner (Hg.), Bergung von Kulturgut im Nationalsozialismus, Mythen – Hintergründe – Auswirkungen (Schriftenreihe der Kommission für Provenienzforschung 6), Wien 2016, S. 359–382. Hinsichtlich der umfassenden späteren Konservierung und Restaurierung von 1973 bis 1985 vgl. Manfred Koller, Klimts Beethovenfries, Zur Technologie und Erhaltung, in: Mitteilungen der Österreichischen Galerie, Nr. 66/67, Wien 1978/79, S. 215–241; Markus Santner, Zusammenfassender Bericht über die Konservierung und Restaurierung des Beethovenfries von Gustav Klimt (1974–1985), Archiv des Bundesdenkmalamtes, 2009; Ivo Hammer, 110 Jahre Beethovenfries von Gustav Klimt. Zu Maltechnik, Restaurierung und Präsentation, in: Agnes Husslein-Arco / Alfred Weidinger (Hg.), Gustav Klimt. Josef Hoffmann. Pioniere der Moderne, München – London – New York 2011, S. 140–149.

37 Dvořák war Kunsthistoriker, ab 1905 Professor für Kunstgeschichte an der Universität Wien und gleichzeitig Generalkonservator in der k.k. Zentralkommission.

38 Angetrieben auch von dem großen Interesse der Kunstgeschichtsforschung an den immer wieder neu aufgedeckten mittelalterlichen Wandmalereien, spricht man zwischen 1920 und 1945 daher auch von der Phase der „kunsthistorisch angeleiteten Restaurierung", vgl. Santner 2016, S. 144–172.

39 Walliser studierte anfangs auch Chemie an der Universität Wien, vgl. Santner 2016, S. 148.



Abb. 2: Hl. Oswald vor der Abnahme, Pfarrkirche in Malta, Kärnten, Aufnahme vor 1927



Abb. 3: Hl. Dorothea nach Abnahme des hl. Oswald, Pfarrkirche in Malta, Kärnten, Aufnahme 2015

Abgesehen von einzelnen Kursangeboten, waren die Restauratoren in der Regel akademisch ausgebildete Maler und bildeten sich autodidaktisch weiter. An der von Robert Eigenberger gegründeten „Fachschule für Konservierung und Technologie" an der Akademie der bildenden Künste in Wien, die erste universitäre Ausbildungsstätte ihres Faches, spielte die Restaurierung von Wandmalerei lange Zeit keine wichtige Rolle.[40]

Walliser führte im Auftrag des Bundesdenkmalamtes zahlreiche Untersuchungen und Projekte durch. Seiner eigenen Aussage zufolge zählten die Abnahme und Übertragung von Wandbildern zu den schwierigsten Aufgaben und absolut zu seinem „*Spezialfach*".[41] So führte er bereits in seinen Anfangsjahren 1927 die Abnahme eines mittelalterlichen Wandbildes durch, welches sich an der südlichen Langhauswand der Pfarrkirche Maria Hilf Assumptio in Malta in Kärnten befand. Der heilige Oswald lag bereits stark fragmentiert über einer noch älteren Wandmalerei, einer Dorotheadarstellung (Abb. 2). Eine detaillierte Dokumentation über die Vorgehensweise ist nicht überliefert, jedoch berichtet Walliser im „Kärntner Tagblatt" vom 25. November 1927, dass er die Reste des darüberliegenden Wandbildes „*in ungemein behutsamer Weise […] Stück für Stück*" abgenommen und die einzelnen Fragmentteile anschließend in ein Gipsbett wieder zusammengefügt hätte[42] (Abb. 3). Für die kurz nach der Übertragung an der Oberfläche des abgenommenen Wandstückes entstandenen weißen Flecke (Salzausblühungen?) wurde Walliser jedoch stark kritisiert.[43] Der Grund für die Abnahme des hl. Oswald war dessen starke Fragmentierung wie auch die höhere Wertschätzung der noch

40 Santner 2016, S. 138 f.
41 BDA-Archiv Hofburg, Akt Walliser (1925–1965), GZ. 4867/50, 16.05.1950.
42 Die entstandenen Fehlstellen zwischen den originalen Wandfragmentstücken wurden im Ton der umliegenden Farben retuschiert, vgl. BDA-Archiv, Nachlass Walliser, Kärnten, Kärntner Tagblatt, 25.11.1927; Santner 2016, S. 149.
43 Wegen dieser „*missglückt[en]*" Abnahme wurde ihm sein erstes Ansuchen 1933 um einen Professorentitel nicht bewilligt. Walliser sei „*riesig reklamesüchtig*" und es würde wohl einen „*Sturm […] vor allem von Seite der akademisch ausgebildeten Künstlerschaft*" auslösen, vgl. BDA-Archiv Hofburg, Akt Walliser (1925–1965), Z. 134, 20.01.1934.

älteren darunterliegenden Malerei. Eigenberger weist in seinem Aufsatz von 1915 *Über einige Fragen der praktischen Denkmalpflege* auf die Möglichkeit hin, dass eine Abnahme „*jüngerer und minder qualitativer Malereien*“ durchaus vertretbar sei, da durch die neu entdeckten Kunstwerke neue Forschungsfragen für die Kunstgeschichte entstehen würden.[44]

Wiederaufbau nach 1945

Nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg und der schwierigen Phase des Wiederaufbaues begann eine neue Phase in der Denkmalpflege und Restaurierung in Europa. Diese war unter anderem geprägt durch die Gründung verschiedener internationaler Institutionen[45] und einen vermehrten fachlichen Austausch zwischen den einzelnen staatlichen Restaurierungsabteilungen, wobei Italien mit den beiden Restaurierungszentren in Rom und Florenz eine besonders wichtige Rolle einnahm. Einher gingen diese Entwicklungen auch mit einem auf wissenschaftlicher Evidenz beruhendem Vorgehen. Ein Beispiel dafür ist die 1949 von Walliser und dem Amtsmaurer Josef Frais hergestellte Testreihe zu Mörtelproben für die geplante Wiederanbringung eines abgenommenen Wandbildes des Barockmalers Franz Anton Maulbertsch aus der Wiener Akademie der Wissenschaften. Aus verschiedenen Materialien[46] wurden insgesamt 35 Rezepte gemischt und nach einer Trocknungsdauer von vier Monaten auf verschiedene Eigenschaften hin überprüft und bewertet.[47]

Die Möglichkeiten zur akademischen Ausbildung waren zwar durch das Studium an der Akademie gegeben, jedoch spielte die Restaurierung von Wandmalerei nach wie vor keine sehr große Rolle. Die meisten Restaurator:innen hatten eine Ausbildung als akademische Maler oder Bildhauer, eine handwerkliche Ausbildung oder waren Autodidakten. Um die Qualität der Restaurierungen zu verbessern, führte das Bundesministerium für Unterricht 1948 eine staatliche Prüfung für nicht akademische Restauratoren ein.[48]

Die Abnahme von Wandbildern und deren Übertragung auf neue Trägersysteme betrachtete man in der österreichischen Denkmalpflege nicht mehr – wie noch vor einigen Jahrzehnten – als ein „*Husarenstück*“ (Frodl 1954), sondern man war der Meinung, dass durch den technischen Fortschritt und die Methodenentwicklung in der Restaurierung nur mehr „*selten unüberwindbare Schwierigkeiten*“ vorherrschten und geringe Schäden am Kunstwerk entstanden. Für eine erfolgreiche Abnahme bzw. Übertragung seien ein „*fundiertes Wissen, gründliche Erfahrung und eine ruhige Hand*“ notwendig.[49] Aus denkmalethischer Sicht betrachtete man die Abnahme jedoch als problematisch, da es sich in jedem Fall um „*einen schweren Eingriff in einen historisch gewordenen Zustand*“ handelte.[50] Der Landeskonservator für Kärnten, Walter Frodl, benennt vier Gründe, die aus seiner Sicht eine Abnahme und Übertragung von Wandbildern rechtfertigen: 1. wenn der Schaden am Bildträger für eine weitere Erhaltung des Wandbildes nicht mehr zu beheben ist,[51] 2. wenn der Schaden am

44 Robert Eigenberger, Über einige Fragen der praktischen Denkmalpflege, in: Mitteilungen der k.k. Zentralkommission für Erforschung und Erhaltung der Kunst- und historischen Denkmale XIV, 1915, S. 198–209, hier: 201 f.; vgl. Santner 2016, S. 118 f.

45 U. a. UNESCO, ICOM, IIC, ICCROM.

46 Verwendet wurden folgende Materialien: Kalk, Bachsand, Bachriesel, Lehmsand, Trass, Trassit, Marmorgries, Ziegelbruch, Kunstkasein, Topfenkasein, vgl. Archiv BDA, Bericht von Walliser vom 13.06.1949 u. vom 31.10.1949.

