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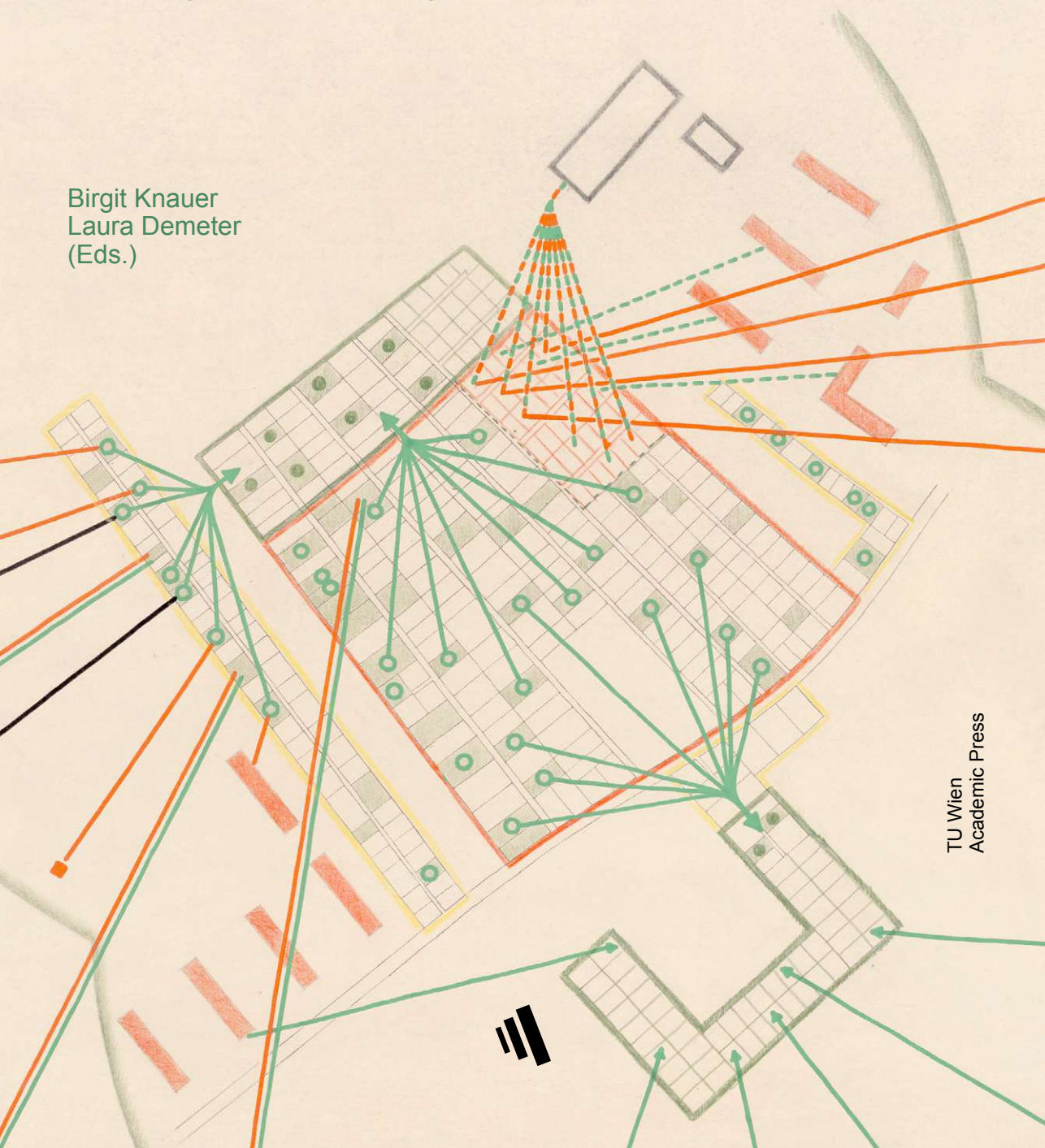
Planning and Preserving in Historic Urban Contexts

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(Eds.)

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CONTENT

Introduction

INTEGRATING HERITAGE IN URBAN PLANNING: MULTI-DISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES ON TRANSFORMATION PROCESSES OF EUROPEAN CITIES IN THE 20TH CENTURY

Birgit Knauer, Laura Demeter

This publication evolved in close connection with the conference "Cities in Transition. A review of historical discourses, planning decisions and conservation strategies", which took place on 16 and 17 November 2023 at TU Wien[1]. The conference was devoted to historical transformation processes affecting urban areas and buildings in European and North American cities in the 19th and 20th centuries. An interdisciplinary group of international speakers discussed historical planning strategies and political and social aspects of planning history. A particular focus lay on how these interact with the development of monument protection and the discourses on architectural and urban heritage that accompanied historical transformation processes.

In line with the topic and aims of the conference, this volume further elaborates on the connections between urban planning strategies and heritage conservation. Their mutual influence and interplay become especially apparent when considering historical case studies of European cities in the 19th and 20th centuries.

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[1] The symposium was conceived by Birgit Knauer, who is a Research Associate at the Department of Heritage Conservation and Building in Existing Fabric at TU Wien. She selected the contributions together with Carmen M. Enss and Laura Demeter, members of the UrbanMetaMapping research consortium, which was based at the Centre for Heritage Conservation Studies and Technologies (KDWT) at the Otto-Friedrich University of Bamberg.

1 URBAN TRANSFORMATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF URBAN HISTORY AND HERITAGE STUDIES

The significance of heritage conservation issues in planning history has already been the subject of various publications (e.g. Larkham, 2003; Pendlebury, 2003; Fischer & Altrock 2018). Some of these specifically address conservation practices and discourses during periods of urban transformation, shedding light on heritage conservation institutions as actors involved in planning processes (Enss & Vinken, 2016; Warda, 2018; Knauer, 2022). Increasing attention has recently been given to studies that focus on urban development and heritage preservation in Central and Eastern Europe. However, these have tended to analyse either individual case studies of urban planning strategies in the postwar context (Grau & Welch Guerra, 2024; Welch Guerra et al., 2023), particularly in socialist countries (Gantner et al., 2021), or to focus on mechanisms of heritage preservation (Bădescu, 2021; Demeter, 2018; Gantner, Geering & Vickers, 2022; Grama, 2019; Iuga, 2016). Systematic interdisciplinary studies of the history of urban transformation and the major role played in this by heritage conservation have also mostly focused on developments in countries such as Poland (Popiołek-Roßkamp, 2021) or the GDR (Briesen & Strubelt, 2022) without providing a comparative analysis.

This collection fills a gap in the existing scholarship by presenting multifaceted research on the historical transformation of cities in Western, Central and Eastern Europe. Case studies from various countries, including Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, and the United Kingdom, examine the connections between historical planning strategies and heritage conservation theory and practice during the transformation processes of the 20th century. The contributions focus particularly on the period following the Second World War and address planning theories and practices of built cultural heritage conservation in the "capitalist Western" European context as well as parallel developments and transformations undertaken by the communist and socialist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe. A specific emphasis has been placed on the developments in former communist countries by highlighting continuities and discontinuities from the interwar period to the Second World War or in the context of the regime changes in 1989. This volume thus highlights the complex processes and contexts that characterised urban policies and heritage conservation practices under these regimes. Several chapters show the developments as continuous processes and make reference to local particularities.

This volume doesn't make any claim to be exhaustive; rather it seeks to pave the way for new studies that explore these topics through an interdisciplinary and transnational lens. The contributions to this volume cover a wide range of topics at the intersection of planning history, urban history, historical geography, and monument preservation, making a significant contribution to all these fields. Authors from these disciplines discuss the historical evaluation, selection, and planning processes relating to the built environment and the accompanying discourses conducted in the media and in public on the preservation or destruction of buildings. Of special interest are the various actors – individuals, institutions or organisations, networks, and specialist

groups – that consciously and unconsciously influenced or reacted to urban transformation processes by various means. But it is not only the (long-term) effects of planning and conservation decisions on the building fabric that are examined. The chapters also shed light on structural and social consequences of planning and conservation strategies that have not yet received much international attention, and which continue to have an impact today.

2 OBSERVATIONS ON THE MUTUAL INFLUENCE AND INTERACTION OF URBAN PLANNING STRATEGIES AND HERITAGE CONSERVATION PRACTICE

Analysing historical urban development and transformation processes in various countries reveals the complex relationship between urban planning, politics, and the preservation of cultural heritage. General observations can be gathered under four main headings:

2.1 Politics, urban development and conservation practice

Several case studies illustrate the close link between politics, urban development, and conservation practice (Knauer, Pendlebury, Oláh, Meissner, Coccoli). During phases of transformation, the historic fabric of cities has been repeatedly subjected to an extensive assessment and selection process. Decisions on the preservation or removal of buildings and urban fabric were based on various factors. These often included not only questions of architectural and historical value, but also political and strategic concerns. Particularly in the aftermath of (intentional or unintentional) destruction, it became necessary to deal with the remaining historic building stock from a planning and heritage conservation perspective.

Destruction and political upheaval have often led to the rewriting of urban narratives. Both planning interventions and selective preservation played a role in this. This involved evaluating the "character" of cities or urban areas and the existing building stock and often deliberately foregrounding (selected) historic buildings. The contributions to this book demonstrate how these decisions in politics and planning changed the structure and townscape of cities and reveal the shifting understanding of cultural heritage over time. For example, the multi-ethnic aspect of cities in Central and Eastern Europe was downplayed in the post-war period in favour of functionalist goals, such as the preservation of historic city centres for tourism (Demeter) or propaganda purposes (Getka-Kenig).

2.2 Conservation of historic city centres beyond political differences

Not only individual – iconic – buildings were repeatedly instrumentalised to fulfil a range of political and social purposes, so were "old towns" and historic urban areas. In the course of the 20th century, interest shifted from the preservation of single monuments to the ensemble and the integration of historic monuments into development and modernisation projects.

Interest in managing built heritage and integrating historic city centres into post-war modernisation and development projects in the 1950s and 1960s grew simultaneously in Western and Eastern Europe (Pendlebury, Oláh, Demeter, Špikić, Getka-Kenig). Modernisation and post-war reconstruction projects and discourses, impacting historic city centres, developed in parallel despite various political agendas.

2.3 Values, (re-)assessment, and the influence of various actors

Another topic that comes under scrutiny is the shifting definition of cultural heritage in the period from 1900 to 1990 (Knauer, Coccoli, Guinand/Musil). Planning decisions (e.g. over transport links, public infrastructure, and conservation campaigns) brought about an upgrading of the historic building stock, transforming not only the built environment but also urban social structures. At the same time, planning decisions led to reassessment and preservation. These mechanisms and patterns have been repeated throughout history, but have also been changed by the intervention of new actors and interest groups.

By contrast, selective preservation practices can be observed repeatedly throughout history: Attributing value to buildings, structures, and larger ensembles sometimes reflects the interests of a "few" and their narratives of the past. In pursuing urban development, planners and administrators in many cities have also had to deal with "dissonant heritage", for example with the built legacy of former authoritarian political systems. Efforts were sometimes made to erase "unwanted memories" of the past and "unpopular narratives" from collective memory (Getka-Kenig, Demeter, Meissner, Hauer/Krammer). The question of preserving the heritage of social and ethnic minorities is an issue that requires further exploration.

By contrast, bottom-up, activist-led interventions against planned demolitions (Meissner) as well as performative and artistic interventions in urban space to protest against political planning decisions (Robine) show how societies can appropriate urban space in opposition to authoritarian forms of governance and efforts to transform heritage.

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2.4   The impact of transformation on the social structures of cities

Often as result of economic and political pressure, historical urban-planning decisions have had a massive impact on the social structures of cities. The contributions to this volume show how cities' multi-layered – and often multiethnic – pasts have been changed by (conscious) planning decisions and transformation processes (Demeter, Geta-Kenig and Špikić). Efforts to revitalise urban districts often led to displacement and gentrification (Guinand/Lelek/Musil), sometimes despite the best efforts of city administrations (Knauer, Coccoli). The reassessment and "upgrading" of urban fabric thus had both positive and negative long-term consequences.

3   OVERVIEW AND STRUCTURE OF THE VOLUME

This volume consists of two parts, in addition to its introductory and concluding chapters. The first comprises six chapters dealing with the planning and politics of preservation across Europe from an interdisciplinary perspective. The second part, with five chapters, covers cultural, social, economic, and functional aspects of urban transformation and their long-term consequences for heritage and related public discourses.

3.1   PART I: Planning and Politics in Historic City Centres

The main topic that the authors address in the first part of the volume is the role of heritage conservation in shaping Europe's historic city centres in the context of modernisation, development, and post-war reconstruction. Covering the period from the interwar era to the 1970s, the various chapters capture how the modernisation debates and projects were carried out in various European cities and affected historic cities and city centres. By focusing on case studies from Austria, the UK, Hungary, Croatia, Poland, and Romania, this section highlights developments that show parallels across diverse political systems, which strongly impacted how authorities, experts and professional institutions carried out the modernisation, development, and reconstruction of cities and their historic centres.

Birgit Knauer provides a long-term view of the evolution of heritage conservation and urban planning in Austria from the beginning of the 20th century until the 1970s. Focusing on the case of Vienna, she identifies four historical periods that transformed the city and were connected to both planning strategies and debates on heritage and heritage practices. She accomplishes this by conducting a thorough analysis of the role of institutions, such as the Federal Monuments Office, in pursuing heritage conservation in times of major urban and political transformation. She also considers how discourses on how to integrate heritage conservation measures within urban planning practice have shifted in line with changing interests.

John **Pendlebury**'s insights into the contribution of the British urban planner and architect Thomas Sharp (1901–1978), a rather marginalised figure, to shaping the concept of "townscape" in Great Britain are outlined by various case studies. By discussing the visions and proposals contained in Sharp's writings of the mid-1940s for historic cities such as Durham, Exeter, and Oxford, Pendlebury draws attention to the immediate and lasting legacies of Sharp's personal engagement in the way these cities transformed or preserved their historic cores during reconstruction or redevelopment processes in the post-war period. Sharp's principles of "townscape", which Pendlebury calls a "methodology of modernity" and "methodology for planning", are revealed in his extensive analysis of the bombed cities of Durham and Exeter and in his contributions to the debates on the modernisation of Oxford and Cambridge during the 1950s and 1960s. For Pendlebury, Sharp's advocacy of a methodology of planning that is "historically informed and historically sensitive" is essential in understanding his legacy in the cities where he was directly involved in planning debates and decision-making processes.

Similarly, **Gábor Oláh** pursues a paradigm shift in his conceptual analysis of the transformation and creation of the "historic" urban core of the Hungarian city of Budapest during the 1960s. Oláh's interdisciplinary approach brings together research methods from the digital humanities, conceptual history, and discourse analysis to highlight how professional discourses, as reflected in Hungarian architectural journals during the 1960s, articulated concepts of urban heritage and urban planning. Furthermore, the author shows how the architectural and urban planning community eventually contributed to shaping the understanding of "conservation areas" and formulated the argument for the preservation of the district of Buda as a whole, moving beyond the tradition of protecting single monuments. The role of Pál Granasztói and the problematisation of "townscape" in the Hungarian context are also extensively discussed.

Taking a similar approach, **Marko Špikić** analyses how various professional groups (urban planners, architects, conservation experts) discussed how to deal with historic cities in Croatia affected by the Second World War and the resulting population displacements. He traces the arguments made in favour of protecting and restoring ruins and historic towns in the context of political transformation – in this case the consolidation of Yugoslavia and the socialist ideology – in a qualitative analysis of various academic publications, conference debates, press articles, and political speeches.

Poland is emblematic of the post-war reconstruction and restoration debates in Central Europe, as examined in this volume by **Mikołaj Getka-Kenig**. He discusses various Polish cities, highlighting how the socialist regime approached the integration of "historic districts" such as "old towns" in debates on post-war regeneration. Similar to Špikić's approach to Croatian cities, Getka-Kenig analyses the ideologically motivated and historically informed reconstruction and renovation projects undertaken in Warsaw and Gdańsk, which were later repeated in other towns and cities such as Poznań,

Krakow, Toruń, and Sandomierz. The author notes that debates on extensive urban transformation were eventually also carried out in smaller Polish cities that were not affected by the war, something Pendlebury also identified in reference to post-war Britain. Finally, he examines the integration of formerly German cities and the "Polonisation" of urban space through heritage conservation and reconstruction projects.

Laura Demeter contributes to debates on the nationalisation of historic cities in Eastern Europe that were shaped by multi-ethnic communities. She discusses how questions of this multi-ethnic legacy were included in debates on the modernisation and conservation of historic cities and how they evolved in the long term. In a case study on the medieval city of Brașov (Kronstadt), which was shaped by the Hungarian and Habsburg monarchy, she examines the state's modernisation policy towards this multi-ethnic city after 1918 in the context of the formation of the modern nation-state of Romania. This chapter shows how political regimes such as the Romanian monarchy (1918–1948) and military dictatorship (1940–1945) pursued top-down policies to nationalise urban space. This reached its peak under the communist regime, which engaged in a comprehensive project of conservation and restoration of the historic city of Brașov as an ensemble worth preserving for its value as a "medieval historic centre", emphasising its potential as a centre for tourism and promoting a narrative that silenced the multi-ethnic character of the historic city.

3.2   PART II: Cultural, Social, and Functional Transformation.
         Long-term Consequences for Heritage and Public Discourse

The second part of the volume brings together a selection of case studies from Austria, Germany (GDR), Bulgaria, and Italy, which reflect upon the social and economic implications of urban planning processes and how they deal with both official and unauthorised aspects of heritage conservation. The authors in this section also analyse the role of actors involved in processes of urbanisation and preservation in post-war Europe, considering aspects such as forms of activism, the appropriation of urban space by various social groups, social exclusion, gentrification, and informality. They draw on theories and methods from disciplines including visual studies, urban planning, heritage conservation, architecture and history.

Part I provided an extensive overview of "authorised" urban planning and heritage conservation actors – from individual experts, via state authorities, to professional institutions – in various European contexts and under a range of forms of political governance. **Friedrich Hauer** and **Andre Krammer** take up this topic in the second part of the book, drawing our attention to a neglected aspect of urban planning debates in 20th century Europe, namely the role of "informality" in processes of shaping urban spaces that go beyond institutional, legislative, and professional practices. By discussing the "informal settlements" that shaped Vienna's peripheries in the post-war era, this chapter highlights

bottom-up initiatives that eventually challenged "authorised" forms of urbanity. These initiatives of "urban planning without planners" also contributed to shaping the discourse on urban planning and the subsequent safeguarding and integration of the "informal settlements" into expanding urban structures and networks in the city.

Concentrating on visual narratives, **Kathrin Meissner** analyses grass-root civic initiatives and the changing discourse on the legacy of the GDR, as exemplified by the authorities' treatment of the gasometer in Berlin's Prenzlauer Berg district. She discusses the roles and discourses of various groups involved in documenting the "demolition" of the gasometer, forms of activism, protest activities, and campaigns for their preservation throughout the 1980s, which eventually contributed to the creation of a "local urban icon". By problematising "demolition" as part of the urban redesign of the formerly industrial space, Meissner contributes to the construction of a visual urban history of the GDR's industrial past and its patrimonialisation.

Similarly, **Melody Robine** discusses how performative and artistic interventions in the urban space of Sofia provided a powerful platform for Bulgarian society to engage with the legacy of the former socialist regime after 1989 and to critically reflect on the liberal economic policies that shaped the capital city in the transition to a market economy. She focuses in particular on the outcomes and methodologies developed within the *Visual Seminar* (2003–2006) organised by the Institute of Contemporary Art – Sofia and the Centre for Advanced Study Sofia. The seminar served as a platform to encourage Bulgarian society to engage with urban space in a creative manner. By means of visual education and public participation, the project aimed to raise awareness of the urban transformation of the post-communist city and shift the interest in dealing with the urban space from planners, designers, and experts to its users such as citizens and communities.

Carlotta Coccoli takes a critical approach towards the integration of heritage conservation practices in the urban transformation of socially vulnerable neighbourhoods in Brescia. The author takes a long-term view, considering state initiatives and focusing on the decaying historic centre of Brescia starting from the 1970s. While initial plans linked improving the city centre's urban fabric with increasing the quality of life in the district, the most recent initiative, launched in 2000, aims not only at physical and functional improvements, but also seeks the social transformation of the neighbourhood. By emphasising the potential of recent strategies to transform the cultural and multi-ethnic character of the district, the author highlights the negative impact of the "gentrification" process of the once "notorious" area in the historic city centre of Brescia on its social composition.

In their long-term analysis, **Sandra Guinand**, **Viktória Éva Lélek**, and **Robert Musil** also address issues related to commercial exploitation and the growing economic value of Vienna's stock of *Gründerzeit* (1848–1914) buildings, which had been neglected until the 1960s. The authors reveal how recent

patrimonialisation and preservation practices contributed to the increase in the economic value of buildings from this period. They discuss the successive phases of commodification, de- and recommodification with reference to selected examples of *Gründerzeit* buildings throughout the 20th century and the social and socio-cultural consequences of these historical shifts.

In her concluding remarks, **Heike Oevermann** emphasises the relevance of the topics discussed in this volume for today's societies. In her opinion, particular attention must be paid to polarising discourses that carry the risk of capitalising on the all too often misused heritage conservation discourses and practices. The author argues for a differentiated approach to ensure the integration of heritage conservation into urban planning practices and discourses, one that should emphasise the relevance of the multiplicity of actors, acknowledge the existence of dissonance, and recognise diversity beyond the economic interests of a few and the dominant normative discourses.

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Part I

PLANNING AND POLITICS IN HISTORIC CITY CENTRES

CONSERVING "OLD VIENNA".
THE HISTORIC CITY BETWEEN THE INTERESTS OF URBAN PLANNING AND HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Birgit Knauer

Abstract

Looking back at the history of the 20th century, if becomes clear that interest in the preservation of architectural heritage arises at a professional level in the process of assigning value, through recording and documentation. But it is often also triggered by (urban) planning decisions or may occur as a "human reaction" to the experience of loss through rapid structural change or destruction by war or natural disasters.

Historic urban transformation processes have been analysed by various disciplines, and many publications already highlight connections between planning and debates on heritage (for the period of reconstruction in the 1940s see among others: Larkham 2003; Treccani 2008). However, the complex interaction between heritage discourses and planning processes have so far been insufficiently researched – especially with regard to long-term developments. This chapter analyses various transformation processes affecting the city of Vienna in the 20th century. It pays particular attention to interactions between these transformation processes and the emerging and growing interest of the city government, experts, and the general public in preserving the historic parts of the city centre and its former suburbs. This interest in conserving the historic built fabric, which is always time-bound, is reflected in planning and preservation initiatives, in debates on the value of Vienna's built legacy, and in the establishment of instruments for the protection of the historic urban landscape. The analysis of these points of interaction will show the long-term consequences of urban transformation on conservation practice – and vice versa.

This chapter draws on the extensive archival sources on conservation practice and the activities of the city administration to present four decisive moments in Vienna's urban history that shaped the appearance of the city and reveal shifts in the attribution of value to the historic urban fabric. Materials consulted included press articles, historical maps, and administrative documents from the archives of the *Bundesdenkmalamt* (Federal Monuments Office) and the Vienna City Archive. Bringing together these sources and focusing on the value discourse in heritage conservation practice over the decades illuminates the relevance of loss and change to heritage conservation practice. The study also shows how strongly the recording of heritage and the development of suitable conservation strategies are always influenced by the period in which they take place.

Keywords

Urban transformation, urban planning history, evaluation of the built heritage, conservation

1   INTRODUCTION

Interest in conserving historic buildings and urban landscapes is often triggered immediately by (urban) planning decisions, or arises – in the long term and at a professional level – especially in connection with the documentation of the existing built environment and the process of value attribution. To a certain extent, this interest can also occur – primarily on a non-professional, social level – as a "human reaction" to the experience of loss through rapid structural change or destruction by war or natural disasters. As Larkham notes "disasters can be seen as catalysts, crises that generate responses" in the form of accelerated processes and the implementation of existing plans (Larkham, 2017, p. 430). Conversely, there are also historical instances of plans and planning strategies being changed due to shifting patterns of value attribution and conservation practices. The British town planner Thomas Sharp, for example, understood planning as a way of enhancing the cityscape and based his 1940s plans on visual analysis and evaluation of the character and architectural and historic qualities of the cities he was planning for (see John Pendlebury's article on Thomas Sharp's planning methods in this publication).

The interests of planning – which always means major change – and conserving the historic building fabric, which are supposed to be completely opposed, are therefore more closely linked than one might expect. A look back at this "trial of strength" over the course of the 20th century reveals considerable interplay between the two interests, which has had powerful effects on the shape and development of the city's appearance. Analysing the long-term development of the city of Vienna over some 70 years, from the early 20th century to the 1970s, demonstrates the truth of this assumption. Using short case studies as examples, this chapter summarises the dynamic conservation considerations that influenced the evaluation and preservation of Vienna's historic building stock during this period. The interactions with planning are made clear through the comparative analysis of contemporary initiatives and plans for the structural development of the city and the planning strategies of various actors: from the city administration, via architects and planners, to civil society initiatives.

1.1   Links between heritage conservation and urban planning throughout history: Vienna as a case study

A number of disciplines have studied historic urban transformation processes, usually by considering specific cities and periods in isolation (for Europe in the interwar period and the period of reconstruction in the 1940s see e.g.: Diefendorf 1993; Pendlebury 2003; Enss & Monzo 2019). Several authors have highlighted interactions between urban planning activities and heritage conservation discourses and practice, focusing mainly on historic city centres (Larkham 2003; Treccani 2008; Enss & Vinken, 2016; Knauer 2022). Relatively few articles have taken a long-term view of planning and its relationship to heritage conservation. Hosagrahar (2018) gives a global overview of the significance of the historic city in major urban planning endeavours of the past,

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focusing on Europe and North America. Mehlhorn (2012) works specifically on the topic, providing a broad overview of the transformation of German cities after destruction and crisis. In addition to other influences on urban planning, he also addresses the influence of heritage conservation.

Analyses of case studies in cities with a long history of both conservation and urban planning are still missing. Vienna proves to be a particularly suitable case study in this regard, as the last major urban transformation – the urban renewal project in the *Gründerzeit* (ca. 1840–1918) – coincides with the establishment of state monument protection from the 1850s onwards. The first city planning office was established as an independent office by imperial decree as early as 1835 (Bernard & Feller, 1999, p. 8). In addition to the parallel development of urban planning and conservation, a crucial factor in the case of Vienna is the major influence of Austria's central conservation institute, which was primarily active in the capital and accompanied and influenced the recurring transformation of the city.

The development and remodelling of the city of Vienna in the 19th and 20th centuries is well documented from an architectural and urban history perspective – but the period between 1938 and 1955 has not yet been sufficiently studied. The study by Bobek and Lichtenberger (1978), first published in 1966, is still regarded as the standard publication on Vienna's urban and architectural development from the middle of the 19th century to the 1960s, focusing on building types and economic and political developments. Donald Olsen's (1986) comparison of cities, which considers transformation and urban development projects in Vienna in the 19th century alongside those undertaken in London and Paris, represents a valuable addition to this, as he also deals intensively with the (re-)presentation of the city through planning and architecture. Urban planning strategies for Vienna in the interwar period and interactions with heritage conservation discourse have been recently addressed (Knauer 2022). The current research of the author of this chapter is primarily concerned with the period of reconstruction following the Second World War; initial results have already been published (Knauer 2023).

1.2 Aims, methods, and relevance

Long-term developments in urban history have so far been insufficiently researched. As Larkham notes, researching longer time periods is essential for analysing actions and reactions in planning history and is too often neglected (Larkham, 2017, p. 430). A more in-depth and comparative analysis of the interaction and mutual influence of urban planning strategies and conservation interests over a longer period, with a stronger focus on the discourses, working methods, and actors of the time, promises to generate new insights and reveal recurring patterns.

The focus of interest of this chapter lies on transformation processes in the city of Vienna during the 20th century and on interactions with the emerging interest in preserving the historic city centre and the historic parts of the former surrounding suburbs. This interest is reflected in planning and conservation initiatives, and debates on the value of more recent building epochs. This

chronological overview of the transformation of the city of Vienna presents decisions and discourses of Viennese planning administration and the *Bundesdenkmalamt* (Federal Monuments Office; in the following abbreviated as BDA), consisting of lawyers, architects, and art historians), which oscillated between transformation and conservation and have decisively shaped the city and continue to do so today. By taking a longer-term view, this chapter reveals the effects of these processes on the architectural and structural development of the city with particular clarity.

Four periods of interaction among actors in urban planning and heritage conservation will be addressed: starting with the years immediately after 1900, then running through the interwar period, addressing the crucial years after the end of the Second World War, and ending in the 1970s, when the protection of townscape was introduced into the legal instruments for the conservation of urban fabric. Analysing this period of more than 70 years will show the long-term effects of urban planning decisions on heritage conservation practice, heritage assessment, and conservation measures – and vice versa. The analysis reveals how the goals of planning and conservation clashed and highlights the way in which the discourse on cultural heritage was conducted over the course of the first seven decades of the 20th century by various actors and initiatives: from administrators and planners to the general public.

Thanks to the central, nationwide organisational structure that still exists today, the BDA's activities during this period are well documented – to the delight of historical research, which is far from being complete, even for Vienna. These structured records, which also bear witness to political entanglements, continuities and breaks in personnel, and methodologies and working methods, are kept in the BDA archives. The analysis draws on historic city maps as well as monument lists, correspondence and file notes as a reflection of the daily tasks of institutional heritage management. Assessments and statements on the significance of buildings and larger ensembles are brought together with contemporaneous discussions of urban planning and specific planning proposals published in specialist journals such as *Der Aufbau* in the early post-war years.

This study on historic urban transformation processes reveals previously unknown details about Vienna's urban history, enhancing our understanding of both the city's history and the history of its institutions. These results also remain relevant, as cities are of course still changing, and lessons can be learnt from historical developments for current planning and conservation practice. The rapid transformation of cities we face today, caused mainly by globalization and urbanisation processes, mean that concerns about the impacts on culture and heritage are – once again – increasing. A long-term study could therefore also point the way to future developments.

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2   FOUR DECISIVE MOMENTS IN THE HISTORY OF VIENNA'S URBAN TRANSFORMATION

As stated above, this chapter uncovers the interactions between urban planning and heritage conservation practice during four decisive periods in Vienna's urban history in the 20th century. The following four sections correspond to these four periods, with each addressing the BDA's activities and statements as well as specific planning proposals by architects and planning decisions of the city administration.

