

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.

Conserving, 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 Schöning / 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 Schöning 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 Szemző / 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 Schöning, *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 Schöning 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 Waffenfabriks-gesellschaft 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 Münchenholz 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 Gilroy, Social housing as heritage: The case of Byker, Newcastle upon Tyne, in: Lianne 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 approach²² 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: Bundeskanzleramt, 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

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



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

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.