

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 Groza¹

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 evi-

dent 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

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- 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 și 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 “Nizhny 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://112patrimoni.ro/Imi/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



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

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.

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 dwell-

ings 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” projects²⁹ and to delineate new parcel divisions. Thus, in autumn 1968, DSAPC Bihor³⁰ 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 Sistemalizare, 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 coordi-

nated 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.

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), ArchHistOR 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.”