2.1   Vienna 1912: First mapping of "heritage" in times of rapid urban transformation

The first decisive period in this analysis happens in the early 20th century, during a period of rapid transformation of the city of Vienna. Both disciplines – urban planning and heritage conservation – and their respective institutions have their roots in the mid-19th century. Especially in the second half of the 19th century, the urban structure of numerous cities was transformed by urban planning decisions, adapting the cities to the needs of modern traffic, and "improving" the historic building stock – something that was often done by demolishing countless buildings. In the case of Vienna, we can observe a quite unusual approach to the question of urban design in the 19th century, as Olsen (1986, p. 111) has already noted – one that sought to fundamentally preserve the structure of the city and which considered the expansion of the city as an addition to its existing structure. Nevertheless, the new layout given in the Vienna development plan of 1892 (Figure 1) was intended to straighten and widen lots of the narrow streets in the city centre.

FIGURE 1   Development plan, section of Wollzeile with planned regulation and new building lines, 1892. (Vienna City Archive, WStLA, P2:1.309.VI/6, CC BY-NC-ND)

The general structure of the city was to be largely retained, with the exception of a few cut-throughs that were planned (leading to major discussions, including among the general public). The professional field of heritage conservation and the corresponding state institutions emerge not least as a reaction to the consequences of the rapid transformation of cities, historic city centres, and landscapes, as the art historian and conservationist Max Dvořák wrote during the turmoil of the First World War (Dvořák, 1918, p. 3).

Austrian heritage conservation was institutionalised as early as 1850, but official organisational structures were introduced only in 1911, when heir presumptive Franz Ferdinand (1863–1914), who showed particular interest in the maintenance of the historic building stock, was appointed *Protector* of the institution by imperial decree (Frodl, 1970, p.13). In the early 20th century, recognition of the value of Baroque and early 19th century architecture was also increasing. Buildings of those periods were documented and described by art historians and conservationists in the BDA's multivolume inventory "Austrian Art Topography" (*Österreichische Kunsttopographie*). This collection contains brief descriptions of buildings considered worthy of preservation from an art-historical and urban-historical perspective (Figure 2), arranged alphabetically by street name (K. K. Zentral-Kommission für Kunst- und Historische Denkmale, 1916). The Art Topography also contains references to town centres worthy of preservation and – this is particularly interesting for our purposes – potential urban planning interventions. In this regard it is critical of projects considered excessively drastic, such as a radical cut-through east of St. Stephen's Cathedral, but also suggests potential structural changes and demolition of "disruptive" buildings, mainly buildings from the late 19th century (K. K. Zentral-Kommission für Kunst- und Historische Denkmale, 1916, p. 77).
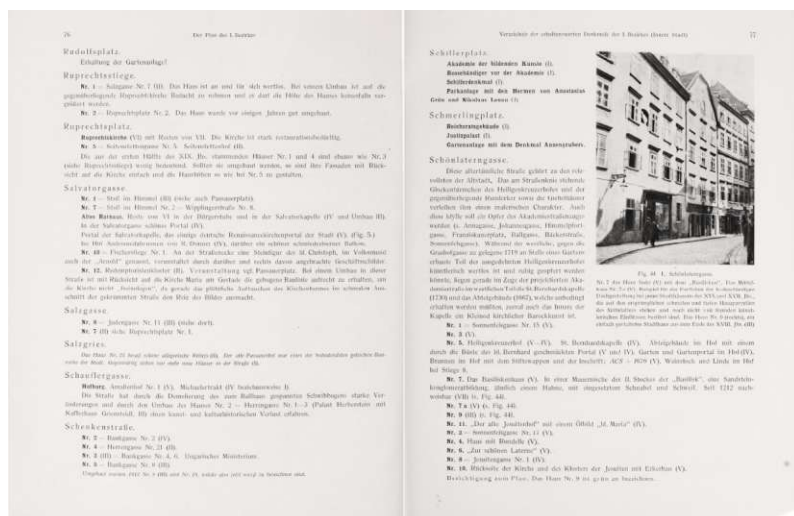
FIGURE 2 Double page from volume 15 of the *Österreichische Kunsttopographie*. (Austrian Art Topography, inventory of Remarkable Buildings in Vienna, Vol. 15, K. K. Zentral-Kommission für Kunst- und Historische Denkmale, 1916, pp. 76–77, CC0)
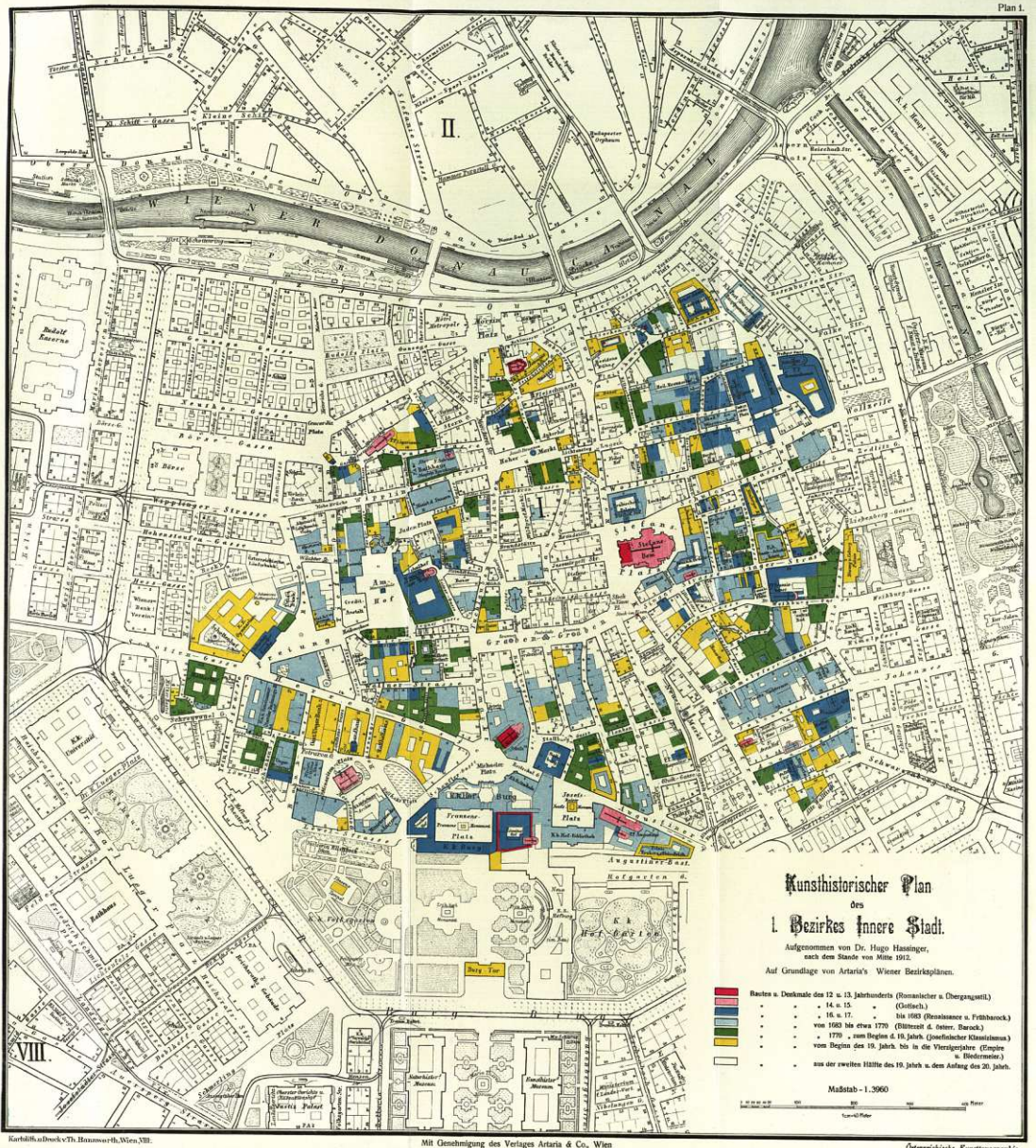
FIGURE 3   Kunsthistorischer Plan des 1. Bezirkes Innere Stadt, by Hugo Hassinger, 1912, showing the ages of building in Vienna's First District (Innere Stadt). (K. K. Zentral-Kommission für Kunst- und Historische Denkmale, 1916, CC0)

The radical remodelling of the city at the end of the 19th century thus also forced an evaluation of the existing built fabric. There was undoubtedly already an awareness of the need to preserve existing urban areas and ensembles at that time. On the one hand, the preservation of these areas was explicitly argued for, based on their artistic and architectural-historical significance. On the other hand, specific buildings and areas were also explicitly excluded on the basis of the same criteria. Surprisingly, the introduction to this volume of the Art Topography refers to Camillo Sitte's pioneering and influential theory of modern, historically informed urban planning. This theory had not yet received significant attention in Vienna, but it would make it possible to preserve the historic city centre while at the same time carrying out the necessary transformation (K. K. Zentral-Kommission für Kunst- und Historische Denkmale, 1916, p. 4). The Art Topography – produced by preservationists – thus explicitly highlights modern planning strategies that would enable a goal common to planners and conservators, namely the conservation of the character of the historic city centre.

From 1912 onwards, the geographer Hugo Hassinger drew up art-historical plans of Vienna (Figure 3) to "capture the art-historical cityscape" and to locate the architectural heritage in the ground plan of the city in a period of radical transformation. In the foreword to the first publication of the map, Hassinger (1912a, foreword) himself emphasised the necessity of this kind of map, since "the process of destruction is progressing in the centre of the old town with incredible speed and its historic character is in danger of disappearing"[1]. These maps were then published in the *Österreichische Kunsttopographie* in 1916 as a technical resource to be used in planning and monument preservation (Hassinger, 1912b, p. 67). Indeed, according to Hassinger, they were to serve as the basis for any development plan (K. K. Zentral-Kommission für Kunst- und Historische Denkmale, 1916, p. 4). Buildings constructed after 1850 were not considered "historic" at the time and are therefore not marked in Hassinger's collection of maps.

The organisational structures of institutional heritage conservation were thus consolidated at the start of the 20th century. The BDA also became involved in urban planning issues through increasing inventorying and mapping of built heritage. The Austrian Monument Protection Act (*Denkmal-schutzgesetz,* BGBl. Nr. 533/1923) was finally passed a few years later, in 1923. Yet in this period, the buildings of the late *Gründerzeit* were still seen as the "enemy" of maintaining and conserving "Old Vienna", the historical building stock built before the 1850s. One could speak of the devaluation of an entire building epoch with long-term consequences, even though monumental buildings, streets and squares, especially from the early phase of this epoch, were recognised quite early on as worthy of preservation – contrary to the widespread assumption that the *Gründerzeit* was rejected as an epoch by experts and the public until the 1960s. We will come back to this later.

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1   Unless otherwise stated, this and all subsequent translations from non-English-language sources are by the author.

2.2   Vienna 1936: Interwar period and the urban renewal of "Old Vienna"

In the course of the 1930s, extensive redevelopment and urban renewal projects were carried out in Vienna in a relatively short period of time. From 1934 onwards, the city administration intended to make the city "healthy" and "more beautiful" in terms of traffic, "hygiene", and townscape (Knauer, 2022). By means of financial subsidies and low lending rates, the city administration wanted to encourage private homeowners to rebuild their houses – not least as a means of stimulating the private building industry and creating jobs. Although no extensive renewal programmes and projects were carried out by the municipality, as in many other European countries, such as Italy, the UK, and Sweden (Internationaler Verband für Wohnungswesen, 1935), the selective interventions and renewal projects in Vienna had a significant impact on the townscape (Figure 4).

FIGURE 4   View of the intersection of Schleifmühlgasse and Operngasse, showing the new Operngasse in the background, by Fritz Zvacek, 1935. (From Austrian National Library Picture Archive, ÖNB/Zvacek, ID: 140.870A(B) POR MAG, CC BY-SA)

During those years, the BDA held numerous discussions about the conservation of many rather inconspicuous and "modest" buildings from the 18th and 19th centuries with a simple façade design that were considered to be of low artistic value. These historic buildings could still be found throughout the entire city area, especially in the former suburbs that were incorporated into the city shortly before the turn of the century and subsequently underwent rapid change. Despite the increasing disappearance of these residential buildings, which were around 100 to 150 years old at that time, the heritage authorities did not initially see any urgent need for action. Even though these properties were considered relevant for the city's history and character, as they provided evidence of the urban development of the past, they were not yet deemed to be rare enough and of sufficient architectural value to be listed. File notes from BDA officers from this period document the constant balancing of conservation and planning interests.[2] More vehement opposition by the authorities to the loss of historic buildings was noticeable in the case of buildings in the city centre and in the picturesque suburb of Grinzing (Knauer, 2022, pp. 109–110).

The attribution of low artistic and architectural value resulted in a kind of "passive selection", revealing a certain powerlessness on the part of the BDA in the face of economic factors and urban planning strategies. This situation was also a consequence of the legal framework, as there were still no instruments for the protection of the townscape. However, public protest at the ongoing destruction of historic buildings became particularly voluminous

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2   See especially the archival collection "Topographische Materialien / Wien / profan", the files are sorted by district and street name.

in 1936. Heritage conservation began to be discussed by both the general public and experts, as can be recognised by the large number of newspaper articles addressing the topic as well as private letters to the BDA in this period. Towards the end of the 1930s, the urban planning strategy of the city government was increasingly criticized, not only by architects and urban planners but also by employees of the city administration, as we can trace from letters and newspaper articles conserved in the archives of the BDA. All these voices finally demanded a change to the 1892 development plan, as reproduced above, which was still in force (Knauer, 2022, pp. 133–135).

As a result of these major protests by both the general public and experts, the city administration was finally forced to change its strategy. In autumn of 1938, a few months after the "*Anschluss*" with National Socialist Germany, the BDA tried to come to an agreement with the Vienna city administration on certain buildings and *inselartige Stadtbereiche* ("island-like" areas) of the old town that were to be spared from urban renewal and preserved at all costs (Seiberl 1938). A concept for protection zones in the city of Vienna was therefore already being considered in the late 1930s, but was not enshrined in law until 34 years later, in 1972 (Bundesdenkmalamt, 1981, p. 69). Once again, the ongoing rapid transformation of the city, of its built environment and its structure, was the driving force behind the creation of an inventory and the selection of areas worth preserving by the BDA.

2.3   Vienna 1946: Conserving "old town islands" and "correcting the past"

In the course of reconstruction after the Second World War, in which around 21 percent of Vienna's building stock was severely damaged (Ziak, 1965, p. 13), a further alignment of urban planning decisions and heritage conservation strategies becomes apparent (Knauer 2023). It is worth mentioning that both the BDA and the *Stadtbauamt* (city's planning department) were active in damage assessment and mapping of war damage.

With the city centre being comparatively badly affected, planners and conservationists suggested the introduction of systematic tools to protect the townscape. As early as 1946, the BDA listed significant streets, squares, and ensembles described as *Altstadt-Inseln* ("old town islands") worthy of preservation or *historische Schutzgebiete* (historic protection areas; Hoppe, 1946, p. 115). Conservationists wanted additional building guidelines to be established for planning in these areas of cultural significance, following considerations already made in the interwar period: For example, the design of façades was to be carried out "with respect for the old surroundings and in line with their character", while roofs and roof coverings were to be restored in their "original form" and materials (Hoppe, 1946, pp. 115–116).

Starting in 1946, the BDA drew up building-age plans for 190 historic towns and villages in Austria (Figure 5), under the direction of Adalbert Klaar (1900–1981), an Austrian architect, building historian, and heritage conservationist. The idea for this large-scale project was already born during the Second World War, as a reaction to the increasing bombing and destruction and the impending loss of historic buildings of cultural value. Klaar's plans not
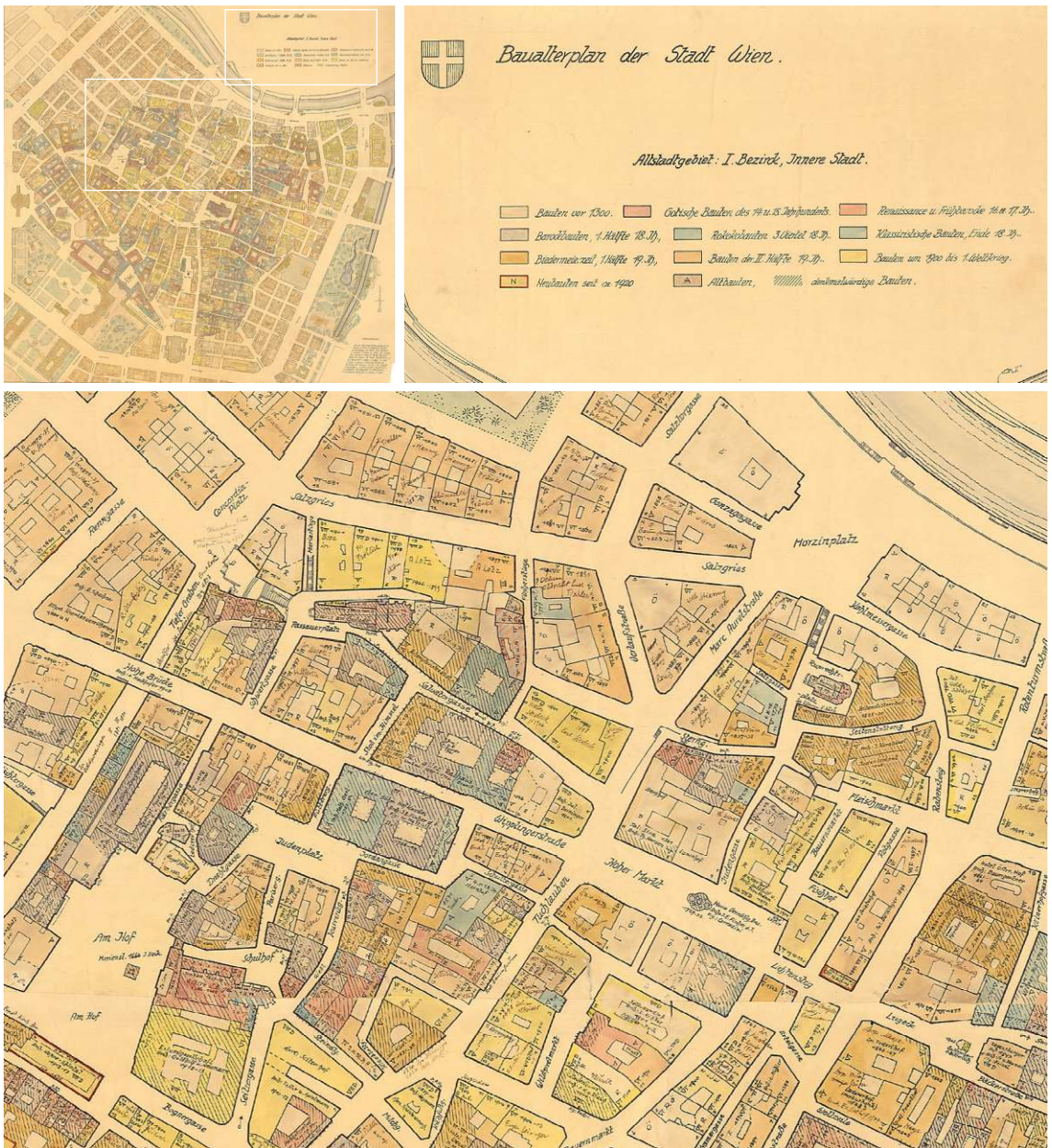
FIGURE 5   Excerpt from the building-age plan of Vienna's inner city and legends by Adalbert Klaar, 1948. (Federal Monuments Office Archive Vienna, Bundesdenkmalamt, plan archive, CC BY-NC-ND)

only show the ages of the buildings in different shades and colours, they also mark buildings of cultural, artistic, and historic value (with hatched lines) and buildings partly destroyed by the war (labelled "R" for "ruins" and "Ö" for plots cleared of rubble). The maps thus provide an insight into what was classified as "worth preserving" in this period, when reconstruction had just begun, and parts of the historic city centre still lay in ruins. As Adalbert Klaar himself noted a few years later, these maps were intended to serve as aids for future urban planning (Klaar, 1980, p. 6).

In post-war reconstruction, however, the practice of heritage conservation was not limited to the documentation and evaluation of buildings and urban structures: The BDA also intervened in the design of the historic city, legitimising these interventions with reference to the catastrophe of wartime destruction. The conservation authorities seemed to be moved by more than just a desire to conserve – the guiding principle of modern heritage conservation that had become increasingly prevalent since the turn of the century. Repair and even reconstruction were now also seen as legitimate methods of restoring damaged buildings or even ensembles of art-historical significance (Demus, 1948, p. 410).

Thus, in the course of reconstruction, urban planners, architects, but also heritage conservation authorities recognized the possibility – indeed, the necessity – of changing, improving, and "embellishing" the townscape. Employees of the BDA also understood reconstruction planning as a "unique opportunity" to correct past errors in architecture and urban planning – especially errors of the late 19th century. Both architects and heritage conservationists supported the removal of facade decorations of the late *Gründerzeit*, described as "meaningless and intolerable" (Leischner, 1946, p. 26). Thus, monument preservation and planning administration pursued goals that were fairly aligned and agreed in their assessment of buildings constructed in the recent past.

Conservationists also called for the creation of new vistas of outstanding monuments in some parts of the Inner District. The art historian Dagobert Frey demanded a "slight opening" of the narrow passageway from the Danube Canal to the medieval church of St. Ruprecht in order to enhance the spatial effect of the church (Frey, 1948, p. 105). This was similar to the way in which Thomas Sharp staged monuments by means of street layouts in his plans (see the article by Pendlebury in this publication). A similar reaction to urban catastrophe can be observed all over war-torn Europe (Diefendorf, 1989, pp. 130, 134). The exposure of visual axes is also reminiscent of the widespread exemption of monumental buildings in the 19th century.

At the same time, however, the BDA also showed interest in *outstanding* buildings form the 19th century. By the early 1940s, the BDA was already aware of the significance of the *Ringstrasse*, the boulevard around the historic city centre, described as a "*Gesamtkunstwerk*" and considered as "one of the greatest urban planning and architectural achievements of the [19th] century" (Frey, 1947, p. 20). A distinction was thus made between outstanding buildings worthy of preservation and the "monotonous mass" of residential buildings of this period, which indicates a more intensive analysis of this more recent building epoch.

The 1892 development plan remained valid in the post-war years, despite criticism in the early 20th century and the interwar period. However, the chorus of criticism of untargeted urban renewal (i.e. the drawing of entirely new street plans) grew steadily, reaching a crescendo in the 1960s, for example in the work of the famous architect and urban planner Roland Rainer (Rainer, 1962, pp. 121–125). In a plan from the early 1960s, Rainer shows the losses of valuable historic buildings that the implementation of the development plan

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FIGURE 6   Heavily criticised proposed regulation in the Vienna Development plan (yellow) and affected listed buildings (black). (Plan by © unknown creator, from "Vienna Development Plan", by Roland Rainer, 1962, p. 122)

would cause (Figure 6). It was precisely this "threat" posed by the development plan that prompted the experts and the population to reflect on the value of the historic built fabric.

2.4 Vienna 1972: Protection zones and redevelopment of areas of historic and cultural interest

Our last stop takes us to the 1970s, or more precisely to the year 1972, when the preliminary work of the post-war years in Vienna culminated in the adoption of the Vienna Old Town Preservation Act (*Altstadterhaltungsnovelle*) as part of the Viennese building regulations by the city administration. Consequently, in 1972 it became possible to define *Schutzzonen* (protection zones) by law and to protect areas worthy of preservation that contribute to the character of the townscape (Koller, 1973). Planners and heritage conservationists in the 1970s relied on the lists of streets and areas worthy of preservation that had been compiled in the immediate post-war period (Knauer, 2023, p. 202).

With the establishment of *Schutzzonen* in 1972, the city government expressed its will to preserve and repair historic townscapes. The first two conservation areas were selected for a specific reason: They were particularly threatened by urban redevelopment and demolition. One of these two areas, the *Spittelberg* (Figure 7), with its mainly Baroque and Biedermeier building stock, had been completely neglected in previous decades (Figure 8) and urgently needed action from an urban planning perspective. In this area of the city "the original image of the suburbs was preserved in the form of a unified group of old houses and courtyards", Roland Rainer noted as early as 1962. In his view the Spittelberg was characterised not only by "extraordinary beauty" but also by "regrettable neglect" (Rainer, 1962, p. 127).

Even before the First World War, the city council had planned to redevelop the neighbourhood, as the area was considered a red-light district. Some Baroque buildings were to be demolished and replaced by new structures (Magistrat der Stadt Wien, 1975, pp. 1421–1422). After the Second World War, in the late 1950s, urban planning authorities reacted to the appreciation of historic urban ensembles and started to re-

FIGURE 7 Schutzzone Spittelberg, Vienna, 1973. (Plan by © MA 21 der Stadt Wien, From Koller, p. 157)

FIGURE 8 Still from the film "Aus den Trümmern ins Heute" ("Out of the Rubble to the Present Day"), 1985. (Vienna City Archive, WStLA, Filmarchiv der Media Wien 033, CC BY-NC-ND)

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develop several urban areas in different districts of Vienna, including the one on Spittelberg (Magistrat der Stadt Wien, 1958, p. 692), which included some 80 historic buildings that required extensive renovation due to their poor structural condition (Magistrat der Stadt Wien, 1969, pp. 2345–2346). Nevertheless, such projects in the former suburbs, which now formed historic districts in the metropolis, made only slow progress, in contrast to the revitalisation of areas in the city core (e.g. *Blutgassenviertel*) – a fact that clearly demonstrates the greater attractiveness of the city centre for politics and business (Lichtenberger, 1977, p. 289).

Finally, in 1969, a large-scale redevelopment concept for the Spittelberg neighbourhood was commissioned by the City of Vienna. It was developed by architects in collaboration with the Department of Heritage Conservation at the Technische Hochschule (today's TU Wien) and included cultural functions in addition to housing, in order to ensure long-term use (Magistrat der Stadt Wien, 1972, p. 1729). Most of the buildings were owned by the city council itself, which – by means of this renovation project – also wanted to encourage private homeowners to carry out renovation work (Bundesdenkmalamt, 1981, p. 69).

However it took a long time to implement the project, and citizens' initiatives were formed in the early 1970s, mainly by artists and poets, who rebelled against the loss of the historic districts. Only after the protection zone was established in 1973, did renovation work finally began in 1975 (Mayer, 1981, pp. 15–18). The demand for participation and involvement of the population in planning processes had grown ever loud from the 1960s, not only in Vienna but in many other countries and especially in large cities (Schubert, 2017, pp. 406–408). The redevelopment of the district in the following years and decades led, on the one hand, to increasing appreciation of the architecture and urban landscape, but – in the long term – also to gentrification and social transformation.

3   CONCLUSION

Looking at the four phases together, various patterns become clear: On the one hand, heritage conservation reacted to the increasing loss of buildings not so much with protection instruments but by recording and documenting the historic building stock. In the long term, this led to greater interest and to a re-evaluation and generally to a stronger sense of appreciation of individual buildings and entire epochs. However, it also resulted in the selection of individual buildings, while others were considered unworthy of preservation.

On the other hand, the increasing loss of buildings and growing civic protest have prompted, or even forced, urban planning authorities to introduce new instruments for the protection of townscapes and ensembles or to tighten up existing regulations. Thus, the professional initiative that set the lengthy processes in motion was ultimately joined by emotional civic engagement, which perhaps ultimately provided the decisive impetus for actual implementation. What is certain, however, is that the city administration had to enter into cooperation with BDA from the 1930s onwards and had to

improve the existing legal situation, which finally succeeded in the 1970s, not least due to increasing pressure from the public and experts.

In all this, it becomes clear that some planning processes have been very lengthy – beginning with an initiative before only being realised decades later. The Spittelberg example illustrates how private and civic engagement can ultimately speed up conservation processes as well as planning projects. The awareness of the need to protect the historic townscape can be traced back to the 1900s, starting with initiatives and the foundational work of the specialist community and university research. Nonetheless, it took fully 70 years for a legal framework to be created.

The case study of Vienna shows the interaction between planning decisions and conservation strategies: The influence of planning and (ongoing or imminent) urban transformation on shifts in the attribution of value becomes just as clear in the course of urban redevelopment around 1900 as it does in the 1950s and 1960s, when the first reconstruction phase – which took place under hardship and material shortages – was completed and major construction projects rapidly changed the city. Historic buildings and ensembles as well as urban heritage became the focus of public attention. Conversely, planning processes were adapted to the new conditions that resulted from the intentions to preserve historic buildings and areas and also led to the introduction of new legal framework conditions, such as the *Schutzzonen*-regulation in 1972.

Throughout the entire process, we can observe the decisive role of stakeholders, who initiate discourse as well as processes in planning and preservation in different ways. In addition, increasing interest in the documentation and mapping of cultural heritage during and shortly after transformation processes becomes evident. Current surveys in the form of maps, documentation, and research are therefore likely to play a similar role in the future, in both planning processes and heritage conservation practice.

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BIOGRAPHY

Birgit Knauer studied art history and romance studies at the University of Vienna. After completing her PhD, she worked as a research assistant at the Chair of Heritage Conservation at the University of Bamberg, Germany. Since 2020, she has been researching and teaching at the Department of Heritage Conservation at the TU Wien, focusing in particular on the architecture of post-war modernism and the discourse and practice of urban planning and conservation in the 20th century.

TOWNSCAPE AS A METHODOLOGY OF MODERNITY: THE PLANS AND PRACTICE OF THOMAS SHARP

John Pendlebury

Abstract

This chapter focuses upon the work of Thomas Sharp, a mid-twentieth century British planner, and his role in the development of ideas of townscape. A figure often marginalised in the historiography of the topic, Sharp's use of townscape was to advocate for a methodology of planning that is both historically informed and historically sensitive, but which remained distinctly modern in outlook and purpose. His work was given an enormous stimulus by the Second World War and the mobilisation to plan for its aftermath. Whilst Sharp did not consider himself to be a preservationist, his most significant commissions were for historic cities and were influential in the development of conservation practice. The chapter considers how Sharp's formulation of townscape developed in a series of plans he produced for the historic cities of Durham, Exeter, and Oxford in the mid-1940s. It then discusses his continuing involvement in Durham and Oxford in subsequent decades, and the continuing importance of the idea of townscape in his work, often expressed through his opposition to the plans and proposals of others, as well as a late commission in his career, for the city of Cambridge. Sharp had a lasting influence on the cities in which he worked and his ideas exerted a significant and long-lasting impact on methodologies of planning, which helped temper the degree and form of redevelopment across the UK.