47 Fragestellungen waren u. a.: die Anhaftung der neuen Mörtel auf den alten Untergrund, die Mörtelfestigkeit sowie die Widerstandsfähigkeit gegen Risse und Brüche, vgl. Archiv BDA, Bericht von Walliser vom 13.06.1949 und vom 31.10.1949. Das Ergebnis wurde in drei Gruppen unterteilt dargestellt: Gruppe 1: „*Mörtel, die für die Wiederanabringung abgehobener Fresken nicht geeignet sind*“. Gruppe 2: „*Mörtel, die für die Wiederanbringung abgehobener Fresken und ähnliche Arbeiten geeignet sind*“. Gruppe 3: „*Die besten Mörtelproben*“. Als bestes Rezept wird vorgeschlagen: 1 RT: Kalk / 1,5 RT: Bachsand, gewaschen > 2 mm / 0,5 RT: Marmorgries / 0,5 RT: Ziegelbruch (2–5 mm) / 1/8 RT: Trass / geringe Zugabe von Topfenkasein u. Kiss, Afrique o. ä. für die mechanische Festigkeit. Vorzunetzen ist mit Kalkkristallwasser und Patschok, vgl. Archiv BDA, Bericht von Walliser vom 13.06.1949 und vom 31.10.1949.

48 Nach Ablegen der Prüfung durfte man die Bezeichnung „Vom Bundesministerium für Unterricht anerkannter Restaurator“ führen. Der erste ab 1946 im Staatsdienst beim Bundesdenkmalamt angestellte Wandmalereirestaurator war Paul Reckendorfer. Reckendorfer studierte zuerst Malerei und von 1949 bis 1953 noch bei Eigenberger an der Akademie Restaurierung, vgl. Santner 2016, S. 184 f.

49 Walter Frodl, Zur Übertragung eines Freskozyklus des 13. Jahrhunderts im Stift Seckau, in: ÖZKD, Sonderdruck, VIII, Heft 5/6, 1954, S. 85–91, hier: 85 (Frodl 1954); vgl. Ernest Pokorny, Freskoübertragung in Tirol, 1. Teil, in: Maltechnik 73/2, 1967, S. 37–43; 2. Teil, in: Maltechnik 73/3, H3, 1967, S. 65–71, hier: 37 (Pokorny 1967).

50 Frodl 1954, S. 85.

51 Ausgewählte Beispiele: Abnahme gotischer Wandbilder 1937 aus der Burg Hainfels im Pustertal in Osttirol durch Walliser. Freilegung und anschließende Abnahme nur mehr fragmentarischer Reste seltener mittelalterlicher Wandbilder zur Neidhartsgeschichte in der Burg Trautson bei Matrei am Brenner 1946/47 durch Franz Singer im Strappo-Verfahren. 1953: Abnahme gotischer Wandbilder aus der Ruine Pfannberg bei Frohnleiten in der Steiermark durch Anders.

Wandbild zu weit fortgeschritten ist und eine Erhaltung nur durch die Abnahme und den Transfer in den Innenbereich gewährleistet ist,[52] 3. wenn das Wandbild, beispielsweise durch spätere Zu- oder Umbauten, nicht mehr sichtbar ist,[53] 4. wenn eine für das Wandbild zerstörerische Veränderung bevorsteht und das Objekt nur durch eine Abnahme gerettet werden kann.[54] Für manche in der Denkmalpflege tätigen Kunsthistoriker galt jedoch nach wie vor auch die Prämisse, dass die „*weniger wertvollen geopfert werden müssen, um die kostbaren zu erhalten*".[55] Diskutiert wurde auch über die Wichtigkeit des neuen Standortes im Zuge einer Wiederanbringung. Im Falle einer Wiederversetzung würde ja „*ein künstlicher […] Zustand geschaffen*", der schon nach kurzer Zeit als „*historisch*" betrachtet werden könnte.[56] Daher sollte die Wiederversetzung in einer Art und Weise erfolgen, die das translozierte Kunstwerk am neuen Standort für die Betrachter:innen klar erkennbar lässt.[57]

Ein Beispiel für eine im 15. Jahrhundert durch einen Turmanbau verdeckte und seit damals nicht mehr sichtbare Wandmalerei stellt die Darstellung eines Christophorus in der Pfarrkirche St. Peter in Holz in Kärnten dar. Das 4 Meter hohe und 1,5 Meter breite Kunstwerk wird 1950 im Stacco-Verfahren in einem Stück abgenommen, was laut Walliser für Österreich die bis dahin größte Fläche einer Wandmalereiabnahme war (Abb. 4). Walliser verklebte die Bildoberfläche mit einem tierischen Leim und mehrlagigen Leinwandstücken und befestigte anschließend einen Holzrahmen um das Wandbild herum. Durch „*Beklopfen mit einem Holzhammer über einem Stück Pressplatte*" versuchte er dann über sechs Tage lang, die Mal- und Putzschichten vom Träger zu lockern, und konnte schließlich das 6 m² große Kunstwerk in einem Stück auf eine Holzplatte legen und abtransportieren.[58] Weit abstehende Putzschichten wurden rückseitig abgearbeitet und das Wandbild anschließend in einer 2 bis 3 Zentimeter dicken Kalkmörtelschicht an der Chorwand im Außenbereich der Kirche wieder versetzt. Zur Stabilisierung wurden an der Mauer Metallhaken befestigt und mit hölzernen Querverstrebungen das Wandbild in das Mörtelbett gepresst.[59]



Abb. 4: Dokumentationstafel von Walliser über die einzelnen Abnahmeschritte des hl. Christophorus in der Pfarrkirche St. Peter in Holz, Kärnten, um 1950

52 Ausgewählte Beispiele: Abnahme der Totentanzbilder am Karner von Metnitz in Kärnten 1968 durch Anders. Abnahme des hl. Romanus am Petersberg in Friesach in Kärnten 1969 durch Anders.
53 Ausgewählte Beispiele: Abnahme des hl. Christophorus in St. Peter in Holz in Kärnten 1950 durch Walliser. Abnahme gotischer Gewölbemalerei aus der Apsis der Leonhardskirche in Nauders in Tirol 1952/53 durch Walliser.
54 Ausgewählte Beispiele: Abnahme von Wandbildern Anton Faistauers im Festspielhaus in Salzburg 1939 durch Susat. Abnahme eines gotischen Wandbildes 1951 im Chor der ehemaligen Jesuitenkirche in Judenburg in der Steiermark.
55 Siegfried Hartwagner, Die Denkmalpflegearbeiten in Kärnten in den Jahren 1948–1950, in: Carinthia I, 142., 1952, S. 3–80, hier: S. 50 f.
56 Frodl 1954, S. 85.
57 Ebd., S. 86.
58 BDA-Archiv, Nachlass Walliser, Kärnten, Bericht 6.11.1950, vgl. Santner 2016, S. 283.
59 Ebd. Eine weitere Abnahme im Stacco-Verfahren führte Walliser 1953 am Karner in Sirnitz, Kärnten, durch, wo die Putzschichten rückseitig bewusst gedünnt und mit einem „*Gewebe abgesichert*" und anschließend auf einen „*gut getrockneten Holzrahmen*" aufgespannt wurden. Walliser verweist in seinem Bericht darauf, dass er, wie auch schon bei einer Abnahme in Nauders in Tirol, eine zusätzliche „*Sicherung gegen Bewegung durch Gewebebänder an der Rückseite*" ausführte. Das Wandbild wurde mit einem Abstand zur Mauer als Supraporte über einem Seiteneingang der Kirche montiert, vgl. Archiv BDA, Kärnten: Bericht Walliser an das BDA, 12.12.1953.

Detaillierte Beschreibungen über die damaligen Vorgehensweisen und die eingesetzten Materialien bzw. Rezepte sind selten überliefert.[60] Die Abnahme von Fragmenten einer Kuppelmalerei im Pfarrgartenpavillon in Radkersburg wird in einem Artikel von Walliser 1954 genauer dargestellt.[61] Die Bildoberfläche wurde an manchen Stellen mit Kalksinterwasser bzw. mit Schellack gefestigt. Zur Abnahme von Altretuschen wurde in diesem Fall Ammoniumcarbonat eingesetzt. Die Verklebung der Gewebestücke (Leinwand und Baumwolle) wurde mit tierischen Leimen ausgeführt. Im Falle einer Übertragung auf eine Leinwand wurden an den Rückseiten meist noch wegstehende Putzschichten reduziert, mit Kalkkasein gefestigt und auf provisorische Holzrahmen aufgespannt. Die Radkersburger Fragmente wurden schließlich noch auf das „*endgültige Format*" zugeschnitten. Die Rückseite konsolidierte man dann mit einem „*reißfestem Baumwollgewebe und mit Jute im Kalkkasein-Verfahren*".[62] Nach der Trocknung wurden die an der Bildvorderseite aufgeleimten Gewebestücke mit warmem Wasser wieder abgenommen. Anschließend spannte man die übertragenen Wandbilder auf hölzerne Blendrahmen auf. Zum Schutz gegenüber Feuchtigkeit strich man die Rückseiten noch mit einem Nitrozelluloselack ein.[63]