Keywords

Townscape, town planning, conservation, preservation, reconstruction, traffic, tall buildings

1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses upon the work of Thomas Sharp, a mid-twentieth century British planner, and his role in the development of ideas of townscape. Discussion of the English townscape movement is usually centred on the periodical The Architectural Review (AR) and a series of articles and campaigns produced by a substantial and varied group of writers from the mid-1940s through until the 1970s under the influence of its eccentric upper-class owner and some-time editor, Hubert de Cronin Hastings. Sharp is often marginalised in the historiography of townscape. For example, in a special issue of The Journal of Architecture on the history of townscape, Sharp's contribution is only fleetingly touched upon in the introductory article (Aitchison, 2012). However, it is my contention that he was important in the development and dissemination of townscape ideas and that key to understanding Sharp's

particular contribution is an appreciation that first and foremost he was a planner. The act of planning was his primary concern, and a townscape approach was a means of achieving good planning. Good planning combined functional efficiency with beauty; Sharp's initial historical model for beauty was the eighteenth-century town, although he grew increasingly appreciative of older, medieval settlements (Figure 1). Though evolving from the 1930s, his work was given an enormous stimulus by the Second World War and the mobilisation to plan for its aftermath. Whilst Sharp did not consider himself to be a preservationist, his most significant commissions were for historic cities and were influential in the development of conservation practice.

This chapter considers how Sharp's formulation of townscape developed in a series of plans he produced for the historic cities of Durham, Exeter, and Oxford in the mid-1940s. It then discusses his continuing involvement in Durham and Oxford in subsequent decades, and the continuing importance of the idea of townscape in his work, often expressed through his opposition to the plans and proposals of others, as well as a late commission in his career, for the city of Cambridge. As such it extends and develops my previous work on Sharp's reconstruction plans (see e.g. Larkham & Pendlebury, 2008; Pendlebury 2004, 2009a, 2015). The chapter first briefly situates Sharp within the wider townscape movement as well as giving some background on Sharp's early career and thoughts about planning and visual planning specifically, that were subsequently to crystallise around the idea of townscape.

2   SITUATING SHARP IN THE TOWNSCAPE MOVEMENT AND HIS EARLY CAREER

Townscape as promulgated by the AR was a large collective activity or project, driven by Hastings. In recent years attention has been drawn to the influence of Nikolaus Pevsner, who was working on AR in the 1940s, and his only relatively recently published manuscript *Visual Planning & the Picturesque* (Pevsner, 2010). The most well-known culmination of this activity is the book *Townscape* by Gordon Cullen (1961). Sharp was linked to this group but not part of it; he was a contributor to the AR in the 1930s, writing a series of articles that can be considered proto-townscape analysis and were subsequently compiled as the book *English Panorama* (Sharp, 1935, 1936a–d). Furthermore, his most significant plans were published by the *Architectural Press*, a sister organisation to the AR. In the case of at least one pivotal plan – for Oxford – Hastings had a direct (if marginal) role in its formulation. However, unlike the AR people, Sharp became more directly involved in trying to put these principles into effect through his engagement with places on the ground as a consultant planner. In this respect his contribution is distinct from the AR, which focused on polemical approaches to architecture and design, rarely systematically integrated with land use planning. Erdem Erten (2009) describes his as an institutional role in disseminating townscape, especially within the planning profession, with the term ultimately becoming a standard term within planning practice.

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28. COUNTRY TOWN, AMERSHAM

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29. TOWN-COUNTRY, WELWYN

FIGURE 1   A plate unfavourably comparing garden city development with the traditional town. (Photos ©unknown creator, *Town and Country-side* by Sharp, 1932, Plate 29)

Sharp was from a working class and northern background, quite unlike the southern, aristocratic AR set. Whilst he would form alliances at different times, he was not a natural collaborator. Through the 1930s he was variously working as a planner in local government, was unemployed, and towards the end of the decade was teaching town planning at King's College, Durham University in Newcastle upon Tyne. He was also making his name as an author and commentator, controversially criticising garden cities, which he considered to be suburban and lacking in what he considered to be the qualities of either the town or the countryside (Sharp, 1932). In his writing Sharp sought to set out ideas of how cities should be managed and the importance of visual planning as part of a better progressive planning. His subsequent book, *Town Planning* (Sharp, 1940), a cheap paperback published early in the Second World War (claimed as the best-selling book ever on the subject, Cherry, 1974) is a manifesto for a more comprehensive and (in Sharp's view) better post-war planning. Whilst it touches upon issues of urban design, this was within a wider framing of spatial planning, considering issues of urban hierarchy, governance, and so on. For Sharp the 1930s was a period for developing his planning ideas, finding his voice and – eventually – becoming established within the planning profession. The point to reinforce is that whilst the idea of townscape is often now considered in a limited way, in terms of visual effect, for Sharp townscape was always one part of a wider approach to planning and specifically to a modern, progressive planning.

3   RECONSTRUCTION PLANNING

During the Second World War, Sharp was seconded to central government for a time, before returning briefly to his academic position. Frustrated at an apparent block on a professorial position he took the opportunity presented by an explosion of interest in planning, and the work possibilities it generated, to strike out as an independent planning consultant. Whilst he had assistants, he never had a large office and retained strong authorial control over his plans. From the mid-to-late 1940s Sharp was commissioned by several historic towns and cities to produce plans for post-war planning and reconstruction – part of the flourishing of such plans in this period. This section focuses on three of Sharp's most significant plans in evolving ideas of townscape, which in chronological sequence were Durham, Exeter, and Oxford.

Sharp was appointed by the City Council to produce a plan for Durham in December 1943. Durham is a historic city in the northeast of England, centred on the cathedral and castle (today forming the heart of a UNESCO World Heritage Site) which sit high on a peninsula in a loop of the River Wear. Sharp had published withering commentary on plans for Durham made by the higher-tier County Council during the 1930s, criticising not so much the principle of what was proposed but the lack of a coherent plan:

> [It] is surely a job of such enormous scope that it should only be undertaken to a most carefully worked out plan. And, characteristically, there is no plan at all. (Sharp, 1937, p. 150).

FIGURE 2   Owengate, Durham. (Photo ©unknown
creator, from *Cathedral City* by Sharp, 1945, p. 48)

He was also critical of a new elevated relief road, with Sharp suggesting
a ground level alternative on technical and aesthetic grounds. Perhaps not
surprisingly then, Sharp's subsequent appointment was vigorously opposed
by the County Council; the County Surveyor was reported as being strongly
opposed to the appointment of any consultant "and to the appointment of
Mr. Sharp in particular" (Durham City Council Works and Town Planning
Committee, 1943).

        Alongside the practical planning proposals in Sharp's plan for Durham,
Cathedral City (Sharp, 1945), he used the opportunity to undertake a visual
analysis of the city. The cathedral and the castle were central to this, though
he also appreciated the "'picturesque' and 'medieval' flavour of the city"
(Sharp, 1945, p. 15), especially in terms of the roofscape and of the foil that
domestic-scaled building gave to the major monuments, as a subsidiary
element highlighting their scale and presence. He considered that the setting
of the cathedral and castle were formed by five elements: the riverbanks; the
college of cathedral-related buildings; Palace Green – the elevated green
space that sits between cathedral and castle; the Bailey – the street that runs
the length of the peninsula, and finally; Owengate – the short and unpre-
possessing street that rises from the Bailey, providing the principal connection
with Palace Green (Figure 2).

The ascent of Owengate gradually reveals the cathedral, a townscape effect
Sharp considered of supreme importance:

> [Owengate] climbs steeply up to Palace Green, with a glimpse of the Cathedral at its head. Then, at the top of the rise, at the head of the curve, the confined view having thus far excited one's feelings of mystery and expectation, the street suddenly opens out into Palace Green, broad, spacious, elevated, with a wide expanse of sky: and there, suddenly, dramatically, the whole fine length of the Cathedral is displayed to the immediate view. It is as exciting a piece of town planning as occurs anywhere in the kingdom. (Sharp, 1945, p. 54).

Of all the places Sharp worked, the historic city of Exeter in south-west England was the most badly affected by war. Following extensive bomb damage in 1942, Sharp was commissioned to undertake a plan for the city. As is characteristic of Sharp's plans, *Exeter Phoenix* (Sharp, 1946) was a rich mixture of practical planning and problem-solving, combined with a vision of the city's character and qualities that should be embraced and enriched in the planning process. This was Sharp the modern planner solving technical problems working together with Sharp the townscaper, crafting visual effects. He firmly rejected the reinstatement of the old city plan in the devastated parts of the city. Much of what had been destroyed was of high architectural value, particular some grand eighteenth century buildings. Despite this Sharp rejected any reinstatement and advocated a new street plan:

> Full restoration is impossible – and highly undesirable. Imitative re-building can only produce incongruity, and display timidity and deceit. The watchword for the future should be – not restoration, but renewal. (Sharp, 1946, p. 88)

At the heart of the historic city lies the medieval cathedral, rather tucked away in the dense Romano-medieval street plan. Sharp appreciated its hidden nature despite its central location. However, though he didn't advocate any general "opening up" so that the cathedral became a monument in landscape, he saw an opportunity created by destruction for making five new views as part of a new, reordered street plan, and this visual focus on the cathedral became the feature for which *Exeter Phoenix* is perhaps best remembered (While and Tait, 2009). This led to the proposal for a secondary pedestrianised shopping street, Princesshay, aligned on the western towers of the cathedral, as part of the new street plan. Sharp's proposal for Princesshay was – in broad terms – implemented, albeit with changes in detail (While and Tait, 2009) and stood until further redevelopment in the early 2000s removed the 1950s buildings but retained the view of the cathedral towers (Figure 3).

Whilst many elements of *Exeter Phoenix* remained unimplemented due to cost constraints, hostile economic interests, or because different planning views prevailed, the plan had an enduring influence in terms of some of its key elements and ideas about the three-dimensional spatial organisation of the city, in particular in its sensitivity to the surviving character of the historic city and principles for rebuilding (Tait and While, 2009). Furthermore, although it has been argued that Sharp's reluctance to prescribe detailed architectural forms for reconstruction is a weakness of the plan (While and Tait, 2009),

FIGURE 3   The post-war redevelopment of Princesshay, Exeter. (Photo: John Pendlebury, CC BY-NC-SA)

Clare Maudling (2019) has shown how the architectural expression of the rebuilt city was carefully controlled by the City Council, following principles that Sharp had earlier established.

In addition to the practical planning proposals made to manage and enhance the townscape, Sharp also used *Exeter Phoenix* to develop the concept more discursively. The plan contained an extended frontispiece and tailpiece outside the main body of the plan to do so. He reflected in his unpublished autobiography upon how his ideas on visual planning and places having a character derived from ordinary buildings and street scenery evolved in *Exeter Phoenix*:

> For Exeter […] I conceived the proper planning to be through a proper recognition of the "genius loci", (the special and distinctive spirit of the place), as I had done at Durham, and to develop the concept of "town-scape", especially of "kinetic townscape", the progress and unfolding of urban scenes which I had apprehended there (Sharp, ca. 1973, p. 236).

It was in his *Oxford Replanned* (Sharp, 1948) that Sharp fully developed his ideas of "townscape" (and used the term, before it was adopted by AR). Once again, Sharp's townscape analysis was both embedded in a practical plan, handling contentious planning issues, and presented in parallel through a frontispiece and tailpiece. These aimed to set out principles and components of "townscape", using Oxford as an example and totalling some 65 pages of analysis, using headings such as mutability, traffic, foils, trees, scale, intricacy, colour and texture, and silhouette. For example, Sharp considered Oxford High Street a "great and homogenous work of art" (p. 20) but his exploration

of townscape also included much more humble elements. For example, under the heading of "trivia" he considered floorscape, arguing for the significance of the texture of cobblestones (Figure 4).

Sharp described *Oxford Replanned* as "largely a work of preservation", although "one piece of surgery is required to relieve the city from a pressure on its spinal column which will otherwise paralyse it" (p. 16). In reality Sharp focused on the appearance of Oxford and the character of the lived city, rather than the fabric of historic buildings. His analysis of relatively modest buildings was context dependent. For example, the picturesque Ship Street
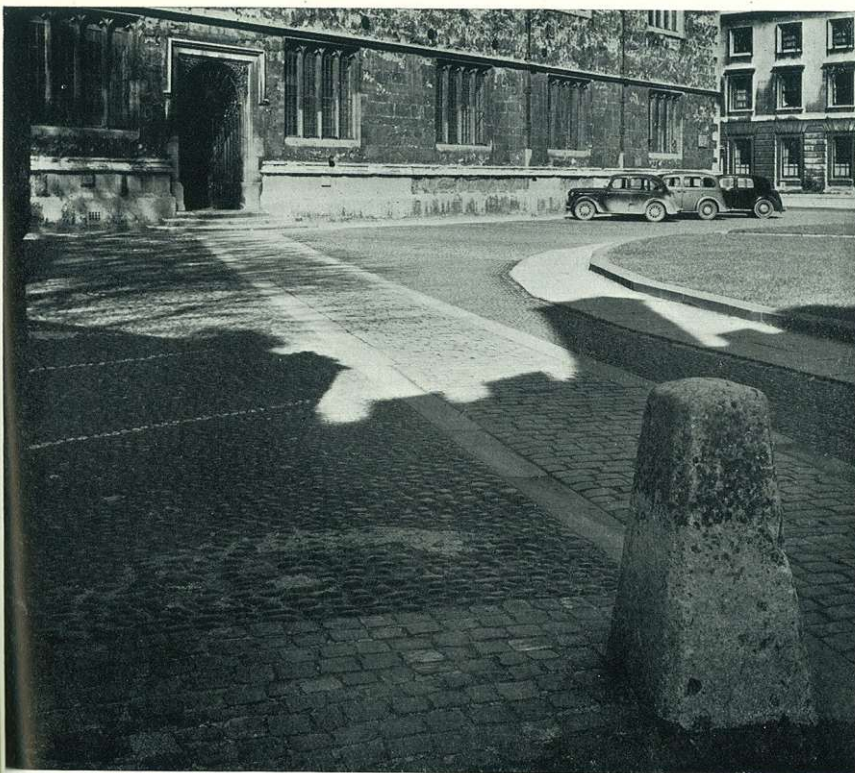
Radcliffe Square

TRIVIA

One of the greatest visual errors we make in looking at a town is in limiting our perception by deliberately excluding from consciousness whole categories of visible objects. It is possibly a piece of aesthetic defence-mechanism. The result, however, is to confine the discussion of architecture and planning to elephantine matters such as buildings and traffic routes, and to elephantine platitudes about vistas and focal points. The trivia, the visual animalcula, slip through the mesh of the sieve. Yet these trivia—curbs, bollards, road surface patterns—form a large part of any scene. Until quite recently, for instance, buildings were designed to be seen against a base of cobblestones; and in Oxford, although cobbles still exist in corners, the aesthetic loss we have sustained in substituting tarmac is very great. There is a subconscious natural human prejudice against jointing, which makes, as between two buildings, the less jointed article—that is, the object built up of bigger units—the more important. Thus stone seems more important than brick. And thus tarmac has introduced into the urban scene a false

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FIGURE 4   A plate, illustrating floorscape. (Photo ©unknown creator, from *Oxford Replanned* by Sharp, 1948, p.193)

was considered a foil between college buildings and Cornmarket Street and therefore regarded as important. However, the attractive St. John's Street was part of an area proposed for redevelopment and therefore considered expendable.

But the purpose of the plan was not just to analyse place quality but to point out and resolve planning problems. And the primary problem in Oxford was traffic. The removal of traffic from the High Street, the principal east-west route bisecting the main college area, and celebrated by Sharp as one of the world's great urban experiences, was a generally agreed priority, generating many alternative solutions. Sharp's largest proposed intervention in the city – the one piece of surgery – was therefore to run a road around the south of the centre, parallel with the High Street and through an area of open land called the Meadows; a route he termed "Merton Mall". The resulting debate about his proposals became dominated by this one issue of motor traffic, already considered a major problem before Sharp became involved in the city. *Oxford Replanned* saw Sharp the modernist planner, seeking to provide a modern infrastructure for motor traffic to the ancient city, combining with Sharp the visual planner, arguing the case for his road proposals as a positive adornment to the city, although failing to persuade many in the city of this.

Whilst the three reconstruction plans for historic cities discussed here are the clearest elaboration of Sharp's developing ideas about townscape in the 1940s, his thinking can also be traced through other commissions he was engaged in during this busy period. These include, for example, an unfinished manual for city centre planning whilst he was seconded to government, a hypothetical New Town proposal for the Bournville Trust and as the initial master-planner for the New Town of Crawley (a role he resigned from after a falling out with the New Town Corporation's Chairman) (see Pendlebury, 2009a for discussion of these). However, it is in his work on villages in this period that we most clearly see a parallel elucidation of townscape principles, especially though *The Anatomy of the Village* (Sharp, 1946). This book emerged from work Sharp undertook for the *Ministry of Town and Country Planning* for a handbook or manual on village planning, which Sharp gained permission to publish when the ministry shelved the project. The aim of *The Anatomy of the Village* was to set out principles of village planning, especially in relation to physical form and design. Sharp considered the English tradition of village development as both informal and orderly, combining utilitarian organisation with beauty or at least charm and pleasantness. Rather than architectural imitation, he argued for continuing good neighbourliness in village development, through such factors as height, street line and colour of materials, following historically established plan form principles. Ironically a short official version of the work did eventually emerge (Sharp, 1953) which also discusses Sharp's somewhat thwarted attempts to put these principles into practice in part-constructed new villages for the Forestry Commission.

After his struggles in the 1930s, Sharp was a phenomenally successful consultant in the 1940s but severely underemployed thereafter. In part this was because work for planning consultants became scarcer as it was increasingly focused on public authorities following post-war planning legislation and in part probably because Sharp had developed a reputation for being "difficult" – he certainly fell out with clients on numerous occasions.

Durham was one city where Sharp maintained a professional association. Sharp's plan, *Cathedral City*, was published in 1945, but he was retained as a planning consultant by the City Council until 1962, initially on the recommendation of the government minister for planning, Lewis Silkin (Bull, 1947). At the beginning his ongoing work was focused on road proposals. Sharp's proposals as set out in *Cathedral City* were supported by the City Council but opposed by the County Council, still hostile to Sharp since his criticisms in the 1930s. Following a public inquiry in 1946 arguments about what form relief roads might take rumbled on for many years and ultimately road construction only occurred in the 1960s, broadly to Sharp's concept, although he was highly critical of the detailed design (Gazzard, 1969).

Otherwise, the consultancy role seems to have been largely responsive, advising the City Council on development proposals as they arose. Some of these proved extremely contentious and often led to conflict with the County Council, which shared planning responsibilities with the City Council. Rather than matters of principle, Sharp's role was to often argue for a different scale and better quality of development, more suited – as he saw it – to the very special qualities of Durham. Increasingly the University was a significant actor in development proposals as it sought to grow in the postwar expansion of higher education. By the mid-1950s the University, historically largely located in the heart of the historic city on the peninsula, was looking to expand into other parts of the city and to develop open land to the south of the city, but also to pursue redevelopment in the historic core. As part of this process, it commissioned proposals for a large urban block bounded by the previously discussed Owengate, North Bailey, Palace Green and, to the south, Dun Cow Lane, from the neo-classical architect Thomas Shirley Scott Worthington. The proposals involved much demolition of historic if modest buildings. Part of the aim was to give a grander, more ceremonial approach to the cathedral. Sharp vigorously opposed these plans and mobilised his friends at the *Architectural Review*, leading to an article entitled *Durham Endangered*, highly critical of the University's plans and with a townscape analysis that drew upon *Cathedral City* (Gomme, 1960). The University retreated from their plans and ultimately engaged a different architect, David Roberts, to produce a much more sympathetic conservation-based scheme. This was one of Sharp's last significant acts in Durham and his time as a consultant came to an end in 1962; in part there seems to have been an overall sense of weariness about the conflicts between Sharp and others, especially the County Council.

Sharp's professional involvement working for the authorities in Oxford finished with *Oxford Replanned*, apart from a brief unhappy period towards the end of the 1950s when he was reengaged on the roads issue (Sharp,

c. 1973). *Oxford Replanned* seems to have been effectively ignored, neither gaining approval or rejection, or that was what Sharp subsequently asserted (Sharp, 1956). But he had moved to the live in the city whilst undertaking the plan and stayed as a resident. Sharp's ongoing contribution to Oxford's planning and townscape took two principal forms – the critically acclaimed book *Oxford Observed* (Sharp, 1952) and, as a citizen, appearing at five public inquiries about road proposals.

In *Oxford Observed* Sharp extracted and developed the townscape analysis originally made for *Oxford Replanned*. Whilst most of the key ideas can be found in *Oxford Replanned, Oxford Observed* represents a more developed and coherent treatise on both Oxford and on the idea of townscape overall. As part of this Sharp returned and extended his devotion to the High Street, "one of the finest pieces of sustained townscape in the world" (Sharp, 1952, p. 18).

> Here is dignity without display; form without formality; an aptitude for creating lofty, even sublime, effects without pomposity or arrogance; an amiable austerity; an immense variety of incident within a broad general totality. And this miracle of harmony-in-conflict is sustained in a series of well-punctuated instalments for three-quarters of a mile on both sides of a street curving broadly like a great river. (Sharp, 1952, p. 19).

Sharp's obsession with the High Street also informed his enduring concern with roads in the city, and the need to remove traffic from the High Street. A series of five highly controversial public inquiries between 1953 and 1970 deliberated over a series of competing schemes to relieve inner Oxford of traffic. Sharp appeared at each, advocating for his distinctive blend of technical and visual planning. As we have seen, Sharp viewed Oxford as one of the great historic cities with the consequent objective of the wholesale removal of traffic from the central precinct. He continued to argue for slightly modified version of his Meadows route "substitute road" presented in *Oxford Replanned*, which he argued as the only proposed solution representing a coherent *system* of traffic planning. At several points a version of the Sharp scheme seemed likely to prevail on technical grounds, but each time was thwarted by college opposition (and by Oxford graduates in government). Ultimately most of the suggested road schemes were abandoned in favour of traffic-management as the mood shifted towards a policy of containment (Stansfield, 1981).

Despite the dearth of work opportunities after the 1940s, Sharp did receive one commission late in his career, for Cambridge. For reasons that are not entirely clear, he was employed as a consultant in the early 1960s to report on the character of the city by the County Council, which was undertaking a review of its development plan. As part of his townscape analysis, he brutally documented the erosion of the character of the university city, through a series of examples of scaled-up, more intensive redevelopment over recent decades, illustrated with before-and-after photographs to telling effect (his report was reproduced in *Town Planning Review*; Sharp, 1963, Figure 5). Sharp included a section on the growing demand for tall buildings, critically reflecting on new construction in London and elsewhere and referencing Cambridge

Fig. 12—St. Andrew's Street—Emmanuel Street, before rebuilding

Fig. 13—St. Andrew's Street—Emmanuel Street, rebuilt 1958

FIGURE 5   A plate unfavourably commenting on new development in Cambridge. (Photos © unknown creator, from *Dreaming Spires and Teeming Towers* by Sharp, 1963, Plate 15)

University's proposals for towers that was to keep Sharp employed in the city. In his recommendations Sharp stressed the importance of modest "town" streets as foils to the grander university colleges and that tower buildings should be prohibited in the city.

Part of the context for Sharp's engagement in Cambridge seems to have been anxiety on the part of the planning authorities about possible tall buildings in the city. In particular, a scheme by the architect Denys Lasdun for new science departments for the university initially proposed two towers of 220 and one of 165 feet (which Barnabas Calder (2015) has argued was influenced by townscape ideas), although by the time the scheme reached

public inquiry in February 1964 these had been scaled back. The County Council objected and appointed Sharp as consultant to appear at the inquiry.

Sharp's evidence, summarised in the inspector's report, goes to the heart of his townscape thinking:

> In the past architects had been content that their buildings should take a natural place in the community of buildings that constituted the town. It now appeared that architects and their clients had private desires to raise their buildings above all the others – but such a private desire was irrelevant and alien to the public interest. The University had no special licence and their buildings were not in a special category which placed them outside the precepts of neighbourliness. (Sharp, 1964, para. 71)

Furthermore

> The real reason for the proposed towers was that the architect of the University liked them – the former had a taste for towers and was not greatly concerned with civic design or the appearance of the City. That was not a good enough reason why the visual character of any town should be jeopardised; let alone Cambridge. (Sharp, 1964, para. 73)

Ultimately redevelopment amounted to one large but lower Brutalist building, designed by different architects and constructed some years later (Figure 5).

In 1968, Sharp published a swansong book, *Town and Townscape* (Sharp, 1968), seeking to summarise and draw together a career's worth of writing and action on townscape with an additional focus on issues arising from rapid urban change in the 1960s. The introduction summarised some of the principal threats to the visual quality of place, considered most severe in historic towns. Principal amongst these were traffic, retail expansion, large-scale speculative development, and architectural fashion. The most interesting and rewarding English townscapes were said to be composed from a variety of building ages and architectural styles that achieve a unity primarily from a shared rhythm. He celebrated the visual qualities of different types of settlement, with occasional digressions into cases in which he had been embroiled. The section on cathedral cities revisited the Owengate approach to Durham Cathedral and the successful action to save it.

An emergent concern was tall buildings. For Sharp, as we have seen with Cambridge, the fashion to build high was merely that, rather than stemming from any deeper rationality. This was intrinsically linked, in his view, to the wider impacts of tall buildings on the town, which he felt were being ignored due to "the excitements of architectural megalomania" (Sharp, 1968, p. 130); he included here an acerbic description of his clash with Lasdun in Cambridge. Sharp distinguished between (then) contemporary tall buildings and earlier tall buildings, such as church towers and spires. The contrast he sought to make was not merely architectural but also social. Historically, he argued, there had been a social hierarchy employed in design – so the most prominent buildings, such as churches, represented collective values of society, whereas new commercial blocks represented private gain.

5   CONCLUSION

A clear sense of Sharp's kinetic townscape approach can be seen in *Cathedral City*, although it is not yet labelled as such. In *Exeter Phoenix* this was termed "genius loci", and townscape principles were used in design solutions for rebuilding. *Oxford Replanned* is a masterful drawing together of the principles of townscape Sharp had been developing. In all these plans Sharp exceeded his brief to present manifestos, arguing for "a way of seeing" places. Townscape was an empirical project. Whilst "townscape" is often associated with architectural writers on an architectural publication, it was conceived as a methodology for planning, and Sharp, as a planner, brought a unique perspective and approach. Dismissed by later critics as superficially focused on visual appearance, as applied by Sharp we can see "townscape" as an early form of an integrated urban design approach (Pendlebury et. al., 2015). Through his planning work Sharp developed principles of townscape analysis and used townscape as an empirical testing ground for an indication of future urban form. Townscape helped conceptualise the relationship between contemporary intervention and existing urban fabric. Sharp's use of townscape was to advocate for a methodology of planning historically informed and historically sensitive, but which remained distinctly modern in outlook and purpose. His plans were simultaneously bold and strategic but locally focused and sensitive. For Sharp, townscape was a method to be widely applied in the creation of urban places of high functional and design quality:

> Whilst it may have been Sharp's special skill to apply his ideas to historic towns, he was advocating a form of urbanism that he considered relevant to *all* towns and cities. Although historic cities were excellent demonstrations of how townscape principles created great places, these ideas should, he believed, be applied in the formation of new places, whether they be modifications of existing towns or entire new settlements. Furthermore, townscape principles in turn were intended as only one part, the visual expression, of a wider urbanism – a practical English and modern urbanism, that could be implemented and used as part of a process of realisable planning […] As such it formed part of a wider comprehensive planning […] the objective was to synthesize functional requirements, the proper workings of the town, with visual seemliness (Pendlebury, 2015, p. 139).

This started with the street as the basic urban building block. Visually, he focused on issues of character, hierarchy, and scale and the importance of urban foils. He had a particularly distinctive approach (considered so by Colin Buchanan, 1958) to the growing problem of urban traffic; he avoided the mechanistic prevailing preference for tight inner-ring roads, advocating bespoke "substitute roads", designed to relieve principal streets of all possible traffic; a major issue in Durham and Exeter but something he fought most tenaciously for in Oxford, often seeming to win the battle, without ever winning the war.

Sharp was influential, therefore, in developing ideas of "townscape" and applying them to real, practical planning situations. Whilst direct implementation of his plans was extremely limited, he had a real and lasting influence on the cities in which he worked. This was reinforced by his actions as a consultant or as a citizen. Very often we can't see these interventions, and they are in danger of being forgotten, as his contribution was to help to avert urban disasters, such as the redevelopment of Owengate in Durham, or the puncturing of the Cambridge skyline with high buildings. More broadly, his analysis of place quality that we see in these plans (and others he produced) has been of enduring influence in affecting how others saw and understood these cities in terms of their qualities and character. Sharp's wider influence was on the discourse of British planning and on an understanding of place and place quality, which served to temper the degree and form of redevelopment across the country. The 1940s was a time of febrile enthusiasm for planning. In amongst this, Sharp's was a distinctive voice arguing about the need for a place-sensitive approach, rather than formulaic solutions. Rather than extensive preservation, Sharp sought the maintenance of character, and he was not at the forefront of the conservation movement that developed in the post-war period (Pendlebury, 2009b). But importantly, we should acknowledge that the turn to more place-sensitive planning and a more conservation-sympathetic approach was built in no small part on the planning and advocacy of Sharp in the preceding decades.

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BIOGRAPHY

John Pendlebury is Professor of Urban Conservation, Centre for Heritage, Newcastle University, UK. He teaches and researches on issues of heritage, conservation, development, planning and governance, focusing on the interface between contemporary cultural heritage policy and other policy processes, as well as undertaking more historical work on how conceptions of heritage have been balanced with modernising forces. Principal publications include Conservation in the Age of Consensus (2009) and the edited collections Valuing Historic Environments (2009 with Lisanne Gibson) and Alternative Visions of Post-War Reconstruction: Creating the Modern Townscape (2015 with Erdem Erten and Peter Larkham). His most recent book, with Jules Brown, is Conserving the Historic Environment (2021).

RESCALING "HISTORIC BUDAPEST": PARADIGM SHIFTS IN URBAN HERITAGE WITHIN HUNGARIAN ARCHITECTURAL DISCOURSE OF THE 1960s

Gábor Oláh

Abstract

Budapest encompasses several historic urban neighbourhoods that have each been designated "historic" at various times and via different mechanisms. The most recently designated historic centre is located on the left bank of the Danube, in Pest, which was largely (re)built in the late 19th century. Since the 1960s, urban heritage preservation has assumed a new dimension, necessitating a shift in scale in Europe and North America: Preservation efforts have expanded from solely protecting historic monuments to encompassing larger areas. The concept of the historic city centre in Pest evolved in tandem with European intellectual movements, while incorporating specific local elements. Hungary's and Budapest's "tumultuous history", characterised by fractures from the Middle Ages onwards, has repeatedly led to the destruction of buildings representative of previous eras and an ensuing near-total absence of architectural heritage. This theme has been a recurring topic in architectural and urban planning journals since the 1930s. Consequently, urban heritage in Budapest has been described in the architectural journals as fragmented, conveyed through concepts such as "townscape", "landscape", and "urban structure", which have vaguer boundaries or can even be considered as "transcendental". This can be contrasted with Western European concepts centred around attributes such as antiquity, homogeneity, and architectural unity. In this context, the challenge of creating urban heritage was pursued through the construction of a spatial and temporal continuum. Concisely, the historicity of Pest's city centre was developed and rendered intelligible by the architectural discourse through changes in scale. This chapter aims to identify the elements through which architectural discourse in the 1960s appropriated and applied new urban heritage paradigms to reinterpret Pest's inner city, based on an analysis of architectural journals *(Magyar Építőművészet, Műemlékvédelem, Városépítés, Településtudományi Közlemények, Építés- és Közlekedéstudományi Közlemények/ Építés- Építészettudomány)* between 1956 and 1973.

Keywords

Urban heritage, historic city centre, urban landscape, socialist urbanism, Budapest

1   INTRODUCTION

1.1   Scaling-up urban heritage: A global and local history

While, prior to the conclusion of World War II, the institutional protection of heritage predominantly focused on individual buildings, a debate had already emerged in the pre-war period regarding the appropriate boundaries for such protection. Initial efforts to extend protection spatially appeared sporadically across various European countries. Examples include the concept of *entourage* (1913) and *abords* (1943) in France, and listed town centres in Poland (1928) (Stubbs et al., 2011). Consequently, there are divergent and specific chronologies in the conceptual evolution and legal adoption of this change in scale from one country to another, and even from one city to another (Vadelorge, 2003). However, as Hartog (2015), Tomas (2004), and Sonkoly (2017) have illustrated, the history of spatial concepts of urban heritage is linked to specific regimes of heritagisation, reflecting the shift from a future-oriented experience of time to presentism. This highlights correlations and even causal relationships with the evolution of urbanisation. Bandarin (2015) further underscores that paradigm shifts in the history of urban heritage, whether driven by spatial, chronological, or thematic extensions, have been characterised by a densification of interactions outside established protocols.

From the 1960s onwards, new instruments for the protection of urban heritage began to emerge in many countries, driven by the development of concepts and frameworks for area-wide protection. During this period, the protection of urban heritage acquired an increasingly international scope. Although the Venice Charter of 1964 did not explicitly address the territorial dimension of urban heritage, from the 1960s onwards, international discourse on heritage, facilitated by organisations such as ICOMOS, UNESCO, and the Council of Europe, began to establish global standards for managing historic districts and frameworks for ongoing discourse (e.g. European Architectural Heritage Year in 1975). In 1987, the Washington Charter (International Charter for the Protection of Historic Towns and Cities) was adopted to complement the Venice Charter, aiming to formalise management methods for historic towns and districts (Bandarin & van Oers, 2012, pp. 39–50; Sonkoly, 2017, pp. 37–47).

With the growth of cities and peri-urbanisation in the post-war period, the frameworks governing city centres underwent significant re-evaluation. This was due both to the concentrated focus on and direction of resources towards planned towns and neighbourhoods and to the stark contrast between the old centres and new peripheries, resulting in radically different housing conditions. Such processes often led to the deterioration and insalubrity of city centres. Simultaneously, the "bulldozer urbanism" (*"rénovation-bulldozer")* became socially controversial, a sentiment that gradually infiltrated professional and political visions as well (Tomas, 2004, p. 199). The shift in attitude towards city centres was fuelled by the devastating experience of war, the perception that the past was being lost, and the revision of the dogmatism of functionalism within the context of the city's relentless expansion. Beyond the physiological

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need for space, the significance of the social and emotional needs for the built environment was thus made explicit. Consequently, these urban spaces gradually accrued an irreplaceable identity value and gained heritage status (Roncayolo, 1997, pp. 250–253; Tomas, 2004, pp. 198–200).

As a result, national legislation has been adapted to modify the spatial scale of heritage protection, establishing different conditions and vocabulary for the delimitation of protected urban areas. These spatial concepts, often encapsulated in neologisms, condense distinct realities: the protected townscape in the Netherlands (*beschermd stadsgezicht*, 1961), the safeguarded sector in France (*secteur sauvegardé*, 1962), the area of historic interest in Hungary (*műemléki jelentőségű terület*, 1964), the *conservation area* in the UK (1967), and the historic centre in Italy (*centro storico*, 1973) (Stubbs et al., 2011). These differing perceptions and conceptualisations of urban space have their origins in specific cultural and historical contexts and may constitute relevant research issues. This necessarily implies studies from the perspective of cultural geography.

Such newly established conservation areas, primarily situated in city centres, were delineated with precise boundaries, necessitating the creation of separate plans distinct from the general urban-planning process. The main objective of the separate management of these areas was the conservation and enhancement of the urban fabric within well-defined boundaries, aligning thus with the functionalist zoning logic of urban planning (Román, 1985, p. 16; Roncayolo, 1997, pp. 250–253; Tomas, 2004, p. 199). Since the late 1980s, conservation areas have faced considerable criticism for their insular or enclave-like nature and the static framework of their protection, which have exacerbated discontinuities in the urban fabric across their boundaries (Román 1985; Bandarin & van Oers, 2012). Consequently, international discourse on heritage began to explore concepts and approaches that could promote continuity, urban integrity, and the preservation as a dynamic process. Many experts saw the solution in a further shift in spatial scale, leading to the development of concepts such as "visual integrity" (Sonkoly, 2017, pp. 145–161). However, the discourse has since evolved towards the more complex notion of the "historic urban landscape" (UNESCO, 2011), which extends beyond the spatial scale to include ecological, social, and cultural dimensions (Taylor, 2018; Turner & Singer, 2015).

1.2   A research problem rooted in the concepts of urban space

Examining the process of scaling-up urban heritage and establishing new categories in contexts outside the core of international heritage discourse, e.g., in Central Europe, reveals that the stakes are different there. These issues are often discussed in the literature in terms of how this region received and adapted external cultural concepts. It could be argued that the paradigms and notions of heritage, primarily developed in English and French, were adopted later and predominantly in a legal and administrative context by the countries of Central Europe. This adoption often occurred with limited public dialogue or further professional discourse (Sonkoly, 2017; Trencsényi, 2004).
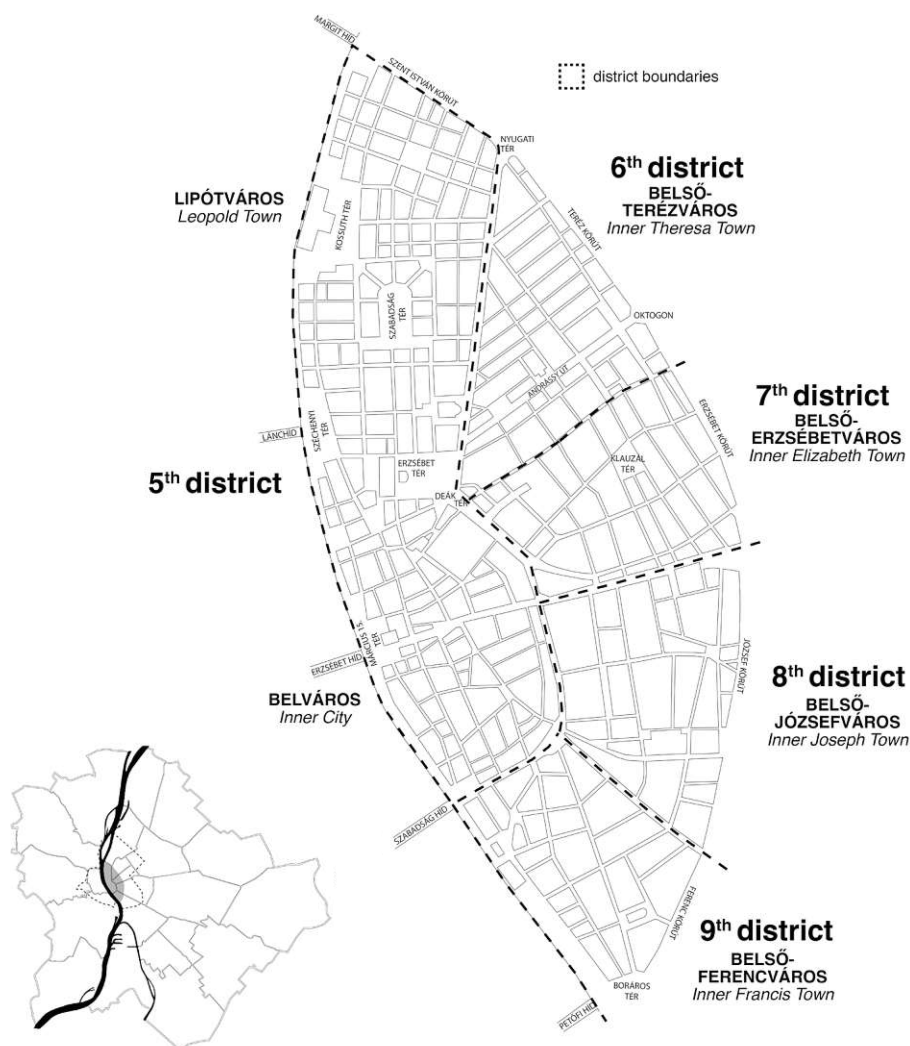
FIGURE 1   The area studied (shaded grey) and the perimeter of the late 19th century urban fabric (dashed line) within Budapest (left) and the boundaries of districts the with the names of the neighbourhoods (right). (Infographic: Gábor Oláh 2024, CC BY-SA)

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However, recent research has begun to critique the robustness of this model of one-way cultural transmission. For instance, Szívós (2021) examines international networks and knowledge transfer through the "permeable" Iron Curtain. Other studies have highlighted the active role of experts from socialist countries in shaping the international urban heritage discourse (Harlov, 2016; Gantner et al., 2022). The question, then, in the context of socialist Hungary, is how the discourse on the scaling of urban heritage has been influenced by international knowledge transfer. Furthermore, can local stakes be identified that accompanied the reception and adaptation of these paradigms and concepts?

Budapest encompasses several historic urban neighbourhoods; each of which has been designated "historic" at various times and via different mechanisms. The most recently designated historic centre is located on the left bank of the Danube, in Pest.[1] This area (Figure 1) underwent significant demolition and reconstruction in the late 19th century due to a high degree of urbanisation. However, no significant physical or structural transformation has taken place since then. Throughout the 20th century, the perception of Pest's inner-city neighbourhoods evolved considerably. In the 1920s and 1930s, sources described it as a young city, lacking historical patina (see for example, Bierbauer, 1932, p. 2), with discussions focusing on intervention, reconstruction, and restructuring. Less than half a century later, from the 1960s onwards, the term "historic" began to be increasingly applied to this urban area, shifting the discourse towards conservation, safeguarding, and renovation. Over the decades, statements and debates reveal a transformation in the perception of Pest's inner-city neighbourhoods, leading to its designation as a protected area with multiple scales and definitions. A significant milestone in this process occurred during the 1960s, when urban heritage became a central topic of professional discourse among architects and urban planners. This period saw the consolidation of legal and administrative terminology related to urban heritage, as well as increased recognition and appreciation of late 19th century architecture and urbanism. An important case of this recognition is the historicisation of the city centre of Budapest, where the eclectic late 19th century ensemble of three-to-six storey buildings spans nearly twelve square kilometres (Benkő, 2012, pp. 32–33.)

2 A CONCEPTUALIST-CONTEXTUALIST METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO STUDY THE SPATIAL EXPANSION OF URBAN HERITAGE

In this chapter, we will analyse a fraction of this late 19th century historic ensemble, encompassing approximately 4.5 km² (Figure 1). This research focuses on the central neighbourhoods of Pest, defined as the area between the Grand Boulevard[2] and the Danube. Administratively, this includes the 5th district and the central parts of the current 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th districts. This area is conceived as an observation perimeter, guided primarily by practical considerations to effectively circumscribe the research field. The specified area has also played a central role in the discourse on the preservation of urban heritage, making this delimitation particularly relevant. Around the Grand Boulevard, we observe the emergence of a spatial unit that is "projected" not only on official maps but also in mental maps.

There are several perspectives from which we can write the history of the concept of the historic centre of Pest. Fundamentally, it can be seen as an

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1   Until 1873, Buda (on the right bank) and Pest (on the left bank) were two distinct municipalities. Today, Buda and Pest remain the familiar names of the two banks of the Danube, though they are not associated with any current administrative units.

2   "Grand Boulevard" is the informal name given to a group of boulevards in Budapest. The following roads constitute part of the Grand Boulevard in Pest, with some named after the districts they traverse (from north to south): Szent István Boulevard, Teréz Boulevard, Erzsébet Boulevard, József Boulevard, and Ferenc Boulevard.

objectified social construct, something that has been shaped, in other words, by the shared understanding and cultural values of urban societies over time. It encapsulates categories and images formed by complex processes involving changing perceptions and interpretations of urban space – whether in physical, geographical, or metaphorical terms. In this way, we will examine the collective efforts involved in constructing the concept of protected urban space, with particular reference to the city centre of Pest. More broadly, this chapter considers the evolution of perceptions and temporalities associated with urban space. It can thus be understood as a history of concepts, conceptions, and representations of urban space in which theoretical constructions and discursive positions appear to be more important than the history of events, political and institutional processes, decision-making mechanisms concerning the preservation of urban heritage, the history of a building or neighbourhood, or the concrete implementation of urban development plans. This conceptual-historical perspective will be used to analyse the evolution of the spatial expansion of urban heritage, complemented by an experimental quantitative approach.

Conceptual history is a widely applicable methodological approach to the historical analysis of urban heritage. Because urban heritage evolved and acquired meaning over time, it may be considered a result of a process of conceptual evolution (Sonkoly, 2017, p. 10). The conceptual-historical method studies concepts and their relationship to reality, and their role in understanding historical change. A concept concentrates a more elaborate construct of thought, condensing various types of information that convey extra-linguistic content, such as sociohistorical contexts. Koselleck (2004) links the theory and method of conceptual history to research in social history, which has a double consequence for this study. Semantic-historical analysis requires socio-historical data to understand and interpret concepts and, in turn, provides socio-historical information (Szabó & Szűcs, 2011). This leads to the hypotheses that: firstly, the conceptual-historical analysis of urban heritage enables us to grasp certain elements of historical reality beyond the object of research; and, second, conceptual history analysis can also contribute to understanding other historical problems of urban social change. By focusing on the evolution of the concepts, meanings, and representations of urban space over time, we can better understand the perceptions, underlying ideas, and values that shape urban heritage. This approach allows us to capture the changing elements and notions of urban heritage as well as the transformations in spatial concepts over time, providing insights into the broader dynamics of urban social change.

From this perspective, urban heritage is not merely static, physical artefacts, but dynamic spaces imbued with cultural meanings, social relations, and historical narratives (Soja, 1996). The absence of precise definitions for such concepts renders them especially pertinent to the study of conceptual history. The ambiguity inherent in the concept represents a shifting perspective on urban space, which acquires clarity and meaning within a given context (Roncayolo, 2002, p. 84). This indeterminacy allows scholars to investigate the ways in which the meanings and applications of these ideas have shifted across different historical periods and contexts. Such fluidity offers valuable

insights into the dynamic evolution of thought and language (Koselleck 2004; Sonkoly, 2017, p. 10). Urban heritage manifests in various contexts and linguistic expressions. Consequently, a primary challenge in analysing textual sources from a historical-semantic perspective lies in identifying concepts in relation to their specific contexts. Concepts are undoubtedly identifiable within their semantic field, but their meaning necessarily goes beyond their original definition. Concepts are strongly anchored in both diachronic and synchronic contexts. In a diachronic approach, concepts are defined, modified, and supplemented in relation to their uses by previous generations. In a synchronic approach, concepts change or reinforce their meanings through a horizontal system of relations and interactions in the present. Since conceptualisation is inherently a collective activity, conceptual history can be seen as a historical method of collective social organisation. As a result, conceptual-historical analyses emphasise the discursive context of concepts, highlighting how they are shaped and reshaped through collective use and interaction within their specific historical and social settings (Koselleck, 2004; Szabó & Szűcs, 2011; Trencsényi, 2004).

In this chapter, conceptual-historical methods will be complemented by contextualist approaches involving discourse analysis, which has further implications for this research. Defining the social group – in this case, the profession of architects and urban planners in 1960s Hungary – makes linguistic representations and concepts of urban heritage more identifiable in both synchronic and diachronic terms by capturing typical co-occurrences and juxtapositions of concepts. The consequences of this conceptualist-contextualist approach are significant (Lepetit, 1993; Szabó & Szűcs, 2011; Trencsényi, 2004):

- Re-evaluation of continuity and discontinuity: By examining the historical and social contexts in which concepts are used, it will be possible to analyse how ideas about urban heritage have evolved or remained consistent over time.
- Visibility of options and bifurcations: This approach highlights the choices and paths available to actors at different points in time, revealing the decision-making processes and potential alternatives that shaped urban heritage discourse.
- Focus on subtle phenomena: As this approach transcends well-established narratives of urban development, certain historical information can be revealed that might be imperceptible or deemed uninteresting from other perspectives. This can uncover nuanced shifts in language and meaning that indicate broader social and cultural changes.

Overall, combining conceptual-historical methods with contextualist discourse analysis offers an appropriate framework for exploring how urban heritage concepts have developed and been employed within the Hungarian context.

This chapter uses Hungarian professional architectural journals published between 1956 and 1970 – namely, *Magyar Építőművészet* (Hungarian Architecture)*, Műemlékvédelem* (Protection of Monuments)*, Városépítés*

(Urban Planning), *Településtudományi Közlemények* (Publications on Settlement Studies)*, Építés- és Közlekedéstudományi Közlemények* (Publications on Building and Transport Science*)/Építés- Építészettudomány* (Building science – Architectural science*)* – as historical sources to carry out the conceptual-contextualist analysis.[3] Architectural journals are becoming increasingly attractive to researchers, and recent studies (Jannière & Vanlaethem, 2008; Parnell & Sawyer, 2021; Schmiedeknecht & Peckham, 2018) demonstrate the multifaceted benefits of this type of source. For the present research problem, these benefits are primarily due to three features, which will be discussed in this chapter:

1. Professional representation: These journals provide a discursive framework for professional information exchange and debate in the fields of architecture *(Magyar Építőművészet)*, urban planning *(Várospítés)*, and monument protection *(Műemlékvédelem)*. This makes them rich sources for understanding the professional perspectives and evolving discourse within these fields.
2. Periodicity: Produced regularly, these journals allow for repeated observations over a relatively long period. This feature enables researchers to track changes and continuities in professional discourse over time, providing a longitudinal perspective on the evolution of concepts and debates.
3. Topicality: Professional journals play a key role in communicating relevant information and discussing pertinent issues of their time. They reflect the then-current priorities, challenges, and innovations within the professional community.

In terms of these three features, this chapter will provide a nuanced understanding of how concepts of urban heritage have been articulated, debated, and transformed within the Hungarian architectural and urban planning community.

Ferkai (2018, p. 112) observes that, during the Cold War era, while most architectural journals (e.g. *Architectural Review*, *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui)* in Western European countries maintained their own distinct editorial lines, thereby establishing unique identities, journals within the socialist bloc were assigned a "lone role": to cover the entirety of architectural production, monument protection, and urban planning for their respective countries. Their primary "editorial principle" was thus to transcend "partisan interests". In Hungary, the communist takeover in 1948–1949 resulted in a complete reset of architectural journalism, leading to closure of the journals that had been established during the interwar period and the founding of entirely new publications. Following the revolution of 1956, the institutional consolidation of urbanism and heritage conservation was paralleled by the consolidation of architectural journalism, resulting in a framework that persisted for the next three decades, until the democratic transition (Figure 2).

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3   Unless otherwise stated, this and all subsequent translations from non-English-language sources are by the author.
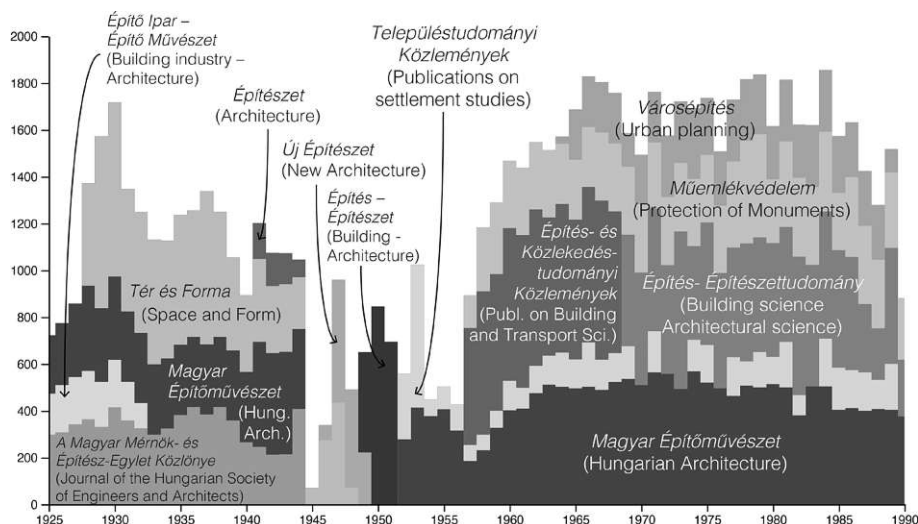
FIGURE 2   Architectural journal production in Hungary between 1925 and 1990. The x-axis represents the years, while the y-axis denotes the total number of pages published in the journals for each corresponding year. (Infographic: Gábor Oláh using RawGraphs, based on data from MATARKA (Searchable database of Hungarian journal tables of contents), 2022, CC BY-SA)

In our analysis of architectural journals, several terms have "surfaced" that institutions or authors have defined to describe urban heritage. To enable a form of experimental, quantitative inquiry, these terms are transformed into keywords (Wevers & Koolen, 2020, p. 226). The quantitative analysis is based on the assumption that keywords can be used to infer the temporal density and dynamics of urban heritage. By this means, the keywords "compete with each other", with the increasing use of one term over another indicating current trends in the approach to urban heritage (Veschambre, 2007, p. 374). The proximity and interchangeability of the keywords allow for the establishment of a typology. The criterion for grouping is defined in terms of scale, which seems to be an appropriate categorisation tool for describing the spatial expansion of urban heritage. Based on the keyword repertoire, five groups of concepts are proposed: surrounding area, building ensemble, townscape, neighbourhood, and landscape (See Table 1). This analytical framework is used to revisit the architects' texts with analysis facilitated by the complex search interface of the Arcanum Newspapers Database.[4] It should be noted that, as a "naive tool user", I possessed limited ability to reflect critically on tool parameters and methods; while the influence of tool choice and (hyper)parameters on the outcome is recognised, in-depth critique remains outside the current scope of expertise (Szabó et al., 2021, pp. 1–2).

4   https://adt.arcanum.com/en/

TABLE 1   Groups and terms found in the journals.

Groups	Terms
Surrounding area	*műemléki környezet* (surroundings of the monument), *történeti/történelmi környezet* (historic/historical surroundings)
Building ensemble	*műemléki együttes/műemlékegyüttes* (ensemble of historic monuments), *történeti/történelmi együttes* (historical/historical ensemble), *városépítészeti együttes* (urban ensemble)
Townscape	*történeti/történelmi városkép* (historic/historical townscape), *védett városkép* (protected townscape), *egységes városkép* (unified townscape), *városképi együttes* (townscape ensemble), *városképi egység* (townscape unit), *védett utcakép* (protected streetscape), *városkép szempontjából fontos/kiemelt terület* (priority area of townscape preservation), *városképi jelentőségű terület* (area of townscape interest)
Neighborhood	*történelmi/történeti városmag* (historical/historic city core), *történelmi/történeti városközpont/belváros* (historical/historic city centre), *műemléki városrész* (quarter of historic character), történelmi/történeti városrész/városnegyed (historic/historical quarter), védett városrész (protected quarter) *műemléki jelentőségű terület* (area of historic interest), *történelmi/történeti értékű terület* (area of historic/historical value), *védett terület* (protected area) *műemléki város/műemlékváros/történeti/történelmi város* (historic/historical town), *védett város* (protected town)
Landscape	*építészeti táj* (architectural landscape), *városi/települési táj* (urban landscape), *kultúrtáj* (cultural landscape), *történeti táj* (historic landscape)

Running the keyword search through the corpus, grouping them, registering their occurrences, and then visualising them (Mauri et al., 2017), opens up several analytical possibilities (Figure 3). First, it is possible to identify "competition" among concepts and (typed) scales, and to determine which formal-informal subject-marker concepts become dominant. Second, conclusions can be drawn about the establishment of technical terms, such as the discursive anchoring of regulatory spatial categories or their invisibility, or the discursive origins of concepts that subsequently become legal categories. Third, the analysis may reveal which spatial references have been privileged by the discourse for the designation of urban heritage, potentially making certain paradigm shifts visible.
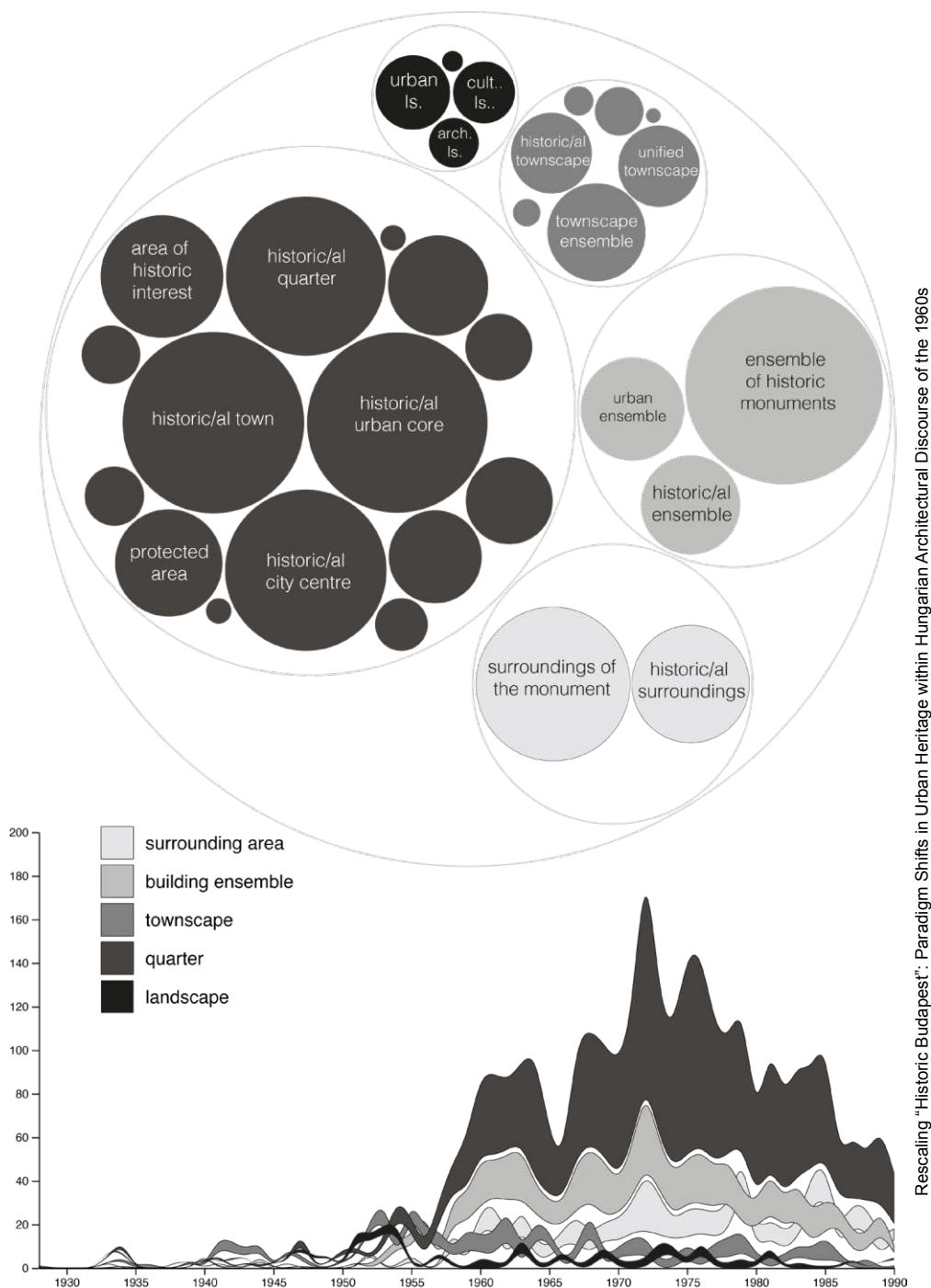
FIGURE 3   Grouping of terms (above) and dynamic classification of five predefined scale-types between 1925 and 1990 based on a keyword search (below). In the figure below, the x-axis represents the years, while the y-axis denotes the number of occurrences. (Infographic: Gábor Oláh using Raw-Graphs, based on data from Arcanum Database (digitised architectural journals), 2022, CC BY-SA).

The typology and the method are not without problems. Latent definitions, overlaps, concepts at the intersection of two sets, and the typological choices that resolve them can affect the analysis and results (Huistra & Mellink, 2016, pp. 221–226; Wevers & Koolen, 2020, pp. 226–228). Despite the significant biases of the method, the experimental combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches can broaden the scope of the analysis.

3 HISTORICISING PEST'S INNER-CITY NEIGHBOURHOODS

3.1 A brief history of institutional heritage management in the city centre of Pest

Budapest is situated at the intersection of geographically diverse regions: the wide Danube River runs between the hilly districts of Buda and its surrounding valleys, on the right bank, and the Plain of Pest, on the river's more extensive left bank. Throughout history, Buda and Pest developed in an interdependent manner. The modern city of Budapest was established in 1873 through the administrative merger of the royal free cities of Buda and Pest and the market town of Óbuda, creating a city of approximately 207 km². In 1950, the creation of Greater Budapest, which incorporated the first ring of agglomerations, expanded the city's surface area by 2.5 times to its current 525 km². The economic boom that began in the late 19th century led to intensive urbanisation, resulting in a very dense city by the start of World War I. At the same time, the peripheral parts of the city were only loosely urbanised, reinforcing the development of a monocentric city. The creation of Greater Budapest, characterised by an extremely dense city centre, under-urbanised and sparsely populated outskirts, and proportionally smaller sub-centres, did not result in the formation of a "compact and organic city" within its extensive administrative boundaries. Within this spatial inequality, the central districts of Pest embody a reality distinct from other urban areas, necessitating specific urban management policies (Benkő, 2012; Erő, 2005).