Ein „Kunstfehler"

Neben den „positiven" Fallstudien gibt es auch Beispiele, wo die Abnahme zu einer völligen Zerstörung führte oder nur mit großen Verlusten durchgeführt werden konnte.[64] Manchmal traten aufgrund technischer Mängel bereits zeitnah neue Schadensbilder an den Trägern auf.[65] Dass die Methoden der Untersuchung und Feststellung der Schadensursachen damals noch nicht den heutigen Standards entsprachen, zeigt das Beispiel einer Abnahme von mittelalterlichen Wandbildern in der Stadtpfarrkirche von St. Veit an der Glan in Kärnten durch den erfahrenen Walliser 1959, wofür dieser öffentliche Kritik einstecken musste. Das Problem war, dass die mit tierischem Leim aufgeklebten



Abb. 5: Zustand während der Beklebung der Bildfläche mit Gewebestücken, Stadtpfarrkirche in St. Veit, Kärnten, Aufnahme 1959



Abb. 6: Sinopie des hl. Antonius, Stadtpfarrkirche in St. Veit, Kärnten, Aufnahme um 1959

Leinwandstücke trotz wochenlanger Bestrahlung mit einer „Heizsonne" nicht trockneten und klebrig blieben (Abb. 5 und 6). Auf den Vorwurf eines „Kunstfehlers"

60 Detailliertere Beschreibungen dieser Zeit findet man bei: Schneider o. J., S. 4–15; Pokorny 1967, S. 65–71; Ulrich Ockerbauer / Franz Walliser, Die Abnahme der Fresken aus dem Pfarrgartenpavillon in Radkersburg, in: ÖZKD XI, 1957, S. 25–29 (Ockerbauer / Walliser 1957).
61 Ockerbauer / Walliser 1957, S. 25–29.
62 Ebd., S. 29.
63 Zum Abschluss wurden kleine Fehlstellen retuschiert und größere im Freskogrundton belassen, vgl. Ockerbauer / Walliser 1957, S. 29.
64 1950 missglückte die Abnahme einer Schutzmantelmadonna am Wirtschaftshof in Stift Rein in der Steiermark, vgl. Bundesdenkmalamt (Hg.), Dehio Steiermark, 2006, S. 397 f.
65 Der 1969 von Anders abgenommene Metnitzer Totentanz musste nach einigen Jahren aufgrund von Schadensphänomenen ein weiteres Mal übertragen werden, vgl. Ivo Hammer, Bilder der Vergänglichkeit – Vergänglichkeit der Bilder. Der Totentanz von Metnitz, in: ÖZKD 49, H3/4, Wien 1995, S. 43–53.

und die Kritik hin, dass er die Rezeptur des Leimes nicht richtig gewählt hätte,[66] ließ Walliser eine Putzprobe in Wien naturwissenschaftlich untersuchen. Telefonisch wurde Walliser von einem Prof. Schmitz über einen massiven „*Mauerfraß*“[67] informiert. Hygroskopische Salze im Mauerwerk dürften die Trocknung des Leimes verhindert haben. Walliser behandelte anschließend die Wandflächen mit Formalin,[68] klebte erneut Leinwandgewebe auf und versuchte die Flächen mit Ventilatoren zu trocknen. Aber auch dieses Vorgehen erbrachte nicht den erhofften Erfolg. Trotz dieser Probleme schaffte es Walliser, die Wandbilder im Stacco-Verfahren abzunehmen und auf einen neuen Träger zu übertragen[69] (Abb. 7).

Die Entwicklung der Konservierung und Restaurierung basierend auf einer wissenschaftlichen Grundlage wird insbesondere in Rom am Istituto Centrale per il Restauro unter der Leitung von Cesare Brandi und den dort tätigen Restaurator:innen vorangetrieben. Im Rahmen der ersten vom International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (IIC) ausgerichteten Konferenz „Recent advances in Conservation“[70], die 1961 in Rom stattfand, referierten Leonetto Tintori und Paolo Mora über die Abnahmetechniken und neuen Trägersysteme. Dabei hoben sie den großen technischen Fortschritt hervor. Eine Abnahme verursacht „*unter normalen Bedingungen keine ernsthaften Schwierigkeiten mehr*“.[71] Von diesen Entwicklungen in Italien profitieren auch die österreichischen Restauratoren. Schon früh werden diese zur Fortbildung an das Istituto Centrale entsendet, so etwa der Amtsrestaurator Paul Reckendorfer vom Oktober 1950 bis Februar 1951 oder 1964 die Bildhauerin und Restauratorin Dina Kerciku mit weiteren Kolleg:innen, die insbesondere über die Abnahme und Übertragung von Wandmalereien sowie über „*Freskoträger auf Polyesterbasis*“ weitergebildet wurden.[72] 1968 startete dann offiziell der „Mural Painting Conservation Course“ in Kooperation mit ICCROM und dem Istituto Centrale, der von Paul Philippot, Paolo und Laura Mora entwickelt sowie geleitet wurde.[73]



Abb. 7: Hl. Antonius im Zustand nach der Übertragung und Präsentation in der Stadtpfarrkirche in St. Veit, Kärnten, Aufnahme 2010

66 BDA Archiv Hofburg, Akt St. Veit an der Glan, Brief 24.06.1959.
67 Damit gemeint war meist Mauersalpeter, auch Kalksalpeter $Ca(NO_3)_2$ bezeichnet.
68 Eine wässrige Formaldehyd-Lösung, die gerne gegen biologischen Befall eingesetzt wird. Sie denaturiert Proteine und verhindert Fäulnis.
69 BDA-Archiv, Nachlass Walliser, Kärnten, Bericht 23.08.1959; BDA-Archiv Hofburg, Akt 5302–5304 St. Veit an der Glan, Restaurierbericht.
70 Garry Thomson (Ed.), Recent advandes in conservation, contributions to the IIC Congress Rome, London 1963 (Thomson 1963).
71 Vgl. dazu Leonetto Tintori, Methods used in Italy detaching murals. Recent advances in conservation, in: Garry Thomson (Ed.), IIC Congress Rome 1961, London 1963, S. 118–122; Giovanni Urbani / Giorgio Torraca, Nuove supporte per affreschi staccati, in: Bollettino Dell´Istituto Centrale Del Restauro 1965, S. 23–36; Thomson 1963 und Schneider o. J., S. 7 f.
72 In ihrem Bericht beschreibt Kerciku detailliert die einzelnen Arbeitsschritte und die zu verwendenden Materialien, die ihnen von Prof. Bellisoni und Prof. Mora vermittelt wurden, vgl. Dina Kerciku, Bericht über das Studium von Freskoträgern auf Polyesterbasis am Istituto di Restauro, ROM, Archiv des Bundesdenkmalamtes, 1964.
73 Jukka Jokilehto, ICCROM and the Conservation of Cultural Heritage. A history of the organization's first 50 years, 1959–2009, ICCROM Conservation Studies 11, 2011, S. 38; Santner 2016, S. 187.

Diese Kontaktaufnahme von Wien nach Rom entsprach den damaligen Bemühungen, sich international stärker auszutauschen und zu vernetzen.[74]

Abnahme mit italiensicher Unterstützung

In Millstatt in Kärnten fand ab 1963 die Abnahme eines 20 m² großen mittelalterlichen Wandbildes an der westlichen Außenwand der Stiftskirche unter italienischer Beteiligung statt (Abb. 8). Der Zustand der Außenwandmalerei war aufgrund permanenter Witterungseinflüsse sehr desolat[75] und das Dach bot nur im oberen Bereich einigermaßen Schutz. Die staatliche Denkmalpflege stand in der Kritik. In der Tageszeitung „Die Neue Zeit" vom 29. August 1961 wird die Vernachlässigung des für die Kunstgeschichte so bedeutenden Kunstwerks beklagt und der zuständige Dechant kritisierte das Nichthandeln, indem er konstatierte, dass das „*Gemälde in Schönheit stirbt bzw. man es dem Verfall überläßt*".[76] Die Meinungen für oder gegen eine Abnahme waren konträr: Einerseits würde durch die Translozierung der „*Wert der Originalität*" verloren gehen, andererseits befürchtete man den raschen Verfall und damit vollkommenen Verlust des Kunstwerks.[77] Aufgrund der Größe des Wandbildes (5,80 Meter x 4,00 Meter) und der fehlenden restauratorischen Erfahrungen wandte man sich an das Istituto Centrale. Der aus Rom entsendete Restaurator Luciano Maranzi sprach sich nach der Begutachtung „*gegen eine Abnahme aus, schätzte jedoch den derzeitigen Erhalt des Wandbildes an Ort und Stelle noch auf etwa 5 bis 10 Jahre ein*", woraufhin beschlossen wurde, das Wandbild in einem Stück abzunehmen.[78] Gemeinsam mit dem österreichischen Restaurator John Anders führte Maranzi im Frühjahr 1963 vier Probeabnahmen



Abb. 8: Zustandsaufnahme vor der Abnahme des Wandbildes an der Westwand der Stiftskirche in Millstatt, Kärnten, Aufnahme vor 1963

(10 cm x 10 cm) im Strappo-Verfahren durch[79] (Abb. 9). Anfang Juli fand ein Treffen zur Begutachtung statt, an dem die stellvertretende Amtsleiterin des Bundesdenkmalamtes Gertrude Tripp sowie Paolo Mora und Paul Philippot teilnahmen. Nach der positiven Zustimmung wurde der Großteil des Wandbildes im Strappo-

74 So wurden Paolo Mora und Paul Philippot von der UNESCO beauftragt, von den europäischen und außereuropäischen Ländern „*Studien und Berichte über die Situation und den Stand der Restaurierung und Konservierung von Wandmalereien einzuholen.*" 1963 kam es im Stift Lambach in Oberösterreich zu einer Zusammenkunft von Mora und Philippot mit den deutschen Kollegen Taubert und Buchenrieder sowie mit den österreichischen Kollegen, vgl. Santner 2016, S. 209 f.; Johannes Taubert, Restaurierprobleme alter Wandmalereien, in: Maltechnik-Restauro 64, 1958, S. 102–104.