Until the Second World War, the central neighbourhoods of Pest had very few listed monuments, primarily because the protection criteria were based on chronological considerations. This chronological principle continued to influence the subsequent classification of historical monuments. Post-war reconstruction, however, brought heightened attention to issues concerning historical monuments, emphasising not only individual structures but also the importance of protecting groups of buildings and townscapes (Dercsényi, 1969; Erő, 2005, p. 275). An important milestone in this process was the 1949 decree-law regulating the protection of monuments and museums.[5] Under these regulations, architectural and landscape features surrounding listed buildings could be protected, as could land of archaeological interest, by means of the *védett terület* (protected area) conservation category.

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5   Decree-Law No. 13 of 1949 of the Presidential Council of the People's Republic on Museums and Monuments (16 November 1949)

The restoration of the heavily damaged Buda Castle and its surrounding quarter emerged as a model project for post-war restoration efforts, marking a significant shift in the scale of urban heritage conservation both theoretically and practically. As foreseen in the Decree-Law of 1949, the necessity to design and plan conservation on a broader scale led to comprehensive surveys of townscapes and monuments conducted between 1951 and 1957. These surveys encompassed urban morphological, archaeological, historical, and art-historical studies, as well as detailed examinations of buildings and building complexes across 74 towns, including Budapest. The data gathered was intended to inform the creation of local urban plans by local councils. The results of the surveys contributed to the development of the legal framework for monument protection. The Building Act of 1964[6] and the subsequent Ministerial Decrees on the Protection of Monuments enacted between 1967 and 1972 established two new categories of area-based urban conservation: *műemléki környezet* (surroundings of the monument)[7] and *műemléki jelentőségű terület* (area of historic interest)[8]. In 1966, fourteen such areas were designated, including the Buda Castle district. These newly designated conservation areas, each situated in the city centre, were meticulously delineated. Their establishment required the development of specific plans, separate from the general urban planning process. The first plans for these areas were developed in the 1960s and 1970s by the Institute for Town Planning and Research, with the guidance of the National Monument Protection Inspectorate. (Gerő, 1967; Erő, 2005, pp. 275–276). The designation of conservation areas in Budapest was strategically programmed to coincide with the 100th anniversary of the unification of Pest, Buda, and Óbuda in 1973, serving as a symbolic gesture. Initially, fifteen surroundings of the monument were designated in the city. During the centenary celebrations,[9] the city council instituted a local protection category specifically for buildings within the capital's jurisdiction. Under this designation, nearly 200 buildings dating from the post-unification period were granted protected status.

During the Stalinist period of the 1950s, proposals were developed to remodel the downtown area of Pest in order to display the regime's power, and plans were drawn up for Moscow-style skyscrapers in the inner *Erzsébetváros* (7th district) and along the Grand Boulevard. However, these bold, aesthetics-oriented urban plans generally did not make it beyond the level of political communication and preliminary outlines. Actual resources and priorities were not focused on downtown Pest, largely due to the accelerated pace of industrialisation, the 1956 revolution, and the subsequent period of reconstruction and consolidation. From the 1960s onwards, urban policy was focused on constructing large-scale housing estates on the outskirts of the city. In this context, the central districts of Pest were regarded by the

6   Act III of 1964 on Building.

7   The category of surroundings of the monument aims to ensure the unobstructed view of a listed building by protecting its architectural and landscape environment. It has been defined as the protection of buildings within precise boundaries.

8   The category of area of historic significance is a delimited part of a town that bears witness to a characteristic morphology or townscape. Within the boundaries of the area, all buildings have been subject to listed building regulations.

9   This was a series of programs organised in 1972 and 1973.

authorities as a problem to be deferred. The focus was primarily on resolving the "quantitative" housing crisis, leading to the postponement of efforts to address issues in the central districts. Consequently, the fin-de-siècle building stock experienced severe deterioration due to a lack of rehabilitation efforts (Benkő, 2012; Kovács, 1994).

At the end of the 1950s, the average age of the building stock in these neighbourhoods ranged between 60 and 80 years, and most had not undergone any major renovations since their initial construction. The only substantial renovation efforts were directed at the priority roads (e.g. Grand Boulevard, Rákóczi Avenue), which were part of the post-revolution reconstruction and urban beautification programme[10] conducted between 1957 and 1961 (Tamáska, 2018, pp. 38–39). According to the literature, this work was often poorly and unsatisfactorily executed. A form of "Potemkin village" policy, involving façade renovations on major roads, became a hallmark of the Kádár regime's (1956–1988) city centre conservation strategy, followed by a similar wave of renovations on the Grand Boulevard in 1982–1983. As Korompay (2002, p. 62) succinctly states, "a century-old Pest has been spared three major renovations". Nevertheless, from the latter half of the 1970s, the urban regeneration of Pest's inner-city neighbourhoods became a priority at multiple levels, encompassing both party directives and public administration initiatives (Szívós, 2014).

3.2   Constructing the temporality and spatiality of the urban heritage of Pest

In the 1950s and 1960s, architects frequently discussed Hungary's "tumultuous history" and the resulting lack of architectural heritage (Gerő, 1967; Granasztói, 1956; Korompay G., 1960). Pál Granasztói (1956) highlighted the differences between the development of urbanisation in Hungary as compared to Western Europe. While Western European cities grew through "enrichment and tradition" (p. 29) since the Middle Ages, Hungarian towns lacked these stable architectural and planning traditions due to their disrupted history. The rapid urbanisation driven by capitalism and modernisation in the late 19th century further transformed Hungarian towns, erasing traditional architectural elements. Pál Granasztói argued that this absence of historical continuity made the "townscape" a central topic in Hungarian discussions about national identity and tradition. Discourse analysis reveals that, from the 1960s onwards, the term townscape no longer adequately captured the changing scale of urban heritage, as larger territorial units became more relevant.

The completion of townscape and monument surveys in 1957 established the foundation for defining conservation areas within towns. Mirroring international discourse, the discussions around establishing these areas focused narrowly on delimiting the conservation areas. According to László Gerő (1967), historical aspects were accentuated at the scale of the conservation area, whereas at the scale of individual buildings, artistic and

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10   The removal of the traces of the Revolution of 1956 was embedded in a comprehensive urban renovation programme that emphasised the projection of prestige and ideological power via the aestheticisation of the townscape on main roads.

aesthetic considerations predominated. This approach contributed to the adjective "historic" becoming a key term in discourse designating priority areas. From the 1960s onwards, the term *történeti városmag* (historic urban core) became the most common reference in specialised articles, supplementing legal and administrative concepts (Figure 3). The term "urban core" emerged almost exclusively in work concerning the historicity of the city (Perényi, 1964). This approach resulted in a conceptual distinction between the "historic urban core" and the "functional urban centre". This theoretical separation asserts disciplinary boundaries: the protection of historic monuments, which focuses on buildings within the urban core, and urban planning, which aims to reorganise the city centre. Debates over territorial and disciplinary boundaries emerged, seeking to clarify the relationship between central functions and historicity. The primary challenge in delineating the boundary between these two territorial concepts lies in the fact that central functions – political, administrative, economic, cultural, etc. – are predominantly concentrated within the historic urban core.

In the 1960s, Venice became a symbol of the changing approach to heritage preservation and a central gathering point for international experts in the field. A key event was the Second International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historical Monuments in 1964, which led to the drafting of the Venice Charter. At the same time, the International Federation for Housing and Planning (IFHP) held a three-day meeting of its Standing Committee on Historic Urban Areas in Venice. Pál Granasztói, a member of this organisation, delivered a lecture on Budapest and Szeged, highlighting the history of urbanism of these Hungarian cities (Granasztói, 1970). Granasztói's decades-long public career established him as a leading authority on urban issues, owing to his contributions in both theoretical and practical domains. His lecture is central to this study because it synthesised the conceptual production of the previous three decades, including his own work.

This period was marked by terminological ambiguity, with the different names for the IFHP committee in different languages – *sites historiques urbains* in French, *historic urban areas* in English, *Historische Stadtviertel* in German – reflecting contrasting cultural and linguistic perspectives on urban heritage. The new paradigm of urban heritage preservation included diverse territorial units with unique scales and thus perceptions, such as *site*, *area*, and *Viertel*. This diversity in terminology was typical of the early stage of the new urban preservation approach, which was not yet conceptually unified (Sonkoly, 2017). This context is crucial for understanding Granasztói's conference paper.

At the IFHP meeting in Venice, nearly all speakers, except for the Hungarian participant, focused on architecturally homogeneous units from the medieval or early modern periods, thereby defining historic urban areas by their antiquity, architectural unity, and homogeneity (Biegański, 1964, p. 47).[11] However, Granasztói (1970) argued that these criteria do not apply to Hungarian towns. He based his argument on three interdependent principles:

11   The speakers presented mostly medieval and early modern examples: Ole Thomassen (Denmark) on Copenhagen's historic model housing estates; R.C. Hekker (Netherlands) on the *hofj* of the Middle Ages; W. Schmidt (FRG) on the world's oldest public housing estate, the Fuggerei in Augsburg, which dates back

1. Hungarian towns lack unified neighbourhoods or groups of buildings of outstanding historic value, having only isolated buildings or ruins from the Middle Ages.
2. These isolated monuments are mainly concentrated in city centres, where remnants of the old road network and land divisions still exist, such as the Buda Castle Quarter and the 5th district in Pest.
3. The urban foundations of Szeged and Budapest were shaped by the eclectic style of the late 19th century.

Granasztói's perspective highlighted the unique challenges and characteristics of Hungarian urban heritage, as contrasted with the more homogeneous and older architectural contexts discussed by other participants.

Granasztói (1970) emphasised that while urban planning at the end of the 19th century often built on or organically developed old urban structures, it also nearly obliterated the remaining historical monuments and architectural units. He argued that the prevailing paradigm, which focuses on medieval and early modern towns, does not suit the Hungarian context. Instead, Hungary requires a different understanding of historicity and spatiality. Granasztói suggested that terms such as "ancient" and "old" are insufficient to describe Hungarian townscapes, and that "historic" offers more flexibility. He believed that reforming the conceptual apparatus of urban heritage necessitated the redefinition of the term "historic". He concluded that the late 19th century produced cohesive architectural ensembles on a city-wide scale in Budapest and Szeged, indicating that their historical value lies in the overall urban scale rather than individual buildings. This view cautiously rehabilitates eclecticism, considering fin-de-siècle urbanism as a "historic subject" distinguished from present-day forms of urbanism by significant socio-economic and technical changes. Furthermore, according to Granasztói, defining the territorial units of urban heritage in Hungary was problematic, as concepts such as *városkép* (townscape), *városszerkezet* (urban structure*)*, and *táj* (landscape) have boundaries that are less rigidly defined than their equivalents in Western Europe.

In this context, it become a dominant element in the discourse that Budapest could be considered as a large-scale and cohesive urban architectural masterpiece, and therefore treated as a historical subject. This theoretical framework posits that the city's historic significance and outstanding value are manifested on a grand scale, rendering it unique globally. However, it is not only *historic* (important in history) but also *historical* (belonging to the past), i.e., the period during which Pest's inner city was built, which can be delineated from the present by profound socio-economic and technical transformations. Both the historical perspective and the scale were critical in attributing heritage value to Pest's inner city. Furthermore, the quality of Pest's inner city was also situated in a transcendental context: Its historicity is manifest in the organic relationship it forged with previous eras, adapting both to the landscape and the urban structure. The "complementary dimension" is provided by its architectural style, characterised by eclecticism that embodies the modernity of the 19th century.

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4 CONCLUSIONS

In many European cities, particularly during the 1960s and even more so in the 1970s, there was a notable transformation in how inner-city neighbourhoods were perceived. Pest was no exception to this trend. This era was characterised by both a chronological broadening of interest to include eclectic architecture and a spatial expansion through the designation of conservation areas, acknowledging the historical significance of the late 19th century urban fabric. This perceptual and conceptual shift, documented in both political and professional discourse, developed specialised instruments to preserve and emphasise the historicity of previously neglected neighbourhoods, thereby reinforcing local identities. Consequently, approaches to the inner city of Pest evolved under the influence of competing visions of conservation and development, which is a hallmark of historic neighbourhoods (increasingly regarded as heritage).

The dismantling of the *topos* of the "young city without historical patina", widely used from the 1920s onwards, was constructed on concepts such as townscape, urban structure, and landscape, and reinterpreted through historical-cultural factors. Historical considerations played an important role, i.e. periodisation and the reinterpretation and expansion of the notion of "the historic", which had consequences for both which styles of architecture could be protected and the scale and extent of protection generally. In the late 1970s, the theoretical construction of the "historic Pest" can also be understood as a programme of regeneration through the preservation of its building stock. This, of course, entailed the mobilisation of immeasurable economic resources, so that the discourse of vulnerability was shaped around the idea of opulence (Sonkoly, 2017, pp. 137–143; Szívós 2014, pp. 47–53).

Thus, the historicity of the inner city of Pest was created through a dynamic change of scale, with standards in relation to the international urban heritage discourse as reference points and benchmarks. Overcoming Pest's spatial and temporal discontinuity became a challenge for the city itself, which was granted a Western European-style organic continuity by means of the discursive upscaling of urban heritage. Fractures and fragmentation were dissolved in the great historical arc that transformed Pest's inner city into a periodic "city-scale production" (Granasztói, 1970, p. 126), Március 15 Square into a site of "architectural-historical continuity",[12] and, later, the Danube panorama into a site of universal value reflecting "the great periods in the history of the Hungarian capital".[13] The value that legitimised the protection was manifested on an almost invisible, metaphorical level. The narratives and conceptual constructions of the protected urban spaces negotiated the real with the symbolic, which implied the use of notions of time and space that referred to continuity. The inclusion of almost transcendental, borderless categories and shifts in scale are important aspects for interpreting the history of urban heritage in Hungary, and perhaps it can be argued, in Central Europe.

12   Meeting minutes of the Executive Committee of the Metropolitan Council of 23 June 1971, p. 81 (Budapest Metropolitan Archive).

13   UNESCO WHC. (2002, 1987). *Budapest, including the Banks of the Danube, the Buda Castle Quarter and Andrássy Avenue*. https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/400/.

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BIOGRAPHY

Gábor Oláh is a postdoctoral researcher at the Atelier Department for Interdisciplinary History at Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE), Budapest and the Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University. He holds a PhD in urban studies and history, which he completed in 2023 through the ELTE-École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS) cotutelle programme. His research focuses on urban heritage, with a particular focus on the concepts of urban landscape and neighbourhood. He has contributed to multiple EU-funded research projects, including REACH (2017–2020), UNCHARTED (2020–2024), SECreTour (2024–2027) and HerEntrep (2024–2027).

DISCURSIVE STRATEGIES, VISIONS, AND OUTCOMES IN THE TRANSFORMATION OF CROATIAN HISTORIC TOWNS, 1945–1960

Marko Špikić

Abstract

The historic towns of the People's Republic of Croatia greeted the triumph of the partisan forces in 1945 mostly with war damage and in ruins. In the first post-war years, the new political authorities at both federal and republican levels required society as a whole, and those professionals who were in charge of the preservation of historic monuments and urban planning, in particular, to make a radical turn towards the Soviet model. Croatian architects, urban planners, and conservators responded to these requests in different ways. What united them was an attempt to establish a form that could integrate multiple damaged historical environments. While a number of conservators tried to remain faithful to the heritage management traditions and theory developed in the German and Austro-Hungarian Empires at the turn of the 20th century, the practical needs of art historians – who were soon followed by architects and urban planners – demanded a turn towards reconstructions or new architectural creations. A new vocabulary of reconstruction was thus created, one that drew on the theoretical positions of Dehio, Gurlitt, Dvořák, and Riegl, but was also in accordance with the political demands of the communist elite. Visions of the future of historic buildings and sites were accompanied by doubts, debates, and polemics comparable with those taking place in other European countries, which tried to steer a course between the principle of reconstructing lost forms and the principle of substitution with new architectural works. The common point of the two interest groups was accompanied by another: the desire for social transformation. This sought not just the physical replacement of lost forms with new ones, but also the reorientation of the meaning of the reconstructed sites in line with the political purpose of re-education and the creation of a harmonious socialist society. This chapter discusses the fundamental concepts, actors, ideas, and accomplishments in the preservation and transformation of Croatian historical towns in the first fifteen post-war years.

Keywords
People's Republic of Croatia, conservation, urban planning, Post-Second World war reconstruction, historic towns

1   INTRODUCTION

An increasing number of recent studies dedicated to reconstruction after the Second World War have sought to raise new questions (such as Treccani, 2008; Nerdinger, Eisen & Strobl, 2010; Bullock & Verpoest, 2011; Stefani & Coccoli, 2011; Glendinning, 2013, pp. 235–256, 268–283; Mlikota 2021). This chapter conducts discourse analysis of the historical records, proclamations, studies, plans, and programmes of politicians, architects, urban planners,

and conservators of the People's Republic of Croatia in the first fifteen years after the Second World War. It is structured chronologically by key legal and political changes in Yugoslavia: the establishment of a new socio-political system in 1945, and the adoption of the second Constitution of the Federation and a new Law on the Protection of Cultural Monuments in 1960 (Špikić, 2022a, pp. 141–179). It should be added that this chapter will not discuss events in the wider Yugoslav context. The reason for this is not the political reality that began in the early 1990s. From the very beginning of the Yugoslav federal system, the conservation institutes of the individual republics were entrusted with autonomous management. The head of the Conservation Institute in Zagreb, Ljubo Karaman, wrote in 1950 that individual nations and regions of Yugoslavia often developed separately from each other in the past, so he considered the centralisation of institutions intended for the study of culture and historic buildings inappropriate (Karaman, 1950, p. 153). Although brief reviews of this topic were already carried out during the 1980s (Marasović, 1983, pp. 77–82), research into architectural reconstruction after the Second World War truly only began in Croatia in the last decade (Špikić & Vanjak, 2013–2014, pp. 7–24; Špikić & Raič Stojanović, 2016, pp. 83–95; Špikić, 2017, pp. 35–49; Mlikota, 2017; Špikić 2018, pp. 145–159; Špikić, 2019a, pp. 281–292; Špikić, 2019b, pp. 69–74; Špikić 2022a, pp. 141–179). This chapter is based on research in the archives of conservation institutes in Zagreb and Rijeka (which are kept in the Ministry of Culture and Media of the Republic of Croatia and the State Archives in Rijeka), as well as on systematic bibliographical research of the main post-war newspapers (*Vjesnik, Novi list, Narodni list, Slobodna Dalmacija*) and professional magazines (*Arhitektura, Čovjek i prostor* from Zagreb and *Zbornik zaštite spomenika* from Belgrade).

The aforementioned topic has not yet received the attention it deserves. Yet there is a great deal to study: Whether we are interested in how politicians discredited their predecessors or made predictions of a bright future, in the promotion of the architectural and urban visions of international modernism, or in the revision of pre-war concepts in conservation circles, prophecies, visions, and practical achievements were always preceded by written or spoken words.

Most of these words were intended for public consumption. Although they targeted different audiences, the various discourses were united by the demands of political ideology. From the rise to the fall of the communist system in Yugoslavia, this meant insisting on the political unity of previously discordant, polarised, and warring nations and on the firm integrity of the federal state. One of the aims of this chapter is, therefore, to discuss whether the political insistence on the "brotherhood and unity" of the peoples of Yugoslavia had a practical impact on the aspiration of the professionals in Croatia to "fill the voids" created by the war, in order to achieve a new integrity and harmony in historic towns and in society as a whole.

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2   DIAGNOSIS AND PROGNOSIS: PERCEPTION AND FUNCTION OF RUINS FOR COLLECTIVE MEMORY

Analysing the discourse of post-war political and professional actors seems pertinent for two reasons: The first is the need of partisan leaders to implement radical social reforms among the united Yugoslav peoples and to replace their collective trauma and memory by rhetorical means using the political "new speech." The second lies in the fact that the performance of the new historical drama was to begin within the crumbling scenography of ruined historic towns and villages.

If the state of the war-torn historic towns of Croatia is considered, especially those of Istria and Dalmatia, which lost their Italian populations, one can talk about a *Year Zero*. These towns greeted the arrival of the partisans mostly in ruins. Osijek, Slavonski Brod, Zagreb, Lepoglava, Hrvatska Kostajnica, Poreč, Pula, Rijeka, Osor, Senj, Zadar, Šibenik, Split, Makarska, and Korčula stand out as the most affected. The damage scale established in 1948 by the general director of the Administration for Antiquities and Fine Arts in Rome, Guglielmo de Angelis d'Ossat, classified individual buildings and sites as having suffered "limited damage", "major damage" or "practically complete destruction"[1] (De Angelis d'Ossat, 1957, pp. 19–20). Though Croatian conservators were unlikely to have been familiar with this scale, it readily applies to the situation they faced: The towns of Osijek, Zagreb, Osor, Šibenik, Split and Korčula belong to the first group. The second group included Lepoglava, Hrvatska Kostajnica, Poreč, Pula, Rijeka, Senj and Makarska, while the third group was represented by Slavonski Brod and Zadar. Significant individual historic buildings in these cities include the Pauline monastery in Lepoglava; the Romanesque House in Poreč; the ancient Temple of Augustus and the cathedral in Pula; the cathedrals in Osor, Senj, and Zadar; the Vukasović palace in Senj; the Venetian Loggias in Zadar and Šibenik; the Lazzaretto in Split; and the Municipal Palace in Korčula.

One of the starting points for understanding the challenges of the post-war era is to analyse how the ruins were perceived at the time. The response to the devastation left by the war was similar throughout Europe: While Carlo Ceschi noted the "brutality of the events", which caused "internal anxiety" (Ceschi, 1943, p. 2), Gustavo Giovannoni was impressed by the "terrible carnage caused by the war" (Giovannoni, 1944, p. 218), and in 1945 he wrote about the "cataclysm of war" (Giovannoni, 1945, p. 43), as did Jan Zachwatowicz a year later (Zachwatowicz, 1946, p. 52). The destruction of German towns triggered Hans Schwippert to write in 1944 about "disorder, confusion, misery, and worry" (Schwippert, 1947, p. 17). In 1945, Guglielmo de Angelis called for the restoration of the "bony stumps" of the Roman basilica of San Lorenzo *fuori le mura* (De Angelis d'Ossat, 1945, p. 44), and Ambrogio Annoni gazed at "tortured, wounded and disfigured" Milan (Annoni, 1946, p. 82). In 1946, Carlo Lodovico Ragghianti described the destroyed Florentine bridges as symbols of "damaged civilisation and humanity" (Ragghianti, 1946, p. 613). Paul Clemen spoke of "monstrous ruined places" as the fruits of an

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1   Unless otherwise stated, this and all subsequent translations from non-English-language sources are by the author.

"apocalyptic" and "demonic age" (Clemen, 1947, p. 36, p. 41), while Walter Dirks wrote about the "bitter logic" and the "rightful downfall" of Goethe's house in Frankfurt (Dirks, 1947, p. 826). In reaction to this, Italian, Polish, French, and German experts argued either to preserve the ruins and wounds as a warning, or to combine the fragments with new architecture by means of "critical restoration" (Carbonara, 1997, pp. 285–301) and "provisional architecture" (Will, 1999, pp. 59–80), or to reconstruct the historic buildings, "where they were and as they were" (*com'era e dov'era*) (Dell'Omo, 2014).

In Great Britain, *The Builder* magazine carried a front-page story as early as 1941 arguing that that war ruins should not become "the graveyard of the past" but "the cradle of the future" (N. N., 1941, p. 253). The following year, J. M. Richards wrote about the "architecture of destruction", which "possesses an aesthetic peculiar to itself" (Richards, 1947, p. 8), and in 1945 Hugh Casson asserted that the ruin is "a place with its own individuality, charged with its own emotion and atmosphere" (Casson, 1945, p. 15). Similarly, Eberhard Hempel wrote about *Ruinenschönheit* (beauty of ruins) in 1948 (Hempel, 1948, p. 76).

The attitude towards ruins in post-war Croatia was both dismissive and selective. Initial reactions were affective, including the desire for retribution, but also hope and the need for reform, which led Croat politicians, architects, and urban planners to prophetic visions. By analysing contemporary publications, we see that the ruins encouraged renunciation and the need for a new beginning, rather than the permanent commemoration of collective trauma. This can also be seen in the pictures taken from afar by photographers from the Agency for Photo Documentation such as Milan Pavić (preserved as a separate collection in the Croatian State Archives in Zagreb), who, only two or three years after the war, cautiously began to record the damage, mainly for the purpose of promoting recovery.

At the beginning of March 1945, the writer and journalist Ivo Žic visited Zadar, where only 20 percent of houses were undamaged. He saw the ruins as wounds in the souls of the survivors, who felt despondent and helpless before the collective clearing of the ruins began: "After all the horrors of war, Zadar lies before you as a seriously wounded man" (Žic, 1945, p. 3). A few weeks later, the poet and first president of the parliament of the People's Republic of Croatia, Vladimir Nazor, entered Zadar and gave a speech at a rally. He saw the town's destruction as an allegory of the fall of Austrian and Italian oppression. His closing words were symptomatic and fateful:

> It is sad to see the ruins in our country. But we, who have suffered and overcome so much, are not afraid of them. We will kiss every stone of our beloved, now demolished building and save it as a memory; and we will sweep the stones of the enemy's ruined tower from our soil and throw them into the deep sea of oblivion. We are not afraid of the ruins and voids created as a result of the war; what was destroyed to us, we will rebuild; what is empty, we will fill again. On the place of the fascist, now destroyed Zadar, a new, purely Croatian Zadar will be built. (Nazor, 1945, p. 3)

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FIGURE 1   Tipping rubble into the sea, Zadar. (Photo: Ratko Novak, 1945, Zadar Scientific Library, Photo collection, 1642, CC BY-NC-ND)

The ruins of other towns were described in newspaper reports, accompanied by the numbers of workers employed, days spent, cubic meters of rubble removed, and sometimes by photographs (Figure 1). In June 1945, the architect and urban planner Milovan Kovačević (1945, p. 3) observed that "from the pile of ruins of old and unhygienic houses and monstrous fascist buildings, completely undamaged historic monuments and buildings of our national past protrude." Since the town was almost entirely destroyed by bombing, he advocated the construction of a "new Zadar, which will be connected to the past with the remaining historic monuments and buildings" (Kovačević, 1945, p. 3). Two weeks later, the Minister of Construction, Stanko Čanica Opačić, spoke more generally, announcing to radio listeners: "With united forces, barehanded, we defeated the enemy; with united forces we will also remove the ruins" (Čanica Opačić, 1945, p. 3).

One could therefore argue that, as in other countries and their historic towns, *Enttrümmerung* (debris removal) represented one of the primary postwar tasks. This complex procedure was carried out in Europe with different intentions and results. The rarest case was the conservation of the state of destruction (as in the case of Dresden's Frauenkirche); the second was clearing the most important historic monuments of collapsed material, and the third the complete removal of the ruins. In Croatia, the propagation of civic fervour for clearing the rubble initially prevented any discussion of the tragic symbolism of the ruins. This may explain why, apart from examples in Poreč and Šibenik, there was no systematic and publicly promoted mapping of war damage in Croatia. It does not mean that thousands of workers callously demolished the last remnants of the bombarded towns. As in the Soviet Occupation Zone of Germany (most significantly in Dresden, Magdeburg, and

FIGURE 2   Removal of ruins in Zadar, 1945. (Photo: Ratko Novak, 1945, Scientific Library Zadar, Photo collection, 1636, CC BY-NC-ND)

Rostock), individual buildings among the ruins were recognised as national monuments, thus forming *Traditionsinseln* (islands of tradition) (Paul, 1992, pp. 313–333; Berger, 1992, pp. 299–312; Hohn, 1992, pp. 117–137). For conservators, these represented oases of artistic and commemorative value. Depending on the decisions of the city administrators, for the modernist planners they became reference points for considering tolerance, adaptation, symbiosis, distance, competition, and contrast.

As can be seen in Nazor's speech, the perception of ruins was accompanied by an appeal to the public to renounce the specific symbols of the past and a chiliastic turn to the future. Both aspirations had practical consequences. For instance, entire war-damaged blocks of Zadar, Šibenik, Senj, Pula, and Poreč were removed. One of the earliest incentives to renounce the past can be found in the speech Marshal Josip Broz Tito gave in Zagreb on 21 May 1945. Emphasising that the Yugoslav peoples "are at a great historical turning point in the unification of the Slavs in the Balkans", he added: "Enough with everything that used to be! Now there is new Yugoslavia, and the sacrifices made for it were necessary, they are sacred, they will be remembered for thousands of years by our future generations" (Tito, 1959-I, p. 270). Soon after Nazor's and Tito's speeches, the removal of ruins began to take place in practice, especially in badly damaged Zadar (Figure 2).

Tito expressed a more explicit assessment of history, and implicitly of cultural heritage, in November 1947, when he became honorary member of the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts in Zagreb. On that occasion, he asserted that "our history" is not "accurate", for it was falsified by the ruling classes, cliques, and individuals. He then called on Yugoslavs "to work tirelessly to remove the veil from our history, to find the truth", and

"to clean our history of all falsifications and unnecessary admixtures" (Tito, 1959-III, pp. 208, 213). On 3 November 1952, at the 6th Congress of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in Zagreb, Tito created a dichotomy between "outdated understandings" and "positive cultural achievements from the past". Consequently, he offered a synthesis:

> Our socialist culture builds precisely on these positive achievements, refining them with the scientific achievements of Marxism in the field of social development. We just have to reject what does not belong in the new social system, what had to die with the old social system, what hinders further development (Tito, 1959-VII, p. 278).

The new communist authorities thus found themselves among the ruins of historic towns, in looted villages, museums, and sacral monuments. For them, the entire cultural landscape of Istria was *terra incognita*, where the historical and cultural existence of the Slavs had yet to be proven. Their view of the past was initially guided by the dogmatism of the Stalinist USSR and, after the break with Stalin in 1948, by selective commemoration (rejection, removal, clearing) and aspirations for integration. After the war, tangible symbols of the past were fragmented, unrecognised, uncomfortable, or unacceptable.