75 Seit der Mitte der 1950er Jahre beschäftigte man sich mit der Außenwandmalerei. Walliser versuchte eine „*Entkeimung*" und fixierte die Oberfläche durch eine „*Kalkkristallwasser-Besprühung*", vgl. BDA-Hofburg, Akt Millstatt, PK, 1948–1978, Z. 1621/77, Bericht 06.12.1955.

76 BDA-Archiv Hofburg, Akt Millstatt, Brief 15.12.1961.

77 BDA-Hofburg, Akt Millstatt, PK, 1948–1978, Z. 1621/77.

78 BDA-Archiv AKR, Akt Millstatt, Brief 28.09.1962 und 23.01.1963.

79 Die Vorgehensweise war: Reinigung der Oberfläche mit verdünntem Alkohol und anschließend klebte man „*zwei Lagen Mullstoffleinen sowie zwei Lagen dickes Leinwandgebewebe mit heißem, bereits angequollenem Perlleim in waag- und senkrechten Bahnen auf*", BDA-Archiv AKR, Akt Millstatt, Restaurierbericht 23.01.1964.



Abb. 9: Während der Abnahme durch Manzani und Anders, Stiftskirche in Millstatt, Kärnten, Aufnahme 1963



Abb. 10: Sinopia an der Westwand der Stiftskirche in Millstatt, Kärnten, Aufnahme um 2010

Verfahren und ein kleiner, stark versinterter Teil im Stacco-Verfahren abgenommen.[80] Zu einem weiteren Treffen in Millstatt am 25. Juli 1963 wurden zahlreiche österreichische Restaurator:innen eingeladen, um das Vorgehen sowie das fachliche Wissen der in Millstatt angewandten Verfahren zu vermitteln.[81] Trotz der erfolgreichen Übertragung gab es Kritik, dass der entstehungszeitliche Kontext für immer verloren ging und man „*einen anderen Weg [hätte] suchen müssen, das bedeutende Werk zu erhalten*".[82] Für die Kunstgeschichteforschung wurde mit der dadurch erfolgten Sichtbarmachung der Sinopia ein Gewinn erzielt, bietet diese doch einen interessanten Einblick in den künstlerischen Arbeitsprozess[83] (Abb. 10). Die in Millstatt geäußerte Kritik spiegelte die internationale Diskussion wider, dass nämlich das „*Denkmal […] untrennbar mit der Geschichte verbunden ist*"[84] und Kunstwerke ein „*integraler Bestandteil eines Denkmals sind [und] von ihm nicht getrennt werden*" dürfen, es sei denn nur in Ausnahmefällen.[85] Als einzige Ausnahme wird die Möglichkeit bezeichnet, wenn das Objekt auf keinem anderen Weg mehr zu erhalten sei. Dies war in Millstatt auch das Hauptargument der Befürworter, dass bei einer Belassung in situ das Wandbild in absehbarer

80 Hinsichtlich des Trägers wurde von Mora der Vorschlag unterbreitet, das „*Fresco auf eine Aluminium-Konstruktion mit Hartfaserplatten aufzukleben*", beziehungsweise es wurde auch die „*russische Methode der Plexiglasfixierung*" in Erwägung gezogen; letztlich entschied man sich für einen Holzrahmen und eine Kalkkaseinverklebung auf Leinwand, vgl. BDA-Archiv AKR, Akt Millstatt, Restaurierbericht 23.01.1964 und BDA-Archiv AKR, Akt Millstatt, Restaurierbericht 07.09.1969. Zur genauen Beschreibung der weiteren Vorgehensweise vgl. Santner 2016, S. 207–214.

81 Maranzi und Anders hatten eigens dazu ein Stück des Wandbildes noch in situ belassen, um dann im Beisein der Gruppe „*eine kleine mittelalterliche Komposition […] i[m] Strappoverfahren*" abzunehmen. Teilgenommen haben: Helmut Kortan, Giovanna Zehetmayer, August Kicker, Josef Fastl, Gustav Krämer, Frambert Wall-Beyerfels und Alois Höfer sowie die Kirchenmaler Lucas Arnold und Adolf Campidell jun., vgl. BDA-Archiv AKR, Akt Millstatt, Zl. 8430/63.

82 Karl Ginhart, Mein Lebenslauf von 1958–1968, in: Carinthia I, 159, 1969 S. 5–15, hier: 10.

83 Es wurde auf die damals in aller Munde befindliche Ausstellung „Fresken aus Florenz" bezogen, die bereits in New York, Amsterdam und in London gezeigt wurde. Restaurator Anders rechtfertigte dies damit, dass damit wohl „*am besten die Richtigkeit der Maßnahme zur Abnahme gefährdeter Wandmalereien*" bewiesen ist und welch wichtige Rolle die Sinopien spielen, vgl. BDA-Hofburg, Akt Millstatt, PK, 1948–1978, Brief 15.10.1969; Manfred Koller, Zur Problematik der Übertragung von Wandmalereien, in: Maltechnik-Restauro, H2, 1987, S. 17–22, hier: 17 (Koller 1987).

84 Charta von Venedig: Internationale Charta über die Konservierung und Restaurierung von Denkmälern und Ensembles (Denkmalbereiche), 1964, Artikel 7.

85 Charta 1964, Artikel 8; vgl. auch Paolo Mora / Laura Mora / Paul Philippot, Conservation of Wall Paintings, London 1984, S. 251–261.

Zeit vollkommen zerstört sein würde. Die Übertragung bedeutete aber eben auch einen Verlust der Integrität und Authentizität des Kunstwerks hinsichtlich seines Standortes, seiner Materialität und seiner Funktion.[86]

Ab den 1950er Jahren ist ein deutlicher Anstieg von Abnahmen in Österreich zu beobachten, die als vermeintliche „Routineübertragungen" angesehen werden, wobei man meinte, das Kunstwerk ganz „*ohne Substanzverluste […] mit dem ganzen Zauber ihrer Struktur, Oberfläche und Farbigkeit […] erhalten*" zu können.[87] Diese Sichtweise wurde in der Fachschaft stark kritisiert, da Abnahmen immer mit einem unwiederbringlichen Verlust verbunden sind. Selbst die mehrfach geäußerte Meinung, dass bloß eine Abnahme der Malschicht erfolge und die Trägerschichten am Objekt belassen würden, stellt eine eklatante Minderung der historischen Substanz dar.[88] Die Welle an Abnahmen und Übertragungen erhielt im europäischen Raum durch die dramatischen Folgen der Flut von Florenz nach 1966[89] eine neue Dynamik,[90] was nicht zuletzt auch zu einer „Musealisierung des Kirchenraumes" führte, indem durch die Wiederaufstellung der abgenommenen Wandbilder ein veränderter gestalterischer, als auch liturgischer Zustand in Kauf genommen wurde.[91] Diese Entwicklung wurde zudem durch die international mit großer Beachtung wandernde Ausstellung „Fresken aus Florenz" beflügelt.[92] In der im Ausstellungskatalog gezogenen Bilanz über die letzten 100 Jahre kritisierte man die fehlende Auseinandersetzung mit Fragen zu Erhaltungsmethoden bzw. die fehlende Verbesserung von Restaurierungstechniken.[93] Wandbilder wurden gerne auch als eine dekorative Gestaltung im Architekturkontext aufgefasst und weniger als ein autonomes Kunstwerk, wodurch die Loslösung aus dem räumlichen und inhaltlichen Kontext als nicht sehr dramatisch empfunden wurde.[94]

Fazit

In der heutigen Begutachtung von früheren Abnahmen und Übertragungen zeigen sich vielgestaltige Probleme: Alterungsprozesse der verwendeten Materialien oder schlechte Lagerungsbedingungen stellen eine neuerliche konservatorische Bearbeitung vor große Herausforderungen. Viele der übertragenen Wandbilder sind für die Öffentlichkeit nicht zugänglich und fristen ein unbefriedigendes Dasein in diversen Depots. Eine Wiedermontage und Präsentation scheitert oft an den fehlenden Aufstellungsstandorten oder den hohen Kosten. Die beschriebenen Nachteile einer Abnahme und Übertragung wurden bereits mehrfach benannt. Durch die Translozierung werden die Kunstwerke aus ihrem historischen, technologischen und ästhetischen Zusammenhang gerissen. Die Fragmentierung bzw. Translozierung von Kunstwerken bedarf, wenn von den beteiligten Stakeholdern nicht andere Lösungen gefunden werden, weitreichender Konzepte, was etwa den Einsatz kompatibler Materialien für die Wiederbehandelbarkeit, die Reversibilität der Trägersysteme oder die Frage eines neuen Standortes im Kontext seiner Umgebung (Witterung und Ästhetik) betrifft. Zudem setzen die Abnahme und Übertragung eine regelmäßige Wartung und Pflege bzw. ein Monitoring voraus.

86 Thomas Danzl, Zur aktuellen Situation der Abnahme und Übertragung von Wandmalereien, in: VDR Beiträge 2, 2019, S. 8–16; vgl. Danzl / Möwald 2016, S. 328.
87 Der Maler und Restaurator Pokorny beschreibt in seinem Artikel detailliert die Vorgehensweise der Strappo-Abnahme und Übertragung auf einen neuen Träger, vgl. Pokorny 1967, S. 37–43.
88 Manfred Koller, Probleme der Freskoabnahme, in: Maltechnik. Technische Mitteilungen für Malerei und Bildpflege, 74. Jg., H2, 1968, S. 48–50; vgl. auch Manfred Koller, Übertragungen – um jeden Preis?, in: Maltechnik 77/4, 1971, S. 94–102 und Koller 1987, S. 17–22.
89 Koller 1987, S. 21.
90 Vgl. Hammer 2019, S. 47–61 mit einer Auflistung von Objekten in Österreich v. a. in den 1970er Jahren.
91 Danzl / Möwald 2016, S. 328.
92 Vgl. Fresken aus Florenz, Ausstellungskatalog im Haus der Kunst in München vom 11. Juli bis 24. August 1969, München 1969.
93 Procacci 1969, S. 37; vgl. weiters Mora / Mora / Philippot 1984 und Hammer 2019, S. 58 (Auswahl).
94 Hammer 2019, S. 51.

Jan Chlíbec

Ein Bronzegrabmal aus der Löffler-Werkstatt im Veitsdom in Prag?

A Bronze Tomb from the Löffler Workshop in St. Vitus Cathedral in Prague?
In Prague's St. Vitus Cathedral stands a bronze tomb of exceptional artistry depicting Ludmilla Berka (†1558) with her two sons. Since Aloys Hirt's mention in 1830, it has been attributed to the Nuremberg Vischer workshop or an unidentified German master. Recent findings reveal the Vischer workshop ended sepulchral production by 1544, and the monument diverges stylistically from its oeuvre. Commissioned by Ludmilla's husband Franz von Thurn—Obersthofmeister at the court of Archduke Ferdinand of Tyrol—, it may plausibly be the work of an as yet unidentified Flemish sculptor from the circle of Mechelen-born Alexander Colin, active at the Habsburg court in Innsbruck from 1563. Casting likely occurred in the Löffler workshop in Innsbruck. The monument's opulence and technical sophistication fully reflects Thurn's high social standing and Ludmilla's role as governess to the children of Emperor Ferdinand I.

Im Sommer des Jahres 1819 machte Aloys Hirt auf seiner Studienreise durch Sachsen über Wittenberg, Meißen und Dresden auch in Prag Station. Der deutsche Kunsthistoriker und klassische Archäologe, seit 1798 Direktor der königlichen preußischen Sammlungen und seit 1810 erster Professor für Theorie und Geschichte der Kunst an der Universität in Berlin, besuchte auch die Prager Kathedrale St. Veit. Im Inneren richtete er seine Aufmerksamkeit auf einige ausgewählte Kunstwerke, unter denen ihn insbesondere das Bronzegrabmal der Ludmilla Berka (Ludmila Berková) (†1558), Hofmeisterin der Töchter Kaiser Ferdinands I., gefangen nahm. Seine Beobachtungen auf der Reise zu den Kunstdenkmälern publizierte er 1830 in Buchform und gerade seine Passage über das Grabmal der Ludmilla Berka, in der Hirt seine künstlerische Qualität hochschätzte, rief eine weitere Welle an Interesse von tschechischen und ausländischen Forschern an diesem Sepulkralwerk hervor (Abb. 1).[1]

Nicht nur die außergewöhnliche Komposition des Grabmals, sondern auch die Art und Weise seiner bildhauerischen Gestaltung wurde von der Forschung hervorgehoben. Den Künstler dieses Werks suchte man hinsichtlich seiner hohen Qualität in der deutschen Produktion und zwar besonders in der berühmten Gießhütte der Familie Vischer in Nürnberg, die auf Statuen, Grabmäler und Epitaphien aus Metall spezialisiert war. Der erste, der diese Zuschreibung vornahm, war gerade Hirt. Nach der Beschreibung der Komposition und der Transkription der Grabinschrift führte er mit einem gewissen Grad an Vorsicht an: „*Auch von diesem schön gearbeiteten Denkmale nennet man den Meister nicht. Es scheint aber noch aus der Nürnbergischen Gießschule des Peter Vischer zu stammen.*“[2]

Gegen die Ansicht Hirts opponierte 1858 August Ambros, der in seiner Monographie über den Veitsdom dem Grabmal eine umfangreiche Passage widmete. Er lehnte Hirts Zuschreibung mit der Begründung ab, dass aus der Arbeit Vischers (und auch des anderen Nürnberger Gießers Pankraz Labenwolf) schon ein völlig anderer Geist sehe, der Geist der Renaissance. Ambros betont den Widerspruch zwischen der Gestaltung der Figur und dem Gesicht der Verstorbenen. Die Figur hielt er für steif, unzureichend modelliert und auf ältere

1 Vor Hirt registrierte 1794 Jaroslaus Schaller beiläufig dieses Grabmal in seiner Aufzählung der Grabmäler im Veitsdom, er führte aber bloß seinen Standort, das bildhauerische Material und die Transkription der Grabinschrift an. Jaroslaus Schaller, Beschreibung der königlichen Haupt und Residenzstadt Prag 1, Prag 1794, S. 195: „*In der St. Johann Nep. Kapelle: unter einem Monument von Bronze*“. Es folgt die Transkription der Grabinschrift, in der er fälschlicherweise anstatt des 22. Oktobers einen Tag früher angibt.

2 Aloys Ludwig Hirt, Kunstbemerkungen auf einer Reise über Wittenberg und Meissen nach Dresden und Prag, Berlin 1830, S. 181.



Abb. 1: Grabmal der Ludmilla Berka von Dubá (†1558), Prag, Veitsdom, Johannes-Nepomuk-Kapelle

künstlerische Verfahren verweisend, welche die Schule von Peter Vischer schon überwunden habe. Das Gesicht hat nach Ambros jedoch Porträtcharakter mit Zeichen des „*Todesschlummers*"; man könne annehmen, dass es nach der Totenmaske geschaffen wurde (Abb. 2). Trotz aller Einwände einschließlich der körperlichen Disproportionen hält er die Platte für ein schönes und interessantes Werk der älteren Kunst.[3]

Oskar Pollak hielt das Grabmal für das Werk eines nicht näher spezifizierten deutschen Bildhauers, der eine noch gotische Schulung hatte.[4] Mit dem relativierenden Wörtchen „*vielleicht*" ordnete auch Ivo Kořán die Arbeit, die er als „*einen Höhepunkt der transalpinen Plastik des 16. Jahrhunderts*" ansah, in eine Nürnberger Werkstatt ein. Kořáns Ansicht zur Autorschaft übernahm auch Jarmila Krčálová.[5] In jüngster Zeit führten Jiří Kuthan und Jan Royt an, dass Ludmilla Berkas Gatte Franz von Thurn 1558 das Bronzegrabmal in der „*berühmten Werkstatt der Vischers in Nürnberg*" gießen ließ.[6] Nach neuen Erkenntnissen beendete die Vischer-Werkstatt jedoch ihre Produktion von Sepulkralwerken schon 1544, also viele Jahre vor dem Tod Ludmillas.[7]



Abb. 2: Grabmal der Ludmilla Berka von Dubá, Detail mit Porträt der Ludmilla

Das erwähnte Grabmonument, das außer figürlichen Elementen auch die Wappen der verwandten Geschlechter enthält, die auf der Rahmung der Bronzeplatte angebracht sind, war offensichtlich von Anfang an als ein sog. „Wandgrabmal" konzipiert, d. h. als ein in vertikaler Position installiertes, in die Kirchenmauer eingelassenes Grabmal. Auf dem Marmorsockel vor diesem figürlichen Grabmal wurde eine Inschriftentafel aus Bronze angebracht.[8] Das Grab selbst befand sich im Boden vor der aufgestellten Grabplatte.