3   AESTHETICS OF INTEGRITY IN THE RECONSTRUCTION
        OF CROATIAN HISTORIC TOWNS

The discursive strategies of post-war Croatian conservators and urban planners were implicitly influenced by Tito's request to "clear our history of all falsifications and unnecessary admixtures" (Tito, 1959-III, pp. 208, 213). Before discussing the concepts of addition and reintegration, it is necessary to say something about the post-war use of the concepts of destruction and demolition. These originate in William Morris's *Manifesto of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings* (SPAB, 1877) and Gustavo Giovannoni's publication *Roman Split* (Giovannoni, 1942, p. 12) and were known to Croatian conservators. Reflection on the relationship between the Croatian people and the heritage of Istria and Dalmatia can be observed in the work of art historian and director of the Conservation Institute for Dalmatia Cvito Fisković (1908–1996). Before the Second World War he started to evaluate the contributions of "native masters", meaning Slavic artists, and to oppose Adolfo Venturi's, Giacomo Boni's, and Pericle Ducati's claims about the *romanità*, *venezianità*, and *italianità* of the Dalmatian historic monuments (Špikić, 2022b, pp. 137–151). It inspired him to transpose his archival discoveries into practical conservation work. Under his leadership, immediately after the war the removal of "parasitic additions" (*parasitske nadogradnje*) to Diocletian's Palace was carried out in Split (Fisković, 1946, p. 3), more radically than Giovannoni envisaged (Giovannoni, 1942, pp. 10–12), and contrary to Alois Riegl's request to "preserve the interests" of mediaeval and modern additions to the late antique Palace (Riegl, 1903, p. 334).

Already in 1945, Fisković published a study on the destruction of Dalmatian cultural heritage by the Nazi and Fascist occupiers (Fisković, 1945), and in 1947 he wrote about the work of "our" builders and stonemasons. Here he pointed out that in "the development of art […] the work of foreign, mostly Italian artists is very often highlighted, while the persistent, sweeping work of domestic workshops has not been sufficiently investigated […]." And further: "However, archival research of historical data about these monuments

FIGURE 3   Diocletian's Palace in Split, Removal of the "Venetian Wall" at the Silver Gate, 1945. (Photo: Unknown photographer, Ministry of Culture and Media, Archive of the Conservation Office in Split. Inv. number 3430, 515, CC BY-NC-ND)

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convinces us more and more that our masters played an initially imperceptible, but essentially important role in the spread of art on the Adriatic." (Fisković, 1947, p. 3)

In November 1945, Fisković held a lecture on *Urbanism and old monuments*, calling for the preservation but also for the adaptation of historic monuments to "new requirements". In his words, "Where there are monuments, they should be highlighted in such a way that their place is foreseen in the regulatory plan. Where they are compacted or suppressed by new buildings, the monuments should be liberated or cleared" (Fisković, 1946, p. 6). Fisković thus followed up on Kovačević's views from the summer of 1945, although their focus was on the treatment of individual historic monuments, not their surroundings.

Immediately after the war, under Fisković's guidance, the "isolation" (*Freilegung, dégagement,* or *isolamento* in older conservation tradition) of the late classical Silver (Eastern) Gate of Diocletian's Palace was carried out by removing the "Venetian wall", demolishing the ruins of the nearby Church of Good Death, and partially reconstructing the ancient gate (Fisković, 1946, p. 3) (Figure 3).

FIGURE 4   Removal of buildings attached to the Northern side of Diocletian's Palace in Split. (Photo ©unknown creator, Croatian State Archives, HR-HDA 1422, Photo fund of the Agency for Photo Documentation (AGEFO-TO), Album 61, O-2614, CC BY-NC-ND)

Fisković also contributed to the demolition of the Lazzaretto on the Split waterfront, which "obscured the view to the southeast part of the Palace". Along the northern side of the Palace (Figure 4), the demolition of "the tattered and tasteless complex of the former military hospital" was carried out, so that "with the demolition of the other houses to the east, the northern wall of the Palace became almost entirely visible" (Fisković, 1950, pp. 166–167). Fisković defended his actions on aesthetic grounds. In Italy, his contemporaries and promoters of "critical restoration", Roberto Pane and Renato Bonelli, pursued similar goals, but with a truly aesthetic rather than an implicit ideological motive. Revising the principles of the pre-war Restoration Norms of 1931 and using their professional authority, they called for the substitution of the documentary with the "genuine artistic" value of the damaged historic buildings (Pane, 1944, p. 71; Bonelli, 1947, p. 3).

One of the most prominent examples of harmonious integration can be found in Šibenik. Opposite the Renaissance cathedral, a large void in the centre of the city had been left by the bombing of 1944 and the subsequent removal of the remains of the Venetian Loggia. Thanks to Fisković's persistence, the

Renaissance building was not replaced by a modernist one. In 1949, the architect Harold Bilinić, who was in charge of the work, published an article about the reconstruction of the Loggia. It was promoted in order to reinstate the "peaceful and aesthetic appearance of the whole" (Bilinić, 1949, p. 30). The reconstruction of the building (without the original Venetian inscriptions on the facade) was supposed to serve as a source of pride for posterity, arousing aesthetic feelings and encouraging further creative work (Bilinić, 1949, 32). The example of the Šibenik Loggia (Figure 5) stands out because the reconstruction of an individual historic monument became the reconstruction of the ensemble, which in this way regained integrity and the desired harmony. After 1945, Bilinić proved himself as one of the main promoters of the reconstruction principle with his projects for the cathedral in Senj (Perčić, 1950, p. 190; Perc, 1950, pp. 66–68) and the Venetian Loggia in Zadar (Mlikota, 2021, pp. 190–193).

The other perspective was offered by the modernist architects who, until the late 1950s, planned industrial complexes and residential districts for the growing proletariat, mostly outside the historic town centres. As sources testify, conservators and architects recognised the value of the "protruding" historic monuments (Kovačević, 1945, p. 3) that helped shape the "islands of tradition". Thus, in Poreč, Senj, Zadar, Šibenik, and Split, the better-preserved historic monuments surrounded by ruins should have become beacons, that is, correctives that could guide urban planning. Although Milovan Kovačević did not take it into account in the first regulatory plan for a thorough urban transformation of the damaged Zadar in 1946, prepared with Božidar Rašica and Josip Seissel, he later wrote that "when erecting new buildings in the old part of the town, care should be taken of the old monuments so that they are harmoniously connected with

FIGURE 5   The Loggia in Šibenik, April, 1952. (Photo: Milan Pavić, Croatian State Archives, HR-HDA 1422, Photo fund of the Agency for Photo Documentation (AGEFOTO), Album 112, E 284, 2, CC BY-NC-ND)

and adapted to them." This required that the new buildings "create a certain integrity and harmony by their external forms and volume" (Kovačević, 1945, p. 3; Kisić, 2023, pp. 537–546). Similarly, Rašica wrote in July 1945:

> [The] architect will have to take care of the existing monuments, and to plan the regulation of that part of the city in such a way as to adapt it as best as possible to them. New Zadar, in that part, should be shaped with free-standing buildings, which will create harmonious wholes with cultural and historic monuments. (Rašica, 1945, p. 3)

This did not imply submission and mimicry, but "honest modernist expression". Valid design and planning meant "mutual tolerance and complementation". While Kovačević died in 1946 and did not see the implementation of the plan to reconstruct Zadar, Rašica became one of the main actors in that process, designing several new buildings. He was accompanied by architects Alfred Albini, Juraj Denzler, Srebrenka Gvozdanović, Mladen Kauzlarić, Bruno Milić, Neven Šegvić (Figure 6), and Ivan Vitić (Mlikota, 2017, pp. 49–93).

In addition to designing and planning, Vitić was part of the discussions that had already begun at an urban planning seminar held in liberated Šibenik in 1944 and continued in newspapers and the first professional journals, which began to be published in Croatia in the late 1940s. In 1950, in his native Šibenik, Vitić installed a public school on the site of a demolished building (Figure 7), combining the remains of the historic building with the school's geometric forms (Vitić, 1950, pp. 24–28). While Fisković wrote that "conservators protect ensembles made up of different styles and therefore must enable the construction of modern buildings that are, naturally, harmonised with existing frameworks" (Fisković, 1950, p. 179), Vitić delivered a paper entitled *On Reconstructions* at a meeting of architects and urban planners in Dubrovnik, held in 1950. His understanding of the term differed from that of the conservators. He was aware that "the people's authorities pay great attention to the preservation of historical values", but maintained that "the
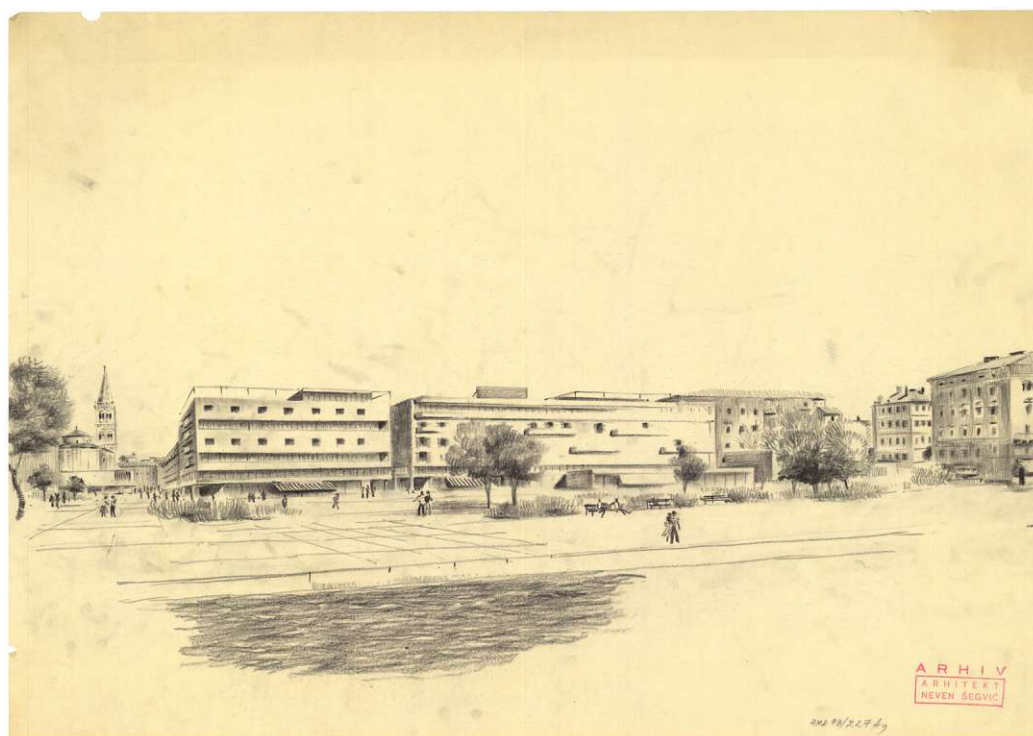
FIGURE 6   Tender project for new buildings in the centre of Zadar by Neven Šegvić. (From Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Croatian Museum of Architecture, Personal archival fonds of Neven Šegvić, HMA 98/227-A9, 1955, CC BY-NC-ND)

FIGURE 7   Simo Matavulj Elementary School in Šibenik by Ivan Vitić, around 1953. (Photo: Jerko Bilać, Croatian State Archives, HR-HDA 1422, Photo fund of the Agency for Photo Documentation (AGEFOTO), Album 149, F 428, 37, CC BY-NC-ND)

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needs of life often cannot eliminate the need for construction in these areas" (Vitić, 1950, pp. 45–46). He distinguished three approaches: faithful reconstruction of lost forms (Šibenik Loggia), reconstruction of an object or block using a modern plan and construction methods (the adaptation of the monastery of St. Mary in Zadar), and construction using contemporary methods and incorporating elements of a former structure (school in Šibenik) (Vitić, 1950, pp. 46–48).

Writing about the first approach, Vitić agreed with the views of his contemporaries on reconstruction: "Such a method comes into consideration for buildings that are too damaged, […] and it is necessary for the purpose of

architecturally rounding the space into a unique whole." In order to achieve unity and completeness, the new parts had to be subordinated to the historical environment, and not to act intrusively (Vitić, 1950, p. 48). Although in his paper he sought the cooperation of architects and conservators (mostly art historians), his newly created, modernist architectural accents (representing the third approach) in the old parts of Šibenik, Zadar, and Zagreb provoked controversy and condemnation, primarily from art historians.

A year later, Serbian architect and urban planner Nikola Dobrović published an article on urban development issues relating to the conservation of historic monuments. Instead of seeing a collision between old and new, he wrote about "harmonising various elements" and "the sublime harmonisation of spatial forms" (Dobrović, 1951, p. 32). The old and new parts of the town had to be united in symbiosis. While the new architecture was promoted as "added value", reconstruction of the lost historic monuments (for example, the Loggia in Šibenik) was understood as a deception presented to the public. For Dobrović, therefore, new architectural forms could help to achieve general harmony and balance between different stylistic expressions (Dobrović, 1951, p. 33).

As can be seen, what the two professional groups have in common, despite often being opposed, is the vocabulary used to discuss the reconstruction of damaged historic towns. Members of both groups frequently deployed such concepts as "connection", "adaptation", "harmony", "unity", "balance", "whole", and "integrity" – both while reconstructing damaged historic buildings and when inserting new architectural forms on the sites of destroyed buildings. These same vocabularies were used generally in conservations, architectural projects, and urban planning in Zadar, Šibenik, and Split.

Similar terms were used by other European experts in the field of that time. Even before the end of the war, Ceschi wrote about filling the voids of bombarded Genoa "so as not to disturb the harmony of a certain order" and "not to change the physiognomy of the structure formed by tradition" (Ceschi, 1943, p. 5). Harmony, balance and *ambiente* are also found in other texts by Italian writers of that era, regardless of whether they pursued harmonisation through reconstruction (Giovannoni, de Angelis D'Ossat, Bernard Berenson, Alfredo Barbacci, Ferdinando Forlati, Piero Gazzola) or via the introduction of new elements (Pane, Bonelli, Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli, Gillo Dorfles, Bruno Zevi, Liliana Grassi).

Pre-war views on historic buildings and their surroundings survive in Dagobert Frey's 1947 reflections on the problem of urban reconstruction of Vienna. The influence of Austrian conservation theory in Croatia dates back to the Habsburg Monarchy. It continued after 1945, as can be seen in the continued acquisition of publications from Austria, which can be found in the library of the Conservation Institute in Zagreb (now in the Ministry of Culture and Media). After the completion of the work of the demolition squads in Vienna, the "important architectural monuments" had to be saved from further deterioration, and they were perceived by Frey as individual objects of value that were important for the conception or reconstruction of the whole. However, cases of "extensive destruction" posed the problem of what to do when demolishing entire blocks, and this resulted in the introduction of the principles of *Neuplanung* (new planning) and thus the removal of "errors and

shortcomings" in planning, conservation, and traffic-engineering in the former urban development. Frey saw the war's destruction as a "turning point in European urban planning" (Frey 1947, p. 3). Nevertheless, remaining faithful to the ideas of his mentor Max Dvořák, he conceived the city as a "living organism", that had to be treated as a "totality", or "whole" (and frequently deploying words such as *Gesamtentwicklung*, *Gesamtstruktur*, *Gesamtbild*, *Gesamtkomposition*, *Gesamtcharakter*). In 1947, Paul Clemen recalled the discussions of the 1905 *Tag für Denkmalpflege* (Heritage Conservation Conference) in Bamberg on the relationship between the care of historic monuments and modern art. He saw the success of the post-war "continuation" of construction and the achievement of "a rhythmic connection" with "the language, the characteristic dialect of the historical world" in the inclusion of "great artistic talents" (Clemen, 1947, pp. 42–43). Therefore, Clemen saw the basis of reconstructing the lost integrity in the discursive connection with the "language" of the forms of the destroyed historic monuments.

Similar aspirations can be seen in the discussions held at the Conference of Yugoslav Conservators in Split in 1953. It brought together experts from six Yugoslav republics, in which diverse organisational systems had been developed. The main topics included discussions on the preservation of immovable and movable historic monuments, on the legal and organisational issues of monument protection, as well as discussions on the preservation of monuments to the memory of the Second World War (known as the National Liberation War). On that occasion, art historian, conservator, and university professor Milan Prelog called for the revision of the conservation principles of Gurlitt, Riegl, and Dvořák, just as Renato Bonelli did in the same year in relation to Giovannoni's "scientific restoration" (Prelog, 1953–54; Bonelli 1959, pp. 41–58). Prelog was prompted to do so by "the question of the treatment of the severe wounds inflicted by modern weapons to the inventory of historic monuments", so it was necessary to revise some "dogmatic postulates that arose from those strict conservation principles" (Prelog, 1953–54, p. 33). When it came to harmonising new buildings within a historic environment, Prelog preferred the opening of green areas at the site of destruction rather than the risk of building "an unsightly improvised construction" (Prelog, 1953–54, p. 41). However, in historic towns, which then became one of his research topics, he agreed to the principle of "closing the cavity between two older parts" by inserting new buildings. While in Poreč, to which he dedicated a monograph (Prelog, 1957), the problem of closing the cavities had not yet been solved, in Šibenik both Bilinić's reconstruction of the Renaissance Loggia and Vitić's modernist school from his point of view represented acceptable solutions (Prelog, 1953–54, p. 43).

In the general conclusions of the Split conference, the conservators agreed that historic buildings should be seen as "unique organic entities". It was necessary to take care of their "integrity", which was to be achieved by "removing recent, unprofessional and unaesthetic deformations" or by new architectural interventions. Until then, an agreement was reached that historic buildings from every period were "in principle equal", but every conservation intervention had to be adapted to the "unique integrity of the object" (N. N., 1953–54, p. 115).

4 PRACTICAL ACHIEVEMENTS AND INTERNATIONAL PROMOTION

In addition to the removal of "unacceptable additions", Nazor's concept of "filling the void" in terms of conservation and urban planning was implement in a variety of ways in the years up to 1960. This chapter shows that five ways of dealing with historic monuments can be distinguished in the post-war context up to the 1960s: first, by restoring and reconstructing historic buildings in the destroyed centres (the Romanesque house in Poreč, the Temple of Augustus in Pula, the facade of the cathedral in Osor, the Vukasović Palace and Cathedral in Senj, the Venetian Loggias in Zadar and Šibenik); second, by creating open, green zones on the sites of bombed blocks and districts (parks in Poreč, Pula, Šibenik, and Split); third, by introducing modern architecture on the site of demolished buildings (projects by Kazimir Ostrogović in Pula (Figure 8) and Rijeka, Ivan Vitić in Zadar (Figure 9) and Šibenik, Neven Šegvić in Trogir and Split); fourth, by substituting entire blocks with modernist planning (Zadar, Senj, Slavonski Brod), and fifth, by urban expansion on previously undeveloped areas building new residential blocks (in Osijek, Zagreb, Rijeka, Zadar, Šibenik and Split) at a distance from the old towns but with the potential to affect the overall character of the town (*Stadtbild*). These different types of intervention were carried out simultaneously, often causing collisions between the old and the new, and leading to conflict among conservators and modernist architects and planners.

FIGURE 8　　The Waterfront in Pula with the residential building by Kazimir Ostrogović on the site of the demolished part of the tobacco factory building. (Photo: Drago Rendulić, Croatian State Archives, HR-HDA 1422, Photo fund of the Agency for Photo Documentation (AGEFOTO), Album 77, R 198, 27, CC BY-NC-ND)
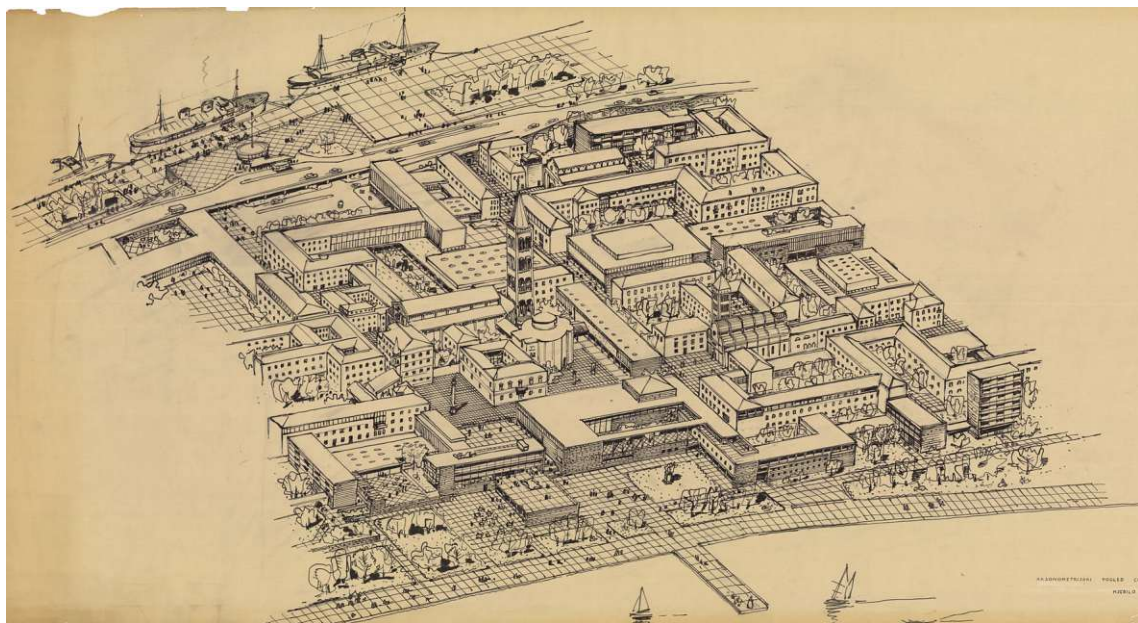
FIGURE 9   Plan of Zadar, tender project by Ivan Vitić. (From Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Croatian Museum of Architecture, Personal archival fonds of Ivan Vitić, 1955, CC BY-NC-ND)

By the end of the 1950s, conservators, architects, and urban planners had carried out a number of projects and plans with the aim of integrating the fragmented and ruined ensembles. They include reconstructions of individual historic monuments, the construction of residential blocks and industrial complexes next to centres of Split and Šibenik, and the increased activities of the Urban Planning Institute of Croatia in Zagreb and Urban Planning Bureau in Split. By 1960, Zadar had been gradually rebuilt on the basis of a plan from the mid-1950s (Figure 9). In Senj, reconstructions and adaptations of destroyed historic monuments were carried out and new structures were inserted into the core. And in the centres of Poreč and Pula, green areas were arranged on the site of war ruins. From the second half of the 1950s, the increasing presence of modernist architecture was felt in the city panoramas with the construction of the first skyscrapers, which caused indignation and led to protests both by Roberto Pane in Naples (Pane, 1959, pp. 76–77) and Croatian art historians.

When Yugoslavia began to liberalise in the late 1950s and "cultural workers" were allowed to travel more widely abroad, the European conservation movement was ripe for global expansion. Italian experts played an important role in this process. Before the gathering of architects and specialists in charge of historic monuments in Venice in 1964, Pane and his colleagues organised a conference on the relevance of the monument and the ancient environment for contemporary urban planning at the Milan Triennale in 1957 (Perogalli, 1958). Five Yugoslav architects and urban planners were invited to the conference. Following a period of tense political relations between Italy and Yugoslavia in the immediate post-war period, this was the first opportunity for an exchange of experiences. As the minutes of the discussions in the book published in 1958 show, the presentations made by the Yugoslav

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conservators did not instigate significant discussion. Three speakers from the People's Republic of Croatia reported on the problems of revitalising historic ensembles. While Zdenko Sila discussed the problems of preserving the historic towns of Istria and Quarnero, which had been damaged in the war and had experienced population replacement (Sila, 1958, pp. 131–142), and Tomislav Marasović presented the results of archaeological excavations and the revitalisation of Diocletian's Palace in Split (Marasović, 1958, pp. 83–90), Bruno Milić discussed the practical problems of assessing the destroyed town of Zadar as part of the plan for development and reconstruction (Milić, 1958, pp. 61–68). Their papers emphasised the need to continue pre-war conservation principles (care of urban ensembles), to revise these principles by establishing new paradigms (isolating and adapting historic monuments to contemporary life, which became Marasović's paradigm of "active approach" (Marasović 1985), and to discuss the (dialectical) relationship between the conservation of historic buildings and modernist urban planning.

5   REACTIONS TO POST-WAR ARCHITECTURAL DESIGNS AND URBAN PLANNING

From individual buildings to entire urban complexes, in the first fifteen post-war years, conservators, architects, and urban planners helped to transform Croatia's old towns into vibrant industrial, cultural, scientific, and tourism centres. At the same time, lively debates and polemics were conducted, which could be followed in daily newspapers and professional magazines, such as *Arhitektura* and *Čovjek i prostor*, which were published in Zagreb from the late 1940s and early 50s, respectively.

At the end of the fifties, the art historian and university professor Grgo Gamulin started publishing critical reviews about modernist architecture in historic towns. He criticised functionalists and advocated the principles of Wright's and Aalto's organic architecture, also foregrounding projects by Paul Maymont, Walter Jonas, Bruce Goff, and Juan Antonio Tonda Magallón. Sensitised to the values of traditional landscapes, Gamulin was concerned about the effects of industrialisation and urbanisation, as well as the sudden expansion of tourism on the Adriatic coast. In 1967, he collected 27 reviews and published them in the book *Architecture in the Region*. Like Clemen in 1947, he wrote in April 1961 that the imperatives of his time were "to preserve and to continue" (Gamulin, 1967, p. 63). Gamulin believed that most contemporary architects could not fulfil any of these requirements. In his eyes, the continuity of construction, as determined by the relevant historical context, on the soil of post-war Croatia was mostly a failure.

Although he closely followed developments in global architecture, lecturing on the topic at the Department of Art History at the University of Zagreb around 1960, Gamulin retained convictions similar to those of Giovannoni in his defence of old ensembles. When considering the problem of encroaching on the existing urban ensemble, he asked architects to adapt to the "body and face of the town", to develop a "sense of continuity", in order to avoid "misunderstandings" and "injuries". In 1961, he wrote about Vitić's

architecture in Šibenik as a "violent imposition and destruction of urban integrity", as a "complete atrophy of artistic sensibility for everything that is not me", and "urban vandalism" (Gamulin, 1967, p. 46). He diagnosed injuries, collisions, morphological caesura, fatal mistakes, astonishingly poor invention, unbearable contrasts. In his own words:

> The barbarians are at work! Civilised, supplied with *Architectural Forum* and *Architecture d'aujourd'hui* […] Or are they, perhaps, just iconoclasts, fanatics of some new (technical) puritanism? Anyway, their fanaticism should be countered by the great principle of every culture, which is still alive: the principle of the sanctity of the environment. (Gamulin, 1967, p. 60)

Gamulin's texts are an indicator of the liberalisation of the country. Since the 1950s, texts pointing to problems and failures had regularly appeared in newspapers and magazines. This enabled the creation of a community of art and architecture critics, with contributions from Darko Venturini, Zdenko Kolacio, Ivo Maroević, Radovan Ivančević, and Žarko Domljan. Newly-established professional magazines, such as *Arhitektura* and *Čovjek i prostor*, therefore did not serve as propaganda tools, but were filled with scepticism and polemics.

6   CONCLUSIONS

Conservation, architecture, and urban planning activities in the Republic of Croatia in the first fifteen post-war years were coloured by both political ideology and the professional aspiration to secure the physical cohesion of damaged buildings and sites. After the horrors of war and facing the ruins, almost everyone involved reacted in two ways, whether in text or image: by calling much of Croatia's legacy and history into question, and by predicting the future. The wounded "bodies" of monuments and historic cities were treated in line with an ideologised holistic ideal. With the exception of the village of Lipa near Rijeka, where, similarly to Oradour-sur-Glane, the ruins were preserved in memory of the crimes of the retreating Wehrmacht and collaborationist troops, in post-war Croatia the ruins did not receive the protected status they received in England (memorials) and West Germany (*Mahnmale*). The perception of the ruins and the commemoration of the events depended on the position and role of individual countries in the global conflict. In the early years, the views of experts were undoubtedly influenced by the ubiquitous socio-political demands for reconstruction and reform. With the advent of liberalisation in the second half of the 1950s, the general tendency to integrate fragments and voids became a key part of the conservation and urban planning process, now as an aesthetic requirement.

The conservators responded to the political demand for the removal of unacceptable admixtures and the discovery of the historical truth by removing individual elements and entire blocks that "obscured the view" of key national monuments. Architects and urban planners responded to the equally important socio-political demand for the revitalisation of historic towns, writing since 1945 about the need to connect the preserved, protruding remnants of the past with new buildings, thus symbolising the new hope of Yugoslav citizens.

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BIOGRAPHY

Marko Špikić graduated in art history and comparative literature at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb. Since 1999, he has been employed at the Department of Art History, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb. His fields of interest include history and theory of architectural conservation in Europe and Croatia, history of antiquarian studies, and architectural reconstruction in Europe. As editor and author, he has published fifteen books and numerous articles in scientific journals. Since 2018, he has served as Vice-Chairman of the Croatian Association of Art Historians (DPUH). From 2011 to 2016, he was chairman of the Croatian ICOMOS NC. Since 2013, he has been a member of the ICOMOS International scientific Committee *Theophilos* on the theory and philosophy of conservation and restoration, serving between 2018 and 2024 as vice president. Since 2019, he has been a member of the association *Arbeits-kreis Theorie und Lehre der Denkmalpflege*.

URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND THE POLITICS OF HISTORY. HISTORIC DISTRICTS AS OBJECTS OF CONSERVATION IN SOCIALIST POLAND (1945–1980)

Mikołaj Getka-Kenig

Abstract

The history of conservation in post-war Poland was characterised by a number of spectacular undertakings in the field of rebuilding and restoring historic districts. The social and economic factors that enabled such large-scale interventions provided the socialist state with an opportunity to shape a more general vision of local and national history. Historic districts provide important material testimony of not only urban history but also its social, economic, political, and cultural contexts. Architectural and urban modifications in such specific spaces influenced the way in which the past was (or was expected to be) seen at that time, with the intention of explaining and justifying the present, namely socialist rule in Poland. Although the socialist regime was based on an ideology of progress and revolution, it also apparently needed to be grounded in history to secure its legitimacy. This was also consistent with the fundamental assumption of Marxist philosophy of history, according to which socialism was the result of a centuries-old teleological historical process. This chapter analyses various examples of interventions in Poland's urban heritage between the late 1940s and the 1970s. In particular, it shows how the development of the state's policy towards historic districts (and thus also the changing character of the interventions) reflected the political evolution of the socialist regime itself. The chapter is divided into three sections, aside from the introduction and the conclusion. The first is dedicated to the pre-war situation, the second part focuses on reconstructions of historic districts in Warsaw, Gdańsk, and Poznań, while the third section deals with the restoration of preserved historic districts in Kraków, Toruń, and Sandomierz.