Die Komposition selbst hat in der böhmischen Produktion keine Vorgänger, aber auch keine Nachfolger. Sie

3 August Ambros, Der Dom zu Prag, Prag 1858, S. 175–177.
4 Oskar Pollak, Studien zur Geschichte der Architektur Prags 1520–1600, in: Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses 29, 1910/1911, S. 129.
5 Ivo Kořán, Renesanční sochařství v Čechách a na Moravě [Renaissanceskulptur in Böhmen und Mähren], in: Jiří Dvorský (Hg.), Dějiny českého výtvarného umění II/1 [Geschichte der tschechischen bildenden Kunst], Praha 1989, S. 117; Jarmila Krčalová, Renesance [Renaissance], in: Anežka Merhautová (Hg.), Katedrála sv. Víta v Praze [St. Veit-Kathedrale in Prag], Praha 1994, S. 157–159.
6 Jiří Kuthan / Jan Royt , Katedrála sv. Víta, Václava a Vojtěcha. Svatyně českých patronů a králů [Die Kathedrale St. Veit, Wenzel und Adalbert. Das Heiligtum der böhmischen Patrone und Könige], Praha 2011, S. 441.
7 Information von Sven Hauschke, Autor der Monographie *Die Grabdenkmäler der Nürnberger Vischer-Werkstatt (1453–1544)*, Petersberg 2006. Hauschke lehnte in einer persönlichen Korrespondenz von 2009 die Autorschaft der Vischer-Werkstatt auch aus stilistischen Gründen ab.
8 Maße der Bronzeplatte: Höhe 191,5 cm; Breite 101,5 cm; Plattenstärke 1,3 cm.



Abb. 3: Grabmal der Ludmilla Berka von Dubá, Detail mit Porträt eines Sohnes



Abb. 4: Grabmal der Ludmilla Berka von Dubá, Detail mit Porträt eines Sohnes

bewahrt zwar noch die sicherlich traditionell gotische Antinomie in der Stellung der Figur, die mit dem Kopf auf einem Kissen wie im Todesschlaf liegend, jedoch zugleich stehend dargestellt wird (so auch die in Totenhemdchen gekleideten Kinder). Diese Antinomie hält sich auch in der Spätrenaissance in der transalpinen Sepulkralskulptur noch relativ lange. Der Faltenwurf der Ludmilla Berka trägt noch Residuen der spätgotischen Kunst.

Die innige Geste, mit der die Mutter ihre beiden Söhne berührt und mit der sie die Kinder an sich schmiegt und gleichsam im Moment ihres Todes besänftigt, hat in der Tradition der Sepulkralskulptur in den böhmischen Ländern nichts Vergleichbares und erscheint in diesem Gebiet weder in der Renaissance noch später (Abb. 3). Die emotionale Aufladung der ganzen Szene wird durch die kleine Geste des Sohnes an ihrer rechten Seite, der im Moment des Entschlafens den Kopf aufstützt, noch akzentuiert (Abb. 4). Die ganze tiefe Trauer der Mutter über den Tod ihrer Kinder, die in ihr Gesicht eingegraben ist und sich in ihren Gesten spiegelt, wurde vom Bildhauer (aber auch vom Gießer) mit der Betonung auf den tragischen Augenblick des Scheidens aus dem Leben wirklich meisterhaft zum Ausdruck gebracht.

Ich bezweifle, dass Ludmillas Gesicht nach einer Totenmaske geschaffen wurde, wie Ambros gedacht hat. Es zeigt stilisierte Züge, Zeichen tiefer Trauer und trägt nicht die typischen Merkmale des *rigor mortis*, wie wir sie aus der italienischen Renaissanceplastik kennen, z. B. bei den Gesichtern des Girolamo und Marco Antonio della Torre auf ihrem Grabmonument in San Fermo Maggiore in Verona von Andrea Riccio, der dieses Werk circa zwischen 1516 und 1521 schuf.

Wie hat das Grabmal der Ludmilla Berka wohl in der ursprünglichen Form ausgesehen? Darauf gibt eine bislang unbeachtete Passage aus dem Buch *Zrdcadlo slavného margkrabství moravského* (Spiegel der berühmten Markgrafenschaft Mähren, Olomouc 1593) von dem berühmten polnischen Historiker, Genealogen und Heraldiker Bartoloměj Paprocký von Hloholy und Paprocká Vůle teilweise die Antwort. Zwar nimmt Paprocký die künstlerische Seite des Grabmals nicht wahr, dafür registriert er aber seinen literarischen Begleittext. Aus seinem Text geht nämlich hervor, dass über ihrem Grab ursprünglich eine Inschrift (wahrscheinlich auf einer Stein-, Bronze- oder Holztafel, was Paprocký nicht näher spezifiziert) mit acht lateinischen Versen eines innigen Gebets angebracht war. Paprocký hat eine Transkription dieses Gedichts angefertigt: „*Mors superata mihi horribilis mortalibus ægris / Non eris : optata fies modo Ianua lucis. / Quam dederat DEVS è Chara mihi Coniuge Prolem / Auxit Cæleftem cum Genitrice Chorum. / Pars maior penes est Matrem, pars altera Patrem: / Hæc concessa solo, iuncta sed illa Polo. / Christe resurgentum Princeps, ardentibus oro / Votis, te nobis assere, nosque tibi*“.[9] Die Inschrift verschwand

9 „*Der Tod, der mir schrecklich erschien für sterbliche Kranke, / wirst du nicht mehr sein; vielmehr wirst du mir zur ersehnten Pforte des Lichts. / Die Nachkommenschaft, die GOTT mir von einer geliebten Gattin gegeben hatte, / hat er mit der Mutter zum himmlischen Chor vermehrt. / Ein größerer Teil ist bei der Mutter, der andere Teil beim Vater: / dieser ist der Erde überlassen, jener aber mit dem Himmel vereint. / Christus, Fürst der Auferstehenden, ich bitte dich mit brennendem Verlangen: / stehe uns bei und nimm uns zu dir.*“ (Übersetzung ins Deutsche von Stefan Weber). Bartoloměj Paprocký z Hlohol a Paprocké Vůle, Zrdcadlo slavného margkrabství moravského [Spiegel der berühmten Markgrafschaft Mähren], Olomouc 1593, Blatt 141.

offenbar im Laufe der Jahrhunderte während der baulichen Veränderungen der Kathedrale.

Der Auftraggeber des Bronzegrabmals war Franz Graf von Thurn (1509–1586), Ludmillas Gemahl und Vater ihrer verstorbenen Kinder Joachim und Ferdinand, wie die Inschrift in Antiqua auf der bronzenen Inschriftentafel unter dem Grabmal angibt.[10]

Beide Eheleute – Ludmilla und Franz – lebten seit der Jugend am Wiener Kaiserhof in der unmittelbaren Umgebung Ferdinands I. und seiner Gattin Anna Jagiello und erfreuten sich ihrer Gunst. Franz stammte aus dem Geschlecht der Thurn-Valsassina und sein Pate in Vertretung war Kaiser Maximilian I. persönlich gewesen. Seit seinem 16. Lebensjahr stand er im Dienst der Habsburger: Schon mit 18 Jahren kämpfte er in der kaiserlichen Armee in Ungarn gegen die Osmanen und 1529 auch in der Belagerung von Wien; an Feldzügen gegen denselben Feind nahm er auch später aktiv teil. Am Hofe Ferdinands I. schloss er auch Bekanntschaft mit Ludmilla Berka aus der Hofgesellschaft der Königin Anna, die Tochter des böhmischen Adeligen Peter Berka von Duba, und heiratete sie 1533; im Heiratsvertrag wird die Braut als „*kammerjungfrau*“ bezeichnet.[11]

Schon in der ersten Hälfte der 1550er Jahre arbeitete Franz beim Erzherzog Ferdinand II. von Tirol, der als Statthalter des Vaters seit 1547 in Böhmen wirkte. Franz gehörte zu den nächsten Höflingen des Erzherzogs; er war in seine heimliche Vermählung mit Philippine Welser eingeweiht und einer der Paten von Ferdinands Kind, das 1558 geboren wurde. Seit 1553 war er Obersthofmeister des Statthalterhofs des Erzherzogs und übte dieses Amt bis zum Ende von Ferdinands Wirken als Staathalter in Böhmen aus. Als Ferdinand nach Innsbruck umzog, blieb Thurn bis 1568 an seinem Innsbrucker Hof. Für seinen treuen Dienst für das Habsburger Geschlecht wurde er mehrmals belohnt. 1568 entließ ihn Ferdinand mit größter Wertschätzung und in gegenseitigem Einvernehmen aus seinem Dienst und ernannte ihn zu seinem Geheimen Rat.