Keywords

Historic district, urban history, politics of history, socialist realism, modernism, Polish People's Republic

1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter argues that the conservation of historic districts in post-war socialist Poland was an instrument of the regime's politics of history. The term "politics of history" as used in this chapter refers to the practice of controlling and organising the collective vision of the (often very distant) past by the state at both central and regional (or local) levels. According to the Polish political scientist, Rafał Chwedoruk, the politics of history has many uses, including the legitimisation of political power, the creation of communal identity, and social integration (Chwedoruk, 2018, p. 327). Architectural monuments are

conveyers of historical meanings. Therefore, their public protection (as much as their intentional destruction) is not neutral from the perspective of the politics of history. This is also the case for historic districts. They provide important testimony not only of urban history but also of its social, economic, political, and cultural contexts. In the history of conservation in Poland, the period between the late 1940s and the 1970s was characterised by a number of spectacular efforts of post-war reconstruction and restoration of historic districts. The legitimacy of socialist regimes was founded primarily on criticism of capitalist socio-economic relations, which were expected to be changed through large-scale modernisation projects such as industrialisation, secularisation, property redistribution, and nationalisation. However, the cultural and built heritage of previous centuries also proved to be an important area of interest for the socialist authorities, since their popular legitimacy apparently required some degree of historical grounding. This was also consistent with the fundamental assumption of the Marxist philosophy of history, according to which socialism was the result of a centuries-old teleological historical process (a general discussion of the attitude of socialist regimes towards the past was provided by Geering & Vickers, 2022, pp. 4–10; Geering, 2022, pp. 223–228). This chapter therefore pays special attention to historic districts because of their specific status as (collective) monuments, bringing together a range of architectural and non-architectural components to form a more or less coherent, historically significant whole.

This chapter does not attempt to outline the general history of the socialist state's conservation policy towards historic districts but is an analysis of this specific aspect of policy. Methodologically, it combines political history with critical heritage studies, paying attention to the phenomenon of the ideologically motivated "creation" of heritage through its reconstruction or renovation. My study is inspired primarily by two monographs written in Polish: *Ideologia i konserwacja. Architektura zabytkowa w Polsce w czasach socrealizmu* (Ideology and Conservation. Historic architecture in Poland in the times of socialist realism) by historian Piotr Majewski (2009), and *Odbudowa Głównego Miasta w Gdansku w latach 1945–1960* (Reconstruction of the Main City in Gdańsk in the years 1945–1960) by art historian Jacek Friedrich (2015). Majewski was the first to highlight (mainly through extensive source quotations) the scope of political involvement of the highest socialist authorities in the reconstruction of Warsaw's monuments (including Old Town). For his part, Friedrich was the first to explore the ideological dimension of the architectural and artistic design of the rebuilt Main Town (or Main City) in Gdańsk, as well as the symbolic role of modernist architecture's incorporation into this space in the last phase of the reconstruction process.

In my contribution, I compare the above-mentioned cases of Warsaw and Gdańsk with other characteristic examples of districts whose rebuilding or renovation served the socialist politics of history. The cases I have chosen to focus on reveal various aspects of the problem under examination and represent different ways in which the state has used historic districts to create visions of the past through architecture and urban planning at various levels of state administration. The chapter consists of three sections, apart from the introduction and the conclusion. The first concerns the pre-war (pre-socialist)

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period. It was then that the idea of bringing historic districts (and not only individual monuments) under the protection of the state emerged. However, the authorities' actions in this field were very limited, mainly for socio-economic reasons (apparently due to the primacy of private property, limiting the state's freedom to shape urban space). The chapter aims primarily to prove how drastically the situation changed after the war.

The following two sections are devoted to the analysis of specific examples of interventions aimed at reframing the urban past in accordance with the post-war regime's needs. The second part concerns cases of reconstruction of historic districts that occurred mainly during the Stalinist period (late 1940s to mid-50s). This was also the period of the official ideology of socialist realism that legitimised the practice of historically informed rebuilding of destroyed cities. The reconstruction of Old Town in Warsaw and its environs is an example of how the socialist authorities treated the rebuilt heritage as a symbolic illustration of the genealogy of socialist urban planning. The development of Main Town and Old Town in Gdańsk draws our attention to the problem of harnessing urban planning in the service of the Polonisation of former German areas (incorporated into Poland after the war, but with a long record of belonging to the Polish state in the distant past). In turn, Old Town in Poznań is an example of how, through relatively small but conspicuous interventions in a historically informed reconstructed space, it was possible to emphasise the connection between heritage and modernity in post-Stalinist realities.

The third and final section presents ideologically motivated examples of the renovation of historic districts that survived the war without large-scale architectural losses. During the first post-war decade, the government focused on the rebuilding of destroyed cities; it therefore paid little attention to the maintenance of such areas. However, the situation changed in the late 1950s, when rising appreciation of the preserved heritage coincided with the fall of the Stalinist regime and the state's retreat from the ideology of socialist realism. However, this period saw new opportunities emerge within the socialist politics of history, which was still an important source of legitimacy for the government. This was manifested most clearly in the celebrations of the millennium of the Polish state between 1959 and 1966, which provided the incentive for many renovation programmes of historic districts. I discuss the case of Old Town in Krakow, whose restoration started in the 1960s, apparently motivated by the regime's longing for international recognition in the post-Stalinist period. By contrast, the conservation of Old Town in Toruń was a post-Stalinist example of the longstanding fight against German heritage. Finally, the case of Old Town in provincial Sandomierz shows how it was possible to "improve" not only local but also national history through minor alterations of the town's historic space.

2   THE PRE-SOCIALIST SITUATION

The conservation and revitalisation of historic districts emerged as key elements of the Polish state's conservation policy only in the aftermath of the Second World War, the end of which also led to the rise of the socialist regime. Before 1939, Poland's public policies on the conservation of monuments were focused mainly on individual buildings. It is true, however, that in the interwar period, many conservators, art historians, and architects started to look at monuments from a broader urban perspective, building the foundations from which the post-war theory and practice of conservation would evolve (the so-called Polish School of Monument Conservation). Some of them, like conservator Jan Zachwatowicz and art historian Stanisław Lorentz, were also able to play leading roles in this post-war development (Dettloff, 2006, pp.130–140). However, their emerging concern for this kind of approach had a rather limited impact on the actions of the state – both the central government and local authorities.

The monument protection ordinance of 1928, issued by Poland's president addressed this topic to a very limited extent, taking into account only "the preserved urban layouts of old cities and old town districts"[1] as subjects of protection (Dziennik Ustaw, 1928, p. 538). Although the term "old town district" occurred here, it was used only once and was not defined. Only in 1936 did the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Enlightenment issue instructions for the "protection of the character of old towns and old town districts", although this document was at the lower end of the hierarchy of legal acts (Dettloff, 2006, pp. 132–133). It seems that the development of the concept of "historic districts" as objects of state protection was hindered primarily by the reluctance of public administrative organs (both central and local) to interfere with private (and ecclesiastical) property (on the case of Warsaw, see: Popiołek-Roßkamp, 2021, pp. 111–114). Privately owned buildings predominated in the oldest and most historically significant areas of Polish cities. It was therefore a rare initiative in the field when an open competition was organised by the City Board (*zarząd miejski*) of Kraków in 1937, inviting urbanists to submit their designs for "ordering" (*uporządkowanie*) the space of former market squares within the city's medieval core. By "ordering", the local authorities understood the reorganisation of pedestrian and vehicular movement in the area, the choice of the squares' individual functions, the design and choice of materials for their surface, the refashioning of tenement house façades facing the squares, the method of illumination, and the placement of advertising columns, newsstands, memorials, and water handpumps. However, the competition ended without a winner, and due to the subsequent outbreak of the Second World War, the idea of "ordering" this area was never implemented (Zarząd Miejski w Krakowie, 1937, pp. 74–82; Dettloff, 2006, p. 134). Local authorities also initiated renovation programmes in such cities and towns as Warsaw (1928–1929), Zamość (1934–1937), and Lublin (1936–1938). They were focused on the restoration of tenement house façades that faced main market squares in those cities. Such programmes were partly funded by the central government (Dettloff, 2006, pp. 318–325).

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1   Unless otherwise stated, this and all subsequent translations from non-English-language sources are by the author.

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3 REBUILDING DESTROYED HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Many Polish cities and towns were severely damaged in the Second World War. This was true not only in the case of territory that had belonged to Poland before the war but also in the former German provinces annexed to Poland in 1945 (including Silesia, Pomerania, and Masuria). The idea of faithful reconstruction of historic architecture (including individual buildings of particular value) originally came from conservators. It was primarily Jan Zachwatowicz, the first post-war general conservator of monuments, who championed this fairly innovative idea, which was at variance with the pre-war practice and theory of architectural conservation. It challenged the principles of the Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments of 1931.

Before the war, Zachwatowicz had authored the first conservation plan for the historic centre of Zamość and conducted works on the rebuilding of the medieval walls of Warsaw's Old Town (Dettloff, 2006, pp. 134, 322). In his post-war view, the reconstruction of historic architecture should be a symbol of the defeat of Nazi Germany. Although the war deprived Poles of much of their built heritage, the socialist state was expected to give it back to them. The political authorities accepted this argument, additionally arguing that the history of architecture was in fact the heritage of ordinary people such as builders, bricklayers, and carpenters, and not only of the rich and powerful (Majewski, 2009, pp. 298, 315–316). However, the mass destruction confronted the socialist authorities with the problem of adapting not only individual buildings but also entire districts to modern uses. The reconstruction of historic areas offered an opportunity for more or less spectacular architectural and urban interventions that affected their general appearance. The emergent new vision of the urban past, as communicated through architecture, could serve to legitimise modernity in the social, economic, and political dimensions. The reconstructed historic districts were to constitute an integral element of the contemporary urban fabric, representing the past and showing how it paved the way to modernity. Note that the socialist government had rather little respect for private property, limiting the freedom of private owners to administer and control their buildings. The Demolition and Repair Decree of 1945 already facilitated the state appropriation of private properties that required reconstruction or restoration after the war (Dziennik Ustaw, 1945b, pp. 437–438). This approach was later affirmed also by the Renovation and Reconstruction Act of 1959 (Dziennik Ustaw, 1959, pp. 377–379). In the case of Warsaw, all land was appropriated by the state and transferred to the local municipality as a result of what became known as the "Bierut Decree" of 1945 (Dziennik Ustaw, 1945a, pp. 434–435; Bazyler et al., 2019, p. 327).

3.1 Warsaw – the genealogy of socialist urban planning

The most important undertaking of this sort was the reconstruction of "Old Town" (*Stare Miasto*) in Warsaw, Poland's capital. This relatively small area (around ten hectares) was the medieval nucleus of the city, situated within the medieval walls, centred around a market square, and visually dominated by

early modern, mostly 16th and 17th century tenement houses and three churches. Before the war, Warsaw's Old Town was overpopulated and generally quite impoverished, despite the efforts of the city's administration to encourage tourism (Dettloff, 2008, pp. 321–322; Popiołek-Roßkamp, 2021, pp. 193–198). It was damaged in 1939 and suffered massive destruction in 1944. The socialist government already decided to rebuild it in 1945, but the actual work took place between 1947 and 1953. Note that the rebuilt Old Town was not to be an open-air museum but a modern housing estate, meeting all the necessary features of socialist urban planning and residential architecture. The Office for the Reconstruction of the Capital (*Biuro Odbudowy Stolicy*), which was established to manage the process of rebuilding Warsaw, planned to reconstruct Old Town's historic façades and street layout, restoring all the advantages of its spatial and artistic character "from the best periods" in its history (Majewski, 2009, 193). By "best periods", they apparently meant the medieval and early modern eras, predating the "capitalist" interventions of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Such an approach invited consideration of how such far-reaching changes would affect the heritage of less favoured periods. The socialist authorities, including official urban designers and architects, appreciated Warsaw's Old Town primarily as evidence of Poland's urban planning traditions, from which modern socialist cities could trace their roots. In particular, it was the spatial arrangement built around an axis running from Castle Square (*Plac Zamkowy*) through Old Town Market Square (*Rynek Starego Miasta*) and further through Freta Street to New Town Market Square (*Rynek Nowego Miasta*) that attracted their recognition (Figure 1). The axis

9. *Projekt zagospodarowania przestrzennego Starego Miasta i Nowego Miasta wykonany w Wydziale Architektury Zabytkowej BOS w r. 1946 pod kierunkiem arch. Wacława Podlewskiego, stanowiący podstawę opracowania realizacyjnego w latach 1951–54*
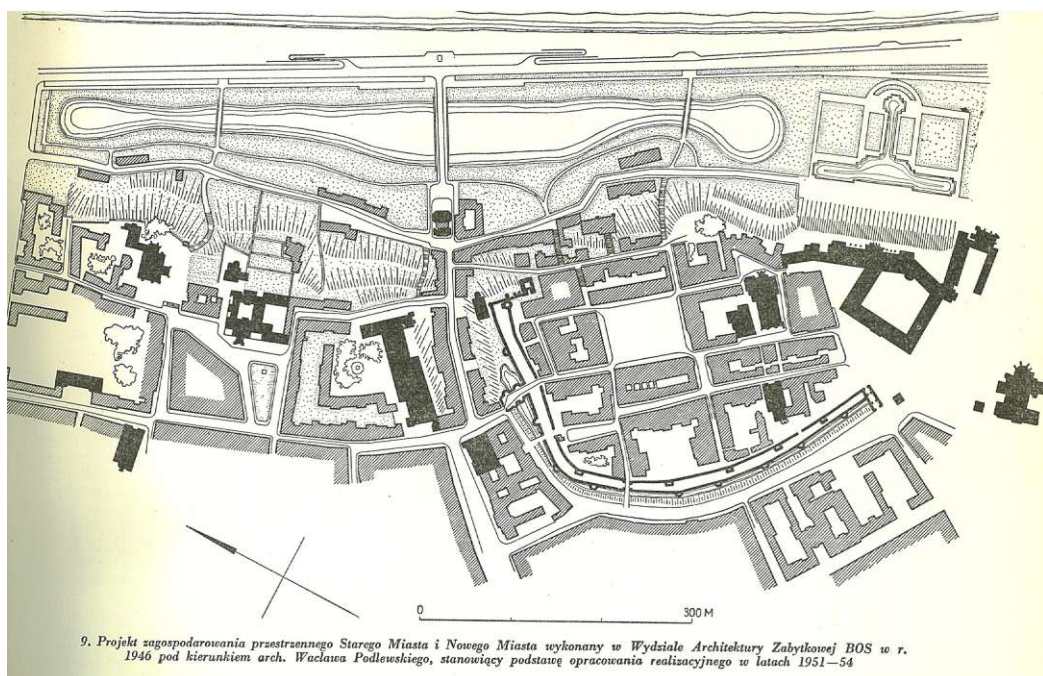
FIGURE 1   Plan of Warsaw's Old Town and New Town as housing estates. Buildings in black (castle, churches, and town walls) indicate non-residential function. (From Biegański, 1956, p. 11, CC BY)
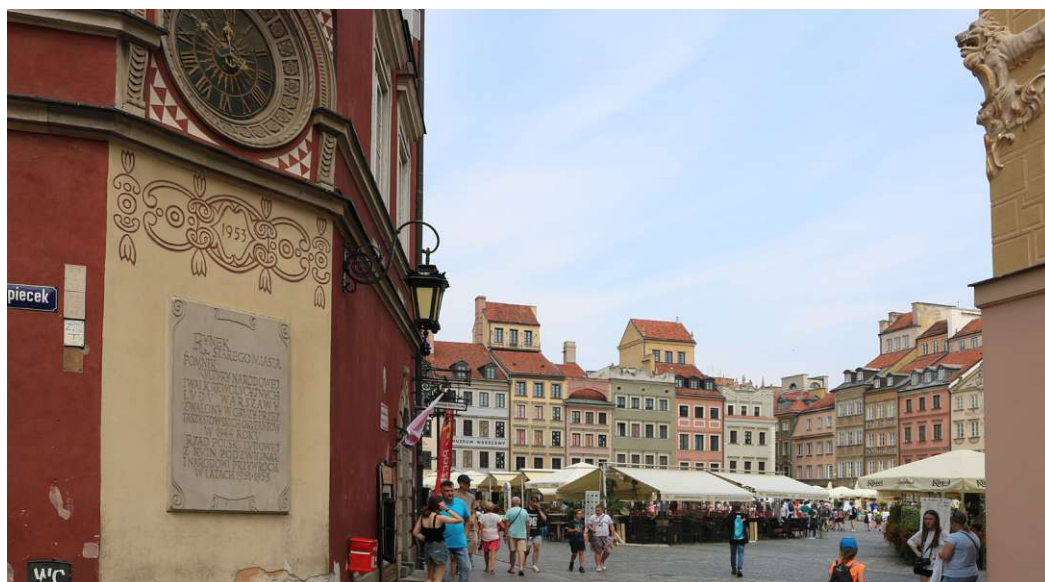
FIGURE 2   Market Square in Warsaw's Old Town; the plaque mentions the site's revolutionary traditions. (Photo: M. Getka-Kenig, 2024, CC BY-SA)

was called the Old Warsaw Route (*Trakt Starej Warszawy*) (Majewski, 2009, pp. 197–198). A subsidiary – socio-historical – argument in favour of the reconstruction was that Warsaw's Old Town had been a working-class district during the long 19th century and was particularly susceptible to revolutionary upheavals. In 1953, the government unveiled a commemorative plaque mentioning this fact at Market Square (Figure 2) (Jaworska & Kietlicz-Wojnacki, 1956, p. 178; see also: Kieniewicz, 1982, pp. 75–82).

However, the central authorities had no interest in restoring historic elements that were considered to disturb this urban ideal. For instance, they did not allow the reconstruction of the town hall, which had stood in the middle of Old Town Market Square until the early 19th century (the beginning of the despised "capitalist" era). If the town hall had been rebuilt, this relatively small square would have lost its potential as a venue for political rallies. Open public squares were a key element of socialist urban planning, providing space for controlled mass demonstrations. Józef Sigalin, a vice chairman of the Office for the Reconstruction of the Capital, suggested even leaving one side of Old Town Market Square without houses and increasing its capacity by building an amphitheatre. But his idea turned out to be too radical for the socialist authorities (Majewski, 2009, p. 195).

Another example of government intervention was the refusal to fully reconstruct the medieval walls of Old Town. Their reconstruction was originally planned by Warsaw's municipality and even partly executed by Zachwatowicz in the pre-war period, after centuries of degradation and the reuse of structures as elements of tenement houses. It was apparently Zachwatowicz's ambition to continue this project, and the idea of Old Town's post-war reconstruction provided him with an ideal opportunity. The walls, however, would have separated Old Town from the rest of Warsaw, which was contrary to the adopted vision of the rebuilt city as a coherent organic space without isolated enclaves. Consequently, the walls were only partially reconstructed (especially

FIGURE 3   The "House under Christ" in Warsaw's Old Town. (Photo: M. Getka-Kenig, 2024, CC BY-SA)

their lower parts), and the area was planted with trees and bushes as a recreational space, enabling a relatively seamless connection with the surrounding areas (Majewski, 2008, pp. 201–202; Popiołek-Roßkamp, 2021, pp. 227–235). The presence of churches was also problematic for the authorities, although all three of them were ultimately reconstructed between 1947 and 1959 (Lewicka, 1992, pp. 124, 133, 140). Initially, however, the leaders of the socialist party wanted St. Martin's Church in Piwna Street to serve as a museum of the history of medieval art (despite the fact that it was a Baroque building, although it did retain elements of its Gothic precursor) rather than a place for public worship (Sigalin, 1986, p. 323). The cathedral, formerly in the English neo-Gothic style (a result of its mid-19th century rebuilding by Adam Idźkowski), acquired a completely new façade. This was inspired by the medieval ecclesiastical architecture of the region of Masovia (the environs of Warsaw), characterised by red brick, squat proportions, and simple decoration. It seems, however, that it was drawn up by Zachwatowicz himself (there were no reliable sources visually documenting the cathedral's appearance before its neo-Gothic rebuilding), in consultation with church leaders, rather than the outcome of government pressure (Majewski, 2008, pp. 200–201; Popiołek-Roßkamp, 2021, pp. 263–269). The authorities apparently had less tolerance for the religious decoration of secular buildings. For instance, the "House under Christ" tenement (*kamienica pod Chrystusem*) was rebuilt without its eponymous statue of the Resurrected Christ, which had crowned its façade since the 18th century (Majewski & Markiewicz, 1998, pp. 135–138) (Figure 3).

Despite these politically inspired interventions, Warsaw's rebuilt Old Town managed to gain international recognition among conservators and heritage experts. It was even included on the UNESCO World Heritage List as early as 1980, having already been initially considered for inscription two years earlier, when the original list of World Heritage Sites was being composed (Röttjer, 2022, p. 65). UNESCO valued Warsaw's Old Town as "an exceptional example of the global reconstruction of a sequence of history running from the 13th to the 20th centuries", especially stressing its "correspondence" with Criterion No. 6 of the World Heritage Convention, namely its association with events of considerable historical significance. The citation also recognised the international impact of the rebuilding on the development of monument conservation. The application on behalf of Warsaw Old Town was accepted despite the fact that it did not satisfy the criterion of authenticity (ICOMOS, 1980, p. 2). However, the surroundings were restored with much less attention to their history. The result was a seamless mix of historic and modern forms that was intended to give the impression of timeless continuity. This was

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apparently caused by a lack of detailed pre-war documentation (which existed for Warsaw's Old Town) (Zachwatowicz, 1956, p. 6). Moreover, an eclectic approach of this kind was in line with the principles of socialist realism, a cultural doctrine that was officially sponsored by the Polish state (following the example of Soviet Russia and other socialist states in Central and Eastern Europe) between 1949 and 1955. Socialist realism in architecture was characterised by revivalism and historicism, although the buildings designed in this style were generally far from being mere pastiches. The historical heritage, especially the centuries-old legacy of classicism (including not only its ancient sources but also their early modern interpretations), was, however, the most important source of inspiration for socialist realist architects (Friedrich, 2015, pp. 163, 187–188; see also: Molnár, 2013, pp. 30–68).

In Warsaw, the direct influence of socialist realism on the rebuilding of historic areas was especially evident in the case of New Town (*Nowe Miasto*) (the second oldest nucleus of medieval Warsaw, originally an independent city that was administratively merged with Old Town only in the late 18th century) and even more of *Mariensztat*, like New Town also situated adjacent to Old Town (Majewski, 2009, pp. 203–208). Mariensztat was a remnant of a private aristocratic enclave (*jurydyka*) that had been established in the mid-18th century and was originally excluded from municipal law (Szwankowski, 1970, p. 114). From the socialist perspective, the feudal origins of *Mariensztat* were not deserving of eulogy or commemoration, although it was the district's "capitalist" development during the 19th century that was in fact subject to most criticism in the socialist period (Stępiński, 1946, pp. 2–3). Mariensztat was rebuilt as a contemporary interpretation of early modern urban heritage, despite this having little to do with the architectural history of the area and its original street layout. Moreover, Mariensztat's 18th century buildings, to which its post-war architecture were supposed to refer, had been overwhelmingly built of wood, not brick (Szwankowski, 1970, p. 114). The rebuilt Mariensztat was thus the perfect expression of the historicist doctrine of socialist urban development and, simultaneously, a completely new creation (Figure 4).

FIGURE 4   Mariensztat in Warsaw. (Photo: M. Getka-Kenig, 2024, CC BY-SA)

3.2   Gdańsk – the Polonisation of German legacy

Even more drastic interventions of this type were planned, but ultimately never implemented in Gdańsk (formerly Danzig). This seaside city belonged to Poland in the medieval and early modern periods, but was under the influence of German culture for all this time. The nearly complete destruction of the historic centre of Gdańsk during the Second World War gave the socialist government an opportunity to rebuild it in such a way as to both emphasise its connection with Polishness and erase its unwanted German legacy (on the taming of Gdańsk's German legacy see: Friedrich, 2015, pp. 55–81; see also: Friedrich, 2012, pp. 115–130). The historic centre of Gdańsk that had been shattered by the war consisted primarily of two residential neighbourhoods: Main Town (*Główne Miasto*) and Old Town (*Stare Miasto*), both originating in the Middle Ages as independent, but adjacent cities (like Old and New Towns in Warsaw). Main Town, known for its spectacular public and ecclesiastical structures, was rebuilt as an essentially modern housing estate. Only the historic façades were reconstructed (however, such reconstructions were not meticulously faithful to the original), while the interiors were transformed in accordance with contemporary housing standards. There were only a few exceptions, such as Uphagen House, which was chosen to become a house museum, showcasing its well-preserved and sumptuous 18th century design (Friedrich, 2015, pp. 112–121).

By contrast, the reconstruction plan for Gdańsk's Old Town, which was never executed, provided for a much more radical modernisation of the urban space. Old Town was intended to become the new administrative and service centre of Gdańsk that would contain the communist party's local headquarters, the provincial national council (the highest local body of administrative power), a city cultural centre, as well as a square that could be used for public rallies and gatherings. The guidelines of the competition to design this area of Gdańsk specified that the city cultural centre should be an "ideological accent", visually dominating the entire historic area (including Main Town) due to its imposing scale, elevation on a small rise, and its direct axial connection with High Gate (*Brama Wyżynna*), the main historic entrance to Main Town. According to Jacek Friedrich, the design specs meant the building of the cultural centre would symbolise the domination over "not only the present but also the history of the city", even suggesting that it was a representation of "the culmination of this history" (Friedrich, 2015, pp. 179, 187). It was an architectural symbol of the Marxist philosophy of history, namely the idea of a teleological progression towards socialism through the ages. Eventually, however, such a spectacular rearrangement of Old Town's urban topography was rejected. The cultural centre was nevertheless established in this area, but it moved into the 16th century building of the district's town hall that luckily survived the war (Habela, 1975, p. 108).

The rich decoration added to the tenement houses of Gdańsk's Old Town during reconstruction was also an important tool of the symbolic Polonisation of Gdańsk's historic core. In addition to motifs openly referring to the history of Poland (even not necessarily related to Gdańsk), these pictorial and sculptural decorations were dominated by visual quotations from the art

of the Italian (especially Florentine) Renaissance. The Italian Renaissance shaped the development of Polish art and architecture in the 16th century but had little to do with Gdańsk's built heritage. Interestingly, according to the accounts of the artists who made them, the subject matters of these decorations were not forced upon them by the authorities in any way. However, they were expressions of the then-prevailing political climate in Gdańsk, which apparently influenced the artists who were engaged in reconstruction works (Friedrich, 2015, pp. 214–215, 231). For them, the Polonisation of the city's heritage did not need special justification, even if they were aware of the ahistorical nature of their artistic endeavours.

3.3   Poznań – heritage and modernity

The reconstruction of the historic centres of various Polish cities continued until the second half of the 1950s. While the socialist realism that prevailed at the turn of the 1950s favoured (more or less) historically oriented reconstruction, the political perturbations of the mid-1950s changed the situation significantly. Social and political factors such as the liberalisation of the regime, greater openness to Western Europe, and greater emphasis on economy (reconstructing historic architecture was very expensive) contributed to the appreciation of modernism in public architecture. This trend was manifested in the construction of purely modernist buildings within historic districts. This reflected not only a growing reluctance to reconstruct, but also the persistent (albeit expressed differently) desire to emphasise the connection of historic districts with modern social life. Individual conspicuous modernist buildings were built both in Warsaw's Old Town (e.g. the self-service restaurant on Zamkowy Square 1963–70) and in the immediate vicinity of Gdańsk's Main Town (theatre, 1956–1967, and shopping pavilion, 1959–61) (Leśniakowska, 2003, p. 188; Friedrich, 2015, pp. 294–315).

However, the most spectacular undertaking of this type was the modernist recreation of the cloth hall and arsenal in Poznań. Poznań is one of the oldest cities in Poland, and in the 10th century was the centre of monarchical power. Its historic district, also known as Old Town, dates from the 13th century, but it was rather the Renaissance, Baroque, and Neoclassical architecture of the early modern era that dominated its urban landscape in the pre-war period. Poznań's Old Town was mostly destroyed in 1945, and its post-war reconstruction followed the example of Warsaw and Gdańsk in preserving an old street layout, eliminating many 19th century elements, reconstructing façades, and designing interiors in accordance with modern standards. Problems arose, however, around the design of the Market Square Central Block (*Blok Śródrynkowy*) in the middle of Old Market Square (*Stary Rynek*), just next to the monumental Renaissance city hall. In the Middle Ages, the site had been occupied by a complex of trading halls, but over the centuries, some of those structures had instead taken on residential and even military roles: former bread stalls were transformed into an arsenal in the 17th century. In the 19th century, many of those buildings were rebuilt as multi-story tenement houses.

There were several attempts to reconstruct the central block in the socialist realist style after 1945. However, conservators rejected all the proposed designs, criticising their lack of connection with the site's history and local architecture in general. The problem was the deficiency of visual documentation from the pre-capitalist period, particularly of the cloth hall and the arsenal. Eventually, a rather unusual compromise was reached in 1957: the eastern, northern, and western parts of the block were to be reconstructed according to historical sources, while the southern parts, namely the cloth hall and arsenal, were to be designed in the modernist style (as eventually built in 1959–1962, according to a design by Jan Cieśliński, Zygmunt Lutomski, and Regina Pawulanka). The new buildings were initially expected to serve commercial purposes, in accordance with their medieval roots. However, the city authorities eventually decided to give them a cultural role – as a contemporary art gallery and military museum (Kondziela, 1964, p. 67; Kondziela, 1975, pp. 70–77; Marciniak, 2008, p. 275) (Figure 5). As a result, the architecture of the central block became representative of three different styles: the Renaissance (city hall, scale house, a row of small tenement houses), Neoclassicism (city guardhouse), and Modernism. The modernist element, clearly standing out against such a backdrop, was a symbol of Poznań's contemporary development and unequivocal orientation towards the future. The past was still an object of reverence, but it was the idea of progress and change rather than the transmission of timeless principles (so characteristic of socialist realism) that apparently motivated this concept.

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FIGURE 5   Modernist pavilions at Old Market Square in Poznań's Old Town. (Photo: M. Getka-Kenig, 2024, CC BY-SA)

4 RESTORATION OF SURVIVING HISTORIC DISTRICTS

In the history of the socialist historic district protection policy, the significance of the political breakthrough of 1956 (the so-called Polish thaw) and the rejection of socialist realism were not limited to declining interest in historical reconstructions. At the same time, the authorities had developed an interest in the problems of well-preserved but previously neglected monuments, including historic districts. Despite the significant destruction of urban areas during WWII, there was no shortage of both large and small cities in which districts dominated by early modern and even medieval buildings survived. Among important events that led the authorities to address this issue there was the official celebration of the millennium of the Polish state between 1960 and 1966 (Noszczak, 2020, pp. 108–190). During this period, the socialist authorities strongly emphasised their attachment to the centuries-long national history that found its supposed climax in the Polish People's Republic (Poland's official name since 1952).