Thurns gesellschaftliches Renommee war sehr groß, wie es übrigens die Notiz von Jan Beckovský dokumentiert, der noch hundert Jahre nach Thurns Tod seine Verdienste um das Haus Österreich betont. Er hob seine Tapferkeit und Besonnenheit bei den Kämpfen gegen die Osmanen während der Belagerung von Wien 1529, die Hilfe für die Kaiser in Friedenszeiten und die männliche Stärke bei ritterlichen Turnieren hervor. Seine Frau Ludmilla erwähnte er aber nur mit einem Satz.[12]

Was das Material von Ludmillas Grabmal angeht, so hatte die Produktion von sepulkralen figürlichen Bronzewerken in Böhmen keine kontinuierliche Tradition und sie konnte sich hier auch nicht etablieren. Aus dem 14. Jahrhundert haben sich nur einige zeitgenössische Nachrichten über Werke erhalten, die später zerstört wurden: ein nicht näher spezifiziertes Grabmal in der St.-Georgs-Basilika in Prag, das Grabmal König Wenzels II. (1271–1305) in der Zisterzienserklosterkirche Aula Regia in Zbraslav und das Grabmal von Bischof Johann IV. von Dražice (um 1250–1343) im Veitsdom in Prag.[13] Auch später, im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert, hatten einige erhaltene Sepulkralarbeiten nicht die Form figuraler Plastiken, sondern waren nur kleinere Bronzetafeln und -wappen, die in den Grabstein eingelassen waren. Zwei von ihnen, das Grabmal von Bušek von Žeberk († 1499) in der Kirche zur Himmelfahrt Mariens in Planá (Plan) bei Marienbad und von Jan Dlask von Vchynice (nach 1471–1521) im Veitsdom in Prag, stammen aus der Nürnberger Werkstatt von Peter Vischer dem Älteren.[14]

Hinsichtlich dessen, dass Thurn längere Zeit in Wien und in Innsbruck gelebt hat, kann man hypothetisch erwägen, ob das Epitaph in der Innsbrucker Werkstatt von Gregor Löffler (um 1490–1565), der zum Beispiel sowohl für Kaiser Ferdinand I. als auch für seinen Sohn Ferdinand von Tirol tätig war, oder eventuell in der Werkstatt seines Sohnes Hans Christoph Löffler

10 Die Inschrift lautet: LUDMILLAE BERCHAE.CONIVGI ILLVS / TRI.FIDEQ INCOMPARABILI.ET FERDI / NANDO. AC IOACHIMO FILIIS DVLCISS. / FRANCISCVS TVRRIANVS COMES.DIE / XXII OCT. M.D.LVIII.PIIS.POSVIT

11 František Hrubý, Hrabata z Thurnu a Valdsassina. Dějiny jich českomoravské větve [Die Grafen von Thurn und Valdsassin. Die Geschichte ihres böhmisch-mährischen Zweiges], in: Český časopis historický 28 [Tschechische historische Zeitschrift], 1922, S. 74–108, hier: 80.

12 Jan Beckovský, Poselkyně starých příběhův českých 2 [Botin alter böhmischer Geschichten], hg. Antonín Rezek, Praha 1879, S. 348: „*Měl on dvě manželky. První pojal sobě léta 1533. paní Lidmilu Berkovnu z Dubé a z Lipého a s ní zplodil synův 13 a 6 dcer, která léta 1558. dne 22. října umřela a v Praze v kostele sv. Víta byla pohřbena.*“ („*Er hatte zwei Ehefrauen. Die erste nahm er sich 1533, Frau Lidmila Berkovna von Duba und Lipa, mit der er 13 Söhne und 6 Töchter hatte. Sie starb am 22. Oktober 1558 und wurde in der St. Veitskirche in Prag begraben.*“).

13 Jan Chlíbec, Česká sepulkralní skulptura z výtvarného a historického pohledu [Die böhmische Sepulkraskulptur aus künstlerischer und historischer Sicht], in: Jan Chlíbec / Jiří Roháček, Monumenta mortis et memoriae. Sepulkrální skulptura ve výtvarné kultuře českého středověku [Monumenta mortis et memoriae. Sepulkralskulptur in der bildnerischen Kultur des böhmischen Mittelalters], Praha 2022, S. 65–68.

14 Chlíbec / Roháček 2022, Kat.-Nr. 133, 237.

(†1597), der sie 1565 nach dem Tode seines Vaters übernommen hat, gegossen wurde. Der Schöpfer des Entwurfs ist bislang nicht identifiziert. Die formale Seite des Grabmals orientiert sich durch ihre Komposition und bildhauerische Bearbeitung offensichtlich an der transalpinen Kunst. Sicherlich handelt es sich nicht um einen böhmischen Bildhauer, weil sich kein stilistisch vergleichbares Werk in Böhmen aus dieser Zeit erhalten hat. Das Werk weist auch nicht auf einen der italienischen Künstler hin, die damals in Böhmen und in Mähren tätig waren. Es bietet sich die Überlegung an, dass der Schöpfer des Entwurfs einer der flämischen Bildhauer aus dem Umkreis von Alexander Colin, der, in Mecheln geboren, ab 1563 in Innsbruck im Dienst der Habsburger wirkte, gewesen sein könnte. Colin arbeitete in Innsbruck am königlichen Mausoleum mit den Figuren von Ferdinand I., seiner Frau Anna Jagiello und ihres Sohns Maximilian II., welches in Einzelteilen nach Prag transportiert und im Veitsdom aufgebaut wurde. Er ist wahrscheinlich auch der Künstler des figürlichen Grabmals von Bernardin Menesia da Toledo, das sich ebenfalls in der Prager Kathedrale befindet. Colin arbeitete in Innsbruck eng mit Gregor Löffler und seinen Söhnen zusammen.[15] Man kann annehmen, dass Colin der Schöpfer des Entwurfs des Bronzeepitaphs für Gregor Löffler im Ferdinandeum ist, das dann einer von Gregors Söhnen gegossen hat. Hans Christoph Löffler goss auch das Epitaph von Hans von Dreyling in der Pfarrkirche von Schwaz nach Colins Modell.[16]

Das Grabmal der Ludmilla Berka wurde im Laufe der 60er Jahre des 16. Jahrhunderts geschaffen und war wahrscheinlich eine der weiteren Sendungen an Sepulkralkunstwerken von Innsbruck nach Prag. Dieses prunkvolle, ökonomisch kostspielige sowie technisch anspruchsvolle Werk entsprach völlig sowohl Thurns gesellschaftlicher Stellung als auch der höfischen Funktion seiner Frau als Erzieherin der kaiserlichen Kinder.

15 Jeffrey Chipps Smith, German Sculpture of the Later Renaissance c. 1520–1580, Princeton – New Jersey 1994, S. 235.
16 Vinzenz Oberhammer, Löffler, in: Thieme-Becker Künstlerlexikon 23, Leipzig 1929, S. 315 f.

Monumentum factum est

Die Terrassenhaussiedlung in Graz-St. Peter. Brutalistische Utopie und Denkmal des sozialen Wohnbaus

Mit der Terrassenhaussiedlung in Graz-St. Peter schuf die Werkgruppe Graz (Eugen Gross, Friedrich Groß-Rannsbach, Werner Hollomey und Hermann Pichler) zusammen mit Walter Laggner und Peter Trummer in den 1970er-Jahren ein Schlüsselwerk des österreichischen Brutalismus und zugleich ein einzigartiges Experiment des sozialen Wohnbaus. Die großmaßstäbliche Anlage mit 531 Wohneinheiten gilt als Hauptwerk der 1959 gegründeten Architektengemeinschaft. Als erstes österreichisches Demonstrativbauvorhaben verband sie architektonische Innovation mit intensiver Partizipation der Bewohner:innen – und markierte damit einen Wendepunkt in der Wohnbaugeschichte der noch jungen Zweiten Republik.

2025, rund fünfzig Jahre nach ihrer Fertigstellung, konnte die Terrassenhaussiedlung nun als authentisch erhaltene brutalistische Großform unter Denkmalschutz gestellt werden. Der Stellenwert der Wohnsiedlung reicht weit über die regionale Bedeutung hinaus: Sie ist ein seltenes Beispiel für die Utopie des gemeinschaftlichen Wohnens in monumentaler Betonarchitektur und dokumentiert die Ambitionen der steirischen Architekten, Architektur als gesellschaftspolitische Aufgabe zu begreifen.



Abb. 1: Terrassenhaussiedlung Graz, St. Peter Hauptstraße 29–35



Abb. 2: Terrassenhaussiedlung Graz

Die Entstehung der Terrassenhaussiedlung ist eng mit den Umbrüchen des österreichischen Wohnbaus nach 1945 verbunden. Graz war im Zweiten Weltkrieg eine der am stärksten bombardierten Städte Österreichs, die Wohnungsnot in der Nachkriegszeit war enorm. Während die 1950er-Jahre von genormten Zeilenbauten und Einfamilienhaussiedlungen geprägt waren, wuchs in den 1960er-Jahren die Kritik an Monotonie und Zersiedelung. Junge Architekt:innen suchten nach Alternativen und forderten eine „neue Urbanität", die Gemeinschaft, Vielfalt und soziale Durchmischung in den Mittelpunkt stellte.

Die Werkgruppe Graz entwickelte bereits 1965 erste Entwürfe für eine terrassierte Wohnhausanlage auf dem schwierigen Gelände einer aufgefüllten Lehmgrube im Südosten der Stadt. Ohne unmittelbaren Auftraggeber betrieben die Architekten ihr Projekt zunächst aus Eigeninitiative – ein Hinweis auf die Überzeugungskraft ihres gesellschaftlichen Anspruchs. Mit der Erhebung zum Demonstrativbauvorhaben konnten staatliche Förderungen gewonnen werden, die schließlich den Bau von 1972 bis 1978 ermöglichten.



Abb. 3: Terrassenhaussiedlung Graz

Die Terrassenhaussiedlung besteht aus vier großvolumigen Baukörpern, die in einer Abfolge von acht bis zwölf Geschossen terrassiert in die Höhe wachsen. Sichtbeton dominiert das Erscheinungsbild: ein klares Bekenntnis zum Brutalismus, dessen Name vom französischen *béton brut* – roher Beton – abgeleitet ist.

Das architektonische Konzept folgt einer Dreiteilung in Primär-, Sekundär- und Tertiärstruktur. Die Primärstruktur umfasst Städtebau, Tragwerk und Erschließungssysteme und bildet die Grundlage für das gemeinschaftliche Zusammenleben. Die Sekundärstruktur betrifft den individuellen Wohnbereich, während die Tertiärstruktur den Spielraum der Partizipation eröffnet: zukünftige Eigentümer:innen konnten Grundrisse, Fassaden und Ausstattung ihrer Wohnungen mitgestalten.

Diese Durchdringung von Gemeinschaft und Individualität prägt die gesamte Anlage. Horizontale Kommunikationsebenen im ersten und vierten Obergeschoß, offene Stiegenhäuser und großzügige Freiflächen fungieren als soziale Begegnungszonen. Ein zentraler Hof mit Wasserbecken, Sitzplätzen und Grünflächen bildet das urbane Herz der Siedlung, während private Terrassen und Pflanztröge den Bezug zur Natur herstellen. In den Wohnblöcken wurden unter anderem ein Kindergarten und ein Gemeinschaftszentrum integriert.

Die Terrassenhaussiedlung ist ein seltenes Beispiel für eine brutalistische Großstruktur im österreichischen Wohnbau. In ihrer kompromisslosen Materialität verkörpert sie die Ideale des Wohlfahrtsstaates: Transparenz, Ehrlichkeit der Konstruktion und die Vision eines demokratischen Zusammenlebens. Statt standardisierter Rasterarchitektur entstand hier eine skulpturale Großform, in der Vorsprünge, Loggien und Rücksprünge ein lebendiges Spiel von Masse und Freiraum erzeugen.

Die Monumentalität des Sichtbetons, kontrastiert durch Begrünungen und offene Loggien, verleiht der Anlage bis heute eine eindrucksvolle Präsenz im Grazer Stadtbild. Gleichzeitig dokumentiert sie die politische und kulturelle Aufbruchsstimmung der 1970er-Jahre – eine Zeit, in der Architektur als Medium gesellschaftlicher Erneuerung verstanden wurde.

Dass die Anlage trotz einzelner Anpassungen an heutige Bedürfnisse weitgehend im Originalzustand erhalten blieb, erhöht ihren Denkmalwert beträchtlich. Sie zählt zu den wenigen authentisch überlieferten brutalistischen Großprojekten Österreichs. Gleichzeitig ist die Grazer Wohnanlage mehr als ein architektonisches Experiment der 1970er-Jahre. Sie ist Denkmal einer Epoche, die Architektur als gesellschaftliche Aufgabe verstand, und zugleich Zeugnis einer utopischen Idee, die bis heute Strahlkraft besitzt. Ihr Wert liegt nicht allein in der rohen Monumentalität des Sichtbetons, sondern vor allem im Versuch, gemeinschaftliches Wohnen in einer neuen städtischen Form zu verwirklichen.

Viele brutalistische Bauten Österreichs wurden seither verändert oder abgerissen. Umso bedeutender ist die weitgehend original erhaltene Terrassenhaussiedlung, die bis heute eine hohe Wohnzufriedenheit aufweist. Sie fungiert nicht nur als architektonisches Wahrzeichen von Graz, sondern auch als lebendiges Beispiel dafür, wie soziale Visionen in gebaute Realität übersetzt werden können.

Das Bundesdenkmalamt hat sich bereits parallel zum Unterschutzstellungsverfahren nicht zuletzt im Hinblick auf die große Anzahl von Bewohner:innen auf zukünftige Veränderungen detailliert mit dem Thema einer möglichen denkmalfachlichen Erhaltung der Terrassenhaussiedlung auseinandergesetzt und unter Einbindung der Interessensgemeinschaft Terrassenhaussiedlung (IG-THS) ein *Entwicklungskonzept Denkmalpflegeplan* ausgearbeitet.

Das Entwicklungskonzept beschreibt denkmalfachliche Zielsetzungen und stellt eine Orientierung für denkmalgerechte Sanierungs-, Instandsetzung- und Weiterentwicklungsmaßnahmen dar. Mit dem Bestreben die Terrassenhaussiedlung in ihrer Substanz und ihrem authentischen Erscheinungsbild zu erhalten, unterstützt es Eigentümer:innen, Bewohner:innen, Planer:innen und Bundesdenkmalamt bei der Planung und der denkmalgerechten Umsetzung individueller Anforderungen. Ein Denkmalpflegeplan gibt dem denkmalpflegerischen Handeln eine feste Struktur und zielt organisatorisch auf die Zusammenarbeit aller an der Erhaltung des Denkmals Beteiligten ab.

Die Anlage steht beispielhaft für eine Phase, in der Architektur, Politik und Gesellschaft ineinandergriffen, um ein neues Modell von Urbanität zu schaffen. Als Schlüsselwerk des österreichischen Brutalismus ist sie nicht nur für Graz, sondern für die Architekturgeschichte der Zweiten Republik von österreichweiter Bedeutung.

Sabine Weigl

Verzeichnis der Autorinnen und Autoren

Aristotelis Antoniou
ari.v.antoni@gmail.com

Giovanni Caudo
Roma Tre University
giovanni.caudo@uniroma3.it

Jan Chlíbec
Czech Academy of Sciences
chlibec@udu.cas.cz

Federica Fava
Roma Tre University
federica.fava@uniroma3.it

Natalie Heger
Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences
heger@u-lab.de

Liliana Iuga
RWTH Aachen University
iuga@staedtebau.rwth-aachen.de

Paul Mahringer
Bundesdenkmalamt
paul.mahringer@bda.gv.at

Heike Oevermann
Technische Universität Wien
heike.oevermann@tuwien.ac.at

Markus Santner
Hochschule für bildende Künste Dresden
santner@hfbk-dresden.de

Ruth Schlögl
Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences
ruth.schloegl@fra-uas.de

Barbara Schönig
Bauhaus-Universität Weimar
barbara.schoenig@uni-weimar.de

Christina Schraml
Universität für angewandte Kunst Wien
christina.schraml@uni-ak.ac.at

Oana Țiganea
Politecnico di Milano
oanacristina.tiganea@polimi.it

Ana Tostões
IST University of Lisbon
ana.tostoes@tecnico.ulisboa.pt

Irina Tulbure
Ion Mincu University of Architecture
and Urbanism – Bucharest
irinatulbure@uauim.ro

Hande Tunç
Özyeğin University, Istanbul
hhandetunc@gmail.com

Sabine Weigl
Bundesdenkmalamt
sabine.weigl@bda.gv.at

Abbildungsnachweis

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Fig. 1: AML, PT/AMLSB/CMLSBAH/PURB/002/05415.
Fig. 2, 4, 5: Ana Tostões.
Fig. 3: AML, PT/AMLSB/CMLSBAH/PURB/002/05416.
Fig. 6: Joana Coutinho.

Beitrag Christina Schraml:
Fig. 1, 4, 6 left: WStLA, Franz Palka.
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Fig. 5, 6 right: Christina Schraml.

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Fig. 1–3, 4 right: Aristotelis Antoniou.
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Sinopia an der Westwand der Stiftskirche in Millstatt, Kärnten, um 2010, Foto Markus Santner.

Beitrag Markus Santner:
Abb. 1, 2, 4–6, 8, 9: Archiv des Bundesdenkmalamts. Bundesdenkmalamt, Archiv.
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Beitrag Jan Chlíbec:
Abb. 1: Institut für Kunstgeschichte, Akademie der Wissenschaften der Tschechischen Republik, Archiv.
Abb. 2–4: Institut für Kunstgeschichte, Akademie der Wissenschaften der Tschechischen Republik, Foto Jan Chlíbec.

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