4.1 Kraków – national heritage and European identity

The rebuilding of the historic centre of Kraków was the most important undertaking in the field of post-war restorations of historic districts. Kraków was the capital of the Kingdom of Poland between the 11th and late 16th centuries and had the largest concentration of buildings entered in the official register of monuments in the early 1960s (Fischinger & Lepiarczyk, 1964, p. 12). Kraków survived the war with little damage, and afterwards, it became the subject of large industrial investments. Between 1950 and 1954, the socialist authorities built one of Poland's largest steelworks on its outskirts. The plant gave rise to a new town called Nowa Huta (literally "new foundry" or "new steelworks"), which was incorporated as a district of Kraków in 1951. At the same time, the historic city centre, officially known as Old Town since 1954 and including the distinct areas of Inner City, Kazimierz, and Stradom, was falling into neglect. It was there that a significant part of Krakow's inhabitants lived (as well as those who had moved there from destroyed cities in the immediate post-war years) (Lepiarczyk, 1955, pp. 195–203; Skiba, 1976, p. 100). The restoration process, which had been initiated by the local administration in the 1950s but only became a special long-term government programme in 1961, consisted not only in renovating historic buildings but also in reducing the overall building density by demolishing structures in the courtyards (thereby increasing access to light). Most of these structures dated from the 19th and early 20th centuries, and their removal was therefore also ideologically justified as symbolically liberating Kraków's Old Town from "capitalist" modifications. However, the authorities also sought to establish a new function for the renovated Old Town as the central district of modern Kraków. According to an official restoration programme, accepted by Kraków's governing body in 1962, it was intended to become primarily a service district, with a lower number of permanent residents, and more focused on administrative, cultural, educational, and tourist activities (Skiba, 1976, pp. 108–109).

The process of thoroughly restoring Kraków's Old Town was initially scheduled to end no later than 1970 (Skiba, 1976, p. 107). However, it eventually outlasted the socialist regime, which fell in 1989. In effect, Kraków's Old Town became a distinctly specialised district of the modern city, in which the past was still one of the most significant pillars of local identity. Although the district's population density was being gradually lowered, Old Town retained its specific symbolic status as a true centre of the city. It also started to serve as an international asset for the Polish state. During the 1960s and 1970s, it was often included in the itineraries of state visits to Poland, including those of representatives of capitalist countries (Estreicher, 1980, p. 91; Chwalba, 2004, p. 111). The regime apparently regarded it as testimony to Poland's eternal Europeanness and its direct cultural ties with the West. In the aftermath of the 1956 thaw, Poland embarked on a partial foreign-policy rapprochement with the West. In this way, Kraków's renovated built heritage was able to support the state's international legitimacy. Moreover, the government succeeded in convincing UNESCO to accept Kraków's Old Town as the first European historic district inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1978. UNESCO awarded this distinction in response to the Polish application that stressed Kraków's "important place in European art by virtue of its geographical location and its role as a centre of western art, which was in contact with cultural influences coming from the East during the Middle Ages and in the 16th and 17th centuries" (World Heritage Centre Nomination Documentation, 1978, p. [9]). Note that Poland submitted Kraków's candidature together with that of the rebuilt Old Town of Warsaw (eventually accepted two years later). These two historic, but very different, districts, the original and the reconstructed one, appeared to supplement each other in representing Poland's heterogeneous contribution to the world's urban heritage.

4.2   Toruń – the persistence of the German complex

Kraków occupied a unique place in the Polish historical imagination as a national symbol; consequently, it managed to attract the special attention of the socialist government, which was constantly longing for legitimacy. In the 1960s, however, analogous state-funded restoration programmes were also implemented in other cities and towns, such as Toruń. Toruń's Old Town was the second-largest complex of monuments in Poland to survive the war (Rymaszewski, 1986, p. 502). It was hardly comparable with its counterpart in Kraków with respect to symbolic significance in Polish history, although it was known as the birthplace of Nicolaus Copernicus (in Poland known as Mikołaj Kopernik). Copernicus was seen then as one of the greatest Poles ever, although his national identity had been disputed since the emergence of modern Polish nationalism in the early 19th century (Kasparek & Kasparek, 2023). His case was symptomatic of the more general problem of Toruń's cultural heritage, which, like Gdańsk, had been significantly influenced by German culture since the Middle Ages. While the large-scale conservation programme for Toruń's Old Town originated in the period of the millennium

celebrations, it was the expected 500th anniversary of Copernicus's birthday in 1973 that was its most significant stimulus (Sudziński, 1989, pp. 199–203).

The restoration of the city's Old Town led to the elimination of many 19th century structures dating from the period when Toruń belonged to Prussia and then the German Reich (Rymaszewski, 1986, pp. 503, 506). It was thus an act of de-Germanisation. A medieval castle that had once belonged to the Teutonic Knights in Toruń was preserved as a ruin in order to keep it as an eternal symbol of Polish victories over the Germans prior to the Second World War. The restoration of the "permanent ruin" was intended to mark the anniversary of the famous Second Peace of Toruń (1466), concluding the longest war with the Teutonic Order and resulting in Poland's regained access to the Baltic Sea (Sudziński, 1989, pp. 198–199; Rymaszewski, 1986, p. 503). The restoration of Toruń's Old Town also led to the establishment of a museum dedicated to Copernicus in the house believed to have belonged to his family, which was opened in 1973 (Mazurkiewicz, 1988, p. 7).

4.3   Sandomierz – a vision of monumental Poland

In connection with the millennium celebrations in the 1960s, similar centrally funded restoration programmes were also implemented in much smaller but historically significant towns such as Sandomierz. The town played an important role in the political and economic history of Poland in the Middle Ages and early modern era but lost this position in the 18th century. The 19th and early 20th centuries were a period of decline in Sandomierz's history, although the economic backwardness apparently helped to save the town's medieval core from drastic urban changes. Sandomierz's Old Town also avoided destruction during the Second World War. Apart from the millennium celebrations, the idea of revitalising Sandomierz's historic centre was also motivated by the post-war increase in the town's regional significance as an industrial and tourist centre. However, the direct impulse to implement the large-scale government programme for the renovation of the historic city centre was a number of construction disasters during the 1960s, resulting from the collapse of houses built on loess soil (Kalinowski, 1986, p. 426). The restoration of Sandomierz's historic centre involved quite far-reaching interventions in its architectural heritage, such as the addition of a storey or redesign of façades. Among the buildings enlarged and refashioned in this way was the "Gomółka House", which had supposedly belonged to the famous Polish Renaissance musician Mikołaj Gomółka (ca. 1535–1591) (Łoziński & Przypkowski, 1962, p. 98). The "upgraded" version of the building was apparently deemed more worthy of the town's great citizen, commemorated in a large (nearly two-stories high) plaque on its side wall. In addition, the east frontage of Market Square (*Rynek*) was rebuilt, replacing its humbler predecessor without any historical justification (Kalinowski, 1986, p. 427) (Figure 6). As a result, Sandomierz's Old Town became more monumental than it had ever been in the past. Although it was not a completely new creation, as in the case of Mariensztat in Warsaw, the architectural and urban heritage of Sandomierz had been "improved" to look more impressive. It

FIGURE 6   Gomółka House and the east frontage Square in Sandomierz's Old Town. (Photo: M. Getka-Kenig, 2024, CC BY-SA)

seems that the renovated Old Town was expected to better reflect the real significance of the city in national history, while also entering into a symbolic dialogue with modern architectural undertakings such as a major glassworks (situated on the other side of the river and visible from Old Town) and the housing estates built outside the historic area (on Sandomierz's urban and industrial development see: Meducki, 1994, pp. 227–229; Wendlandt, 1994, pp. 273–274).

5   CONCLUSION

The authorities of socialist Poland maintained their interest in historic districts for decades, through a variety of political changes. Initially focused on post-war rebuilding, they later turned to areas that survived the war but required comprehensive restoration. These were seemingly different problems, but they had one important thing in common: they both provided the socialist government with an opportunity to reshape the contemporary vision of the past. Historic districts were an integral element of post-war urban development. Their appearance had a significant impact on a local, national, and sometimes (as in the case of Warsaw and Kraków) international scale. Architecture served to represent a vision of the past that could support and legitimise the present, namely the socialist regime. Just as the development of cities and towns in post-war Poland was an expression of economic and social progress, the socialist rearrangement of historic districts testified that this development was not accidental. They proved that, as they saw it, socialism was not at odds with history, but, on the contrary, it was its natural outcome.

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BIOGRAPHY

Mikołaj Getka-Kenig is an Associate Professor at the Institute for the History of Science, Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw. He holds his Master's degrees in history and art history, and a doctorate and habilitation in history. His research interests include the problem of the politics of art and architecture from 1770–1830 as well as heritage policies in socialist Poland from 1945–1989. He currently leads a research project entitled 'Architectural Monuments and the Politics of History in Communist Poland – the Case of Kraków 1945–78', funded by the National Science Centre, Poland. ORCID number: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1180-064X.

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THE SYSTEMATISATION OF THE MULTICULTURAL HISTORIC CITY OF KRONSTADT/BRAȘOV. A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE (1921–1965)

Laura Demeter

Abstract

The multiethnic and historic fortified city of Kronstadt (Brașov[1] in Romanian and Brassó in Hungarian – located at the base of the Carpathian Tâmpa Mountains), whose existence is first documented in the 13th century, played a significant role under Hungarian and Habsburg rule (1211–1918) as a border city and centre of trade. Following the First World War and the unification of Transylvania with the provinces of Bessarabia and Bukovina, Kronstadt became part of the Kingdom of Romania in 1918. This chapter discusses the modernisation of the historic city following the territorial and administrative reforms of 1921, which challenged its multiethnic character and built legacy. In this regard, the process of urban systematisation of the historic city, initiated during the Habsburg monarchy (1711–1918) and carried out in the interwar period and the aftermath of the Second World War due to the damage caused by the city bombardments, will be analysed. Overall, this chapter asks how the transformation under various political regimes of the historic multiethnic "Saxon burg" ultimately into an industrial socialist city impacted its built legacy. Particular attention will be given to the (inter)war period and the first decade of the communist regime, when the city was renamed Orașul Stalin (Stalin City) (1950–1960). The study makes use of archival and visual documentation, such as systematisation maps, to highlight significant steps in the transformation of the city from a multiethnic historical settlement into a modern socialist industrial city with potential for tourism development.

Keywords

Systematisation, mapping, multiethnic cities, historic city centres, war damage, socialism, Brașov

1   WHAT MAKES A CITY MULTICULTURAL? HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter aims to analyse the urban transformation of the multiethnic city of Kronstadt, which was founded as an "urbis" in the Middle Ages, when it was part of the historic province of Transylvania. As a border town until the beginning of the 20th century, it played an important role under Hungarian and Habsburg governance in ensuring trade and transit into the Romanian Principate. This chapter will discuss the transformation of the multiethnic border city into an important industrial hub located in the centre of the modern Romanian nation-

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1   After 1918 to be referred as Brașov throughout the chapter.

state following the union of Romania with Transylvania (December 1918), and with the historic provinces of Bessarabia (March 1918) and Bukovina (November 1918). After a short historical overview of the evolution of the medieval "Saxon burg" into a multiethnic city of trade and crafts under the Habsburg monarchy (1711–1918), this chapter discusses important steps in the modernisation and preservation of the historic city during the (inter)war period and communist regime until 1965.

"The city of the Crown" (Kronstadt in German) took shape during the 13th century, following the colonisation of the Carpathian southern region of Transylvania by the Teutonic knights (Stroe & Stroe, 2009, p. 83). During the 14th century, it became an important trade centre due to its strategic location in the Kingdom of Hungary on the border with the Romanian provinces, which at that time were Ottoman protectorates. The city's development was influenced by its location in the Carpathian Mountains and the availability of water resources, around the Romanesque church, which was replaced in the second half of the 14th century by the Black Church (Institute for Monument Preservation Archives [INP], 1966, p. 2), that is still standing today (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1   Kronstadt Häuser und Straßen Schema, 1874, [Kronstadt: houses and street plan, with the Roma settlement marked in white by the author, 1874]. (From Municipal Archives Brașov, SJAN, BV-FD-00323-B-912-4-45, CC BY-NC)

Laura Demeter

Eventually, it expanded and integrated smaller communities in Schei, Bartolomeu, and Blumăna. Starting in 1427, following the Ottoman military incursions (1421), the city expanded its defence system, which included walls, bastions, towers, and a *Zwinger* (defensive area). The fortification system was concentrated exclusively in the medieval town, where the wealthiest inhabitants (nobles, traders, and craftsmen) and workshops were located (INP, File 1434,
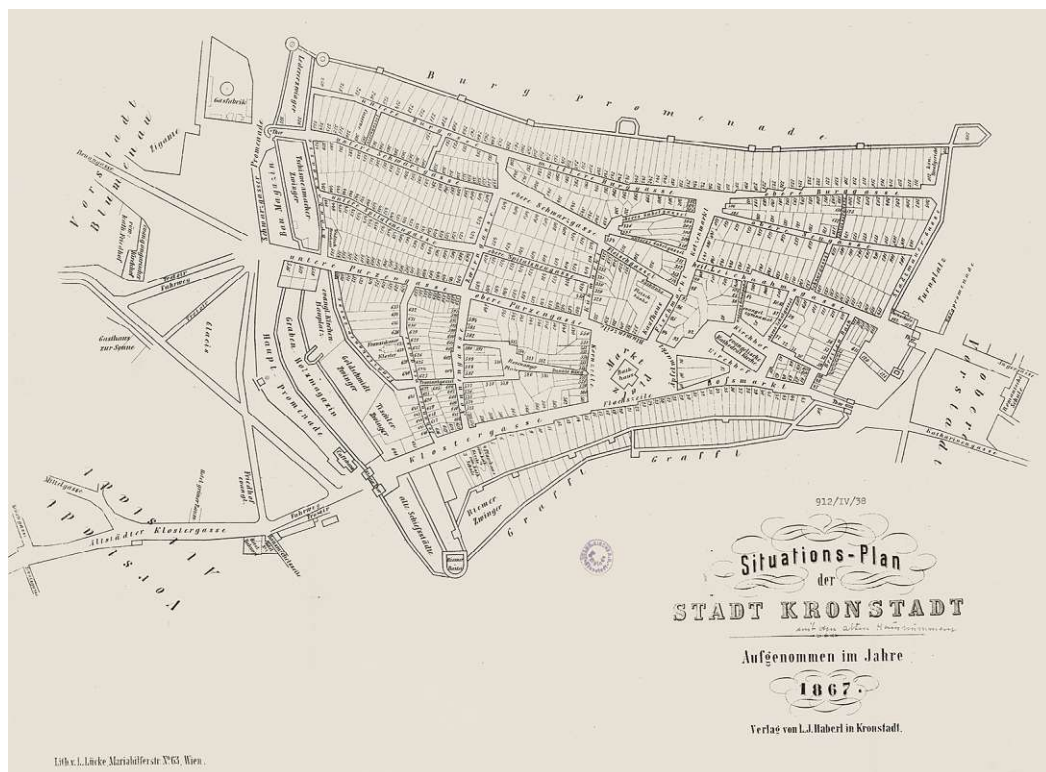
FIGURE 2   Situation Plan of Kronstadt, 1867. (From Municipal Archives Brașov, SJAN, BV-FD-00323-b-912-4-38, CC BY-NC)

1965, p. 3). During this period, the city was divided into four quarters for tax reasons: *Porticae* (1475, Porţii Street and surroundings), *Carporis Cristi* (1480, Town Council square), *Catharinae* (Horse Market, Str. Bariţiu and surroundings), and *Patri* (1486, Monastery Street and surroundings). This division was retained until the 18th century (INP, File 1434, 1965, p. 7) (Figure 2). Furthermore, despite numerous political transformations in the region, the street layout defined during the 14th century and the fortification have also been largely preserved over the centuries. The population in the area predominantly consisted of German (Saxon) and Hungarian-speaking groups, in addition to Romanian, Greek, and Armenian communities. Roma communities were located outside the city walls, as indicated by the Habsburg maps from the 19th century (see Figure 1).

The end of the 17th century marked a significant shift in the city's historical evolution due to changing political conditions generated by the Habsburg military presence. During the inhabitants' uprising of 1689, the city was set on fire, destroying all the city's wooden structures (INP, File 1434, 1965, p. 14). The damage and integration of Kronstadt in the Habsburg Empire in the 17th century as an autonomous city was followed by a period of reconstruction in the Baroque style (1711–1774), replacing the local Renaissance style that had predominated since the 16th century (Stroe & Stroe, 2009, p. 87). Various public institutions were built, including the Catholic Church of Saint Peter and Paul (1773–1782), schools, and trade halls, while the city slowly expanded beyond its walls (INP, File 1434, 1965, p. 14). Transformations

took place in the northern (*Schei*) and southern (*Blumăna*) parts of the city. From the 18th century, the walled city formed Kronstadt's core (*Innere Stadt*), while the developments outside the fortification were identified as suburbs (*Vorstadt – Altstadt*). According to the study issued in 1965 by the heritage conservation authorities in Bucharest, it is the more modest housing from the 16th and 17th centuries that has been better preserved in the historic city, because prosperous families would often change or even reconstruct their houses, particularly during the 19th century. The same survey also identified the predominant architectural style of the historic city as late Gothic and late Renaissance, from the 16th century onwards (INP, File 1434, 1965, p. 14).

In the 19th century, Kronstadt began to lose its autonomy (1806) and was eventually fully integrated into the administrative structures of the Austrian and Austro-Hungarian Empires (1806 and 1867, respectively). Numerous cities in Transylvania started to undergo a process of modernisation, which involved carrying out public works in line with the planning ordinances of the time, such as the construction of pavements and sewerage systems, and the alignment of streets. Regulations concerning building construction for the historic core of Kronstadt can be identified at the end of the 19th century (Municipal Archives Brașov [SJAN], BV, Plans 456, Bauregulierung Kronstadt, Innere Stadt, 1890). During this period, parts of the walls and bastions (in the north in 1835, and the south in 1857) were demolished (INP, File 1434, 1965, p. 16). In their place, triumphal arches were built in a neoclassical style, of which the Schei Gate (1827) has survived to the present. New public buildings were erected, including the courthouse, post office, tax office, prefecture, and banks. Over the centuries, Kronstadt had retained its role as a city of crafts and trade. However, during the 19th century under Austrian and Austro-Hungarian governance, the peripheral city at the empire's borders began to lose its commercial relevance due to increasing trade across the Danube and through Black Sea ports. Yet at the same time, its industrial potential emerged, particularly following the construction of the railway network.

Transylvania's peripheral position in relation to various European empires prior to the early 20th century has been discussed recently by Parvulescu and Boatcă, who defined the region as a "semiperipheral area with an inter-imperiality history" (2022, p. 6). This study has significantly improved our understanding of Transylvania's peripheral position and the traceable legacy of empires in rural spaces. Former empires' legacies in urban areas were discussed in Puia's study (2022) on Transylvanian urban architecture in the interwar period. The legacies of the former Russian and Habsburg empires, as well as visions of modernity in Eastern Europe up to 1940, were similarly highlighted in the edited volume by Behrends and Kohlrausch (2014), who predominantly focused on the metropolitan areas and capital cities of Eastern Europe. Horel (2023) and Kisiel (2018) analysed the multicultural cities of the Habsburg Empire from the 19th century to 1914. Particular emphasis was made by Horel (2023) on the multicultural aspect of the cities, as reflected in cultural institutions, religion, education, and modernisation processes in cities such as Poszony/Bratislava, Lviv, Sarajevo, Zagreb, Czernowitz/Chernivtsi, Arad, Temesvar/Timișoara, Brno/Brünn, and Trieste. Kisiel's (2018) contribution to the politics of space in Austro-Hungarian cities in comparison to Prussian cities focused on Polish

cities and symbolic urban landscapes. However, these studies focused rather on the period from the 19th century until the end of the monarchy (1918).

The connection between historic cities, heritage preservation, reconstruction, and urban planning at the beginning of the 20th century has been studied by several authors. Research on historic city centres and heritage politics in urban planning debates in the European context focused on the Western European tradition, with particular emphasis on case studies from countries such as Germany, Italy, Switzerland, and France (Enss & Vinken, 2016), as well as the UK (Pendlebury et al. 2014; Larkham 2003). Yet, the aspect of multiculturalism was treated less by these authors. Similarly, the connection between spatial planning, heritage preservation, and reconstruction in Europe between 1945–1975 has been extensively analysed in Western Europe (Diefendorf 1990, Barjot et al. 1997, Bullock & Verpoest 2023, Knauer 2023), while case studies from Poland and the GDR reflected developments in Eastern Europe (Briesen & Strubelt, 2022). Studies on urban planning politics and modernity in Eastern Europe have received recently more attention, as shown in interdisciplinary research on knowledge transfer and networks in urban planning at the beginning of the 20th century (Gantner et al., 2021), and interdisciplinary studies on urban planning of the socialist cities in postwar Eastern Europe (Grau & Welch Guerra, 2024; Welch Guerra et al., 2023). The space of Romanian modernity at the beginning of the 20th century has been analysed by authors such as Carmen Popescu (2010; 2011), who discussed the "national style" and "modernity" projects from an interdisciplinary perspective. Further aspects of urban planning policy at the beginning of the 20th century have been researched by Răuță (2013) and Vais (2022), who focused on the creation of the civic centres and the *sistematizarea* (systematisation) of the Romanian cities, as a planning measure to ensure the regulation of the urban and rural spaces. Further research has discussed the systematisation of small towns in Romania in the context of the 1940 earthquake and its impact on the reconstruction debates regarding damaged towns and affected Jewish communities (Demeter 2024). Issues of postwar reconstruction in Romania have been problematised by Iuga (2016; 2019) and Tulbure (2016) with a focus on socialist postwar reconstruction projects. Romanian publications such as *Arhitectura* (1973, Issue 4; 1977, Issue 6) have produced special issues on modernisation and the preservation of historic city centres during the communist regime. Particular attention has been given to research on the reshaping of the city centre of Bucharest and Transylvanian historic city centres such as Brașov and Sibiu. Aspects related to the integration of restoration, reconstruction, and renovation of historic cities have been emphasised, indicating their role in the modernisation of "socialist cities with a historic character" (Sandu, 1973, pp. 4–5). The historical and urban evolution of Brașov has been recently addressed by authors such as Stroe (2008) and Stroe & Stroe (2009), who highlighted the architectural value of various historic buildings and provided a comprehensive overview of its architectural and urban history.

This chapter aims to fill a gap in research dealing with the transformation of multicultural and ethnically diverse Transylvanian cities from an interdisciplinary and *longue durée* approach by combining disciplines of urban history

and heritage studies. It questions how the transformation of the historic and multiethnic Habsburg trade city of Kronstadt into an industrial socialist city, renamed Stalin City (1950–1960) by the communist regime, impacted its built heritage. By scrutinizing urban transformation and systematisation policies in the context of modern nation-state formation after 1918, the consequences of war damage, and the installation of the communist regime in 1948, this contribution highlights the mechanisms by which the historic city centre and its multicultural legacy have been transformed or subjected to preservation. Following the territorial and administrative reform of Romania (1921), the multi-ethnic character and built legacy of the city were challenged by interventions aimed at reflecting the Romanian national identity. In this regard, this chapter will examine modernisation processes and systematisation policies from the Habsburg monarchy through the interwar period to the Second World War. Lastly, it addresses the impact of major political changes on the city generated by the communist regime installed in power from 1948 to 1965.

The paper makes use of archival and visual documentation, such as systematisation maps, to highlight significant steps in the transformation of the city from a multiethnic historic settlement into a modern socialist industrial city. To achieve this, contemporary publications such as *Arhitectura* have been analysed and archival documents from the Institute for Monument Pre-servation, the National Archives in Bucharest, and the Municipality Archives in Brașov were consulted.

2 SYSTEMATISATION POLICY FROM THE INTERWAR TO THE MILITARY DICTATORSHIP (1921–1944)

Following the unification of the historical provinces with Romania in 1918, a new administrative reform was issued in 1921. It aimed to harmonise the existing legislative traditions in the newly acquired provinces, namely Russian legislation in Bessarabia, Austrian in Bukovina, and Hungarian in Transylvania (including the territories of Crișana, Banat, and Maramureș).

This significantly impacted the modernisation processes of cities and rural settlements. According to Mihnea (2016), the impact of the 1921 administrative reform in semi-autonomous Transylvania was twofold. Firstly, suburban estates owned by cities were being entirely expropriated, excepting properties that served for social and educational purposes. (It is important to note that, before the unification, Transylvanian cities were major landowners). Secondly, urban areas were nonetheless expanding due to the distribution of building plots (Mihnea, 2016, p. 124). As the author argues, two different laws with overlapping purposes were in effect after 1918 in Transylvania concerning the distribution of building plots: the *1921 Agrarian Law* (which focused on the expropriation of the suburban lands) and the *October 18, 1921 Law* on building plot distribution in cities, which concentrated on city-owned properties (Mihnea, 2016, pp. 124–125). Responsibility for the implementation of the *October 1921 Law* was assigned to municipalities, and the parceling plans had to be approved by the authorities from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Public Works in Bucharest (Mihnea, 2016, p. 125). These

measures contradicted the specification of the *1921 Agrarian Law*, whose enactment was assigned to local authorities under the Ministry of Agriculture and Domains. This was beyond the municipality's competencies, generating a conflict between various authorities. Additionally, the Superior Commission for Systematisation Plans, Beautification, and Cities Development was the main authority – under the Technical Office of the Ministry of Internal Affairs – responsible for the approval of urban, technical, aesthetic, and sanitary issues to be considered by the national, regional, and local systematisation plans. Later, due to war damage, the systematisation and reconstruction of the damaged areas also became the responsibility of the Systematisation Commission, including the creation and revision of the systematisation plans (National Archives of Romania [SANIC], ODSA, 83/1946, p. 3).

Norms and instructions for the creation of the nationwide systematisation plans were issued in 1927 by the Technical Office of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (revised in 1939) (SANIC, SAOT, 1/1927, p. 1). According to these norms, the systematisation plan aimed to provide information on the current status and future needs of cities, including envisioned extensions and developments triggered by geographic, economic, demographic, social, cultural, and aesthetic conditions (SANIC, SAOT, 1/1927, pp. 1–3). Under such circumstances, the present conditions of cities and potential zones of extension, as well as urban and suburban areas, had to be indicated and mapped. Various neighbourhoods (commercial, collective housing, villa neighbourhoods, industrial and military areas, green areas, and parks) were also subject to zoning and mapping, as were public institutions (squares, schools, hospitals, public baths, theatres, museums, markets, train stations, ports), and transport infrastructure networks (roads, railways). Plans had to be created at the scales of 1:5000 or 1:2500, and plans for detailed and important areas at 1:1000 or 1:500 (SANIC, SAOT, 1/1927, p. 1, 5).

During the interwar period, various cities in Transylvania contested the expropriation measures, arguing that they would hinder their urban development. Large cities, which were important industrial and administrative centres, such as Timișoara, Cluj, Brașov, and Sibiu, experienced rapid demographic growth and housing shortages before the First World War and the unification of 1918 (Mihnea, 2016, p. 129). Puia (2020, p. 55) argues that regulations concerning urban transformation before the 1918 reunification, such as those issued for Sibiu, Târgu Mureș, and Cluj, remained valid until the new national administrative reform came into force in 1925 (revised in 1936) when new systematisation plans had to be created.

Based on the new administrative rules, three cities in Transylvania created systematisation plans during the interwar and war periods: Hermannstadt (Sibiu – 1926, finalized in 1936), Kronstadt (Brașov – 1931 by the architects Alexandru and Ion Al. Davidescu, and 1937–1946 by Duiliu Marcu), and Deva (1943–1944) (Puia, 2020, p. 56). By the end of the war, only 10 of 16 municipalities had systematisation plans (including Brașov), as did only 9 of 42 county-seat cities (SANIC, ODSA 83/1946, p. 3).

In the case of Brașov, the city expanded beyond its fortified core before the 1921 land reform, and its most recent systematisation plan dated back to 1917 (SANIC, SAOT, 1/1917, Plan). Further systematisation plans

for Brașov were elaborated between 1937 and 1946 by Duliu Marcu (1885–1966). Various international theoretical approaches were considered for the elaboration of the road infrastructure plan, including works by authors such as Cesare Chiodi (1935), Sierks, H.L (1926), and August Rey (1928), who discussed the orientation of housing in relation to transport infrastructure (SANIC, SAOT 56/1944, pp. 54–55). The plans proposed by Marcu focused on the north and north-western part of the city, in the proximity of the historic city walls, which included the slaughterhouse, considered an unsanitary area (SANIC, SAOT 56/1944, p. 57). The plan was first approved in 1942 by the Commission for Systematisation, yet debates on the systematisation of the city and the proposed plans continued during the war and in response to war damage (SANIC, SAOT 56/1944). The heavy bombardment of the railway station, tracks and depots, and the damaged neighbourhoods near the railway station, where important industries were located, prompted a reconsideration of the systematisation debates (SANIC, SAOT 2/1945, p. 107). Under these circumstances, local authorities argued that no request for the reconstruction of the war-damaged buildings (industrial and private buildings – the latter representing approximately 50 percent of the building stock) should be granted until the systematisation plans were revised, and proposals to regenerate the damaged areas had been made (SANIC, SAOT 2/1945, p. 108). Due to the war damage, the Systematisation Commission planned an emergency programme prioritising repairs and systematisation measures for the heavily damaged cities and rural settlements nationwide (SANIC, ODSA, 83/1946, p. 3). Law 1315 from April 1945 authorized the reconstruction of war-damaged buildings, even if they were not integrated into the alignment plan, in cases where systematisation works could not be concluded within the proposed timeframe (SANIC, SAOT 38/1945, p. 23).

Up to 1945, Duiliu Marcu proposed nine solutions for the systematisation of the city. The final proposal (January 1944) focused on the systematisation of the civic centre and was finally approved in May 1946 by the Superior Commission for Systematisation Plans and by the local municipality in August 1946 (SANIC, SAOT 19/1946, p. 12). According to this proposal, four zones were identified, comprising residential, protected, mixed, and industrial areas (SANIC, SAOT 56/1944, p. 57). The documentation prepared for the system-atisation plans argued for the necessity to preserve buildings, fortifications, and neighbourhoods considered important for the historic character of the city, and important steps were required to designate them as historic monuments (SANIC, SAOT 56/1944, p. 47). These included a proposal to restore the former City Council building, which dated back to the medieval period (SANIC, MLP 55/1942) (Figure 3).

Furthermore, the diverse architectural legacy of the historic city and issues concerning "style" and "unity" were the subject of debate, as was how to integrate new constructions within the medieval structure of a "Saxon burg" considered "foreign" to Romanian identity. The challenge of "harmonising" the diversity of architectural styles of various buildings (medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque) in the historic city was debated, particularly in the context of integrating a project proposal for a commercial academy (not realised) and the systemati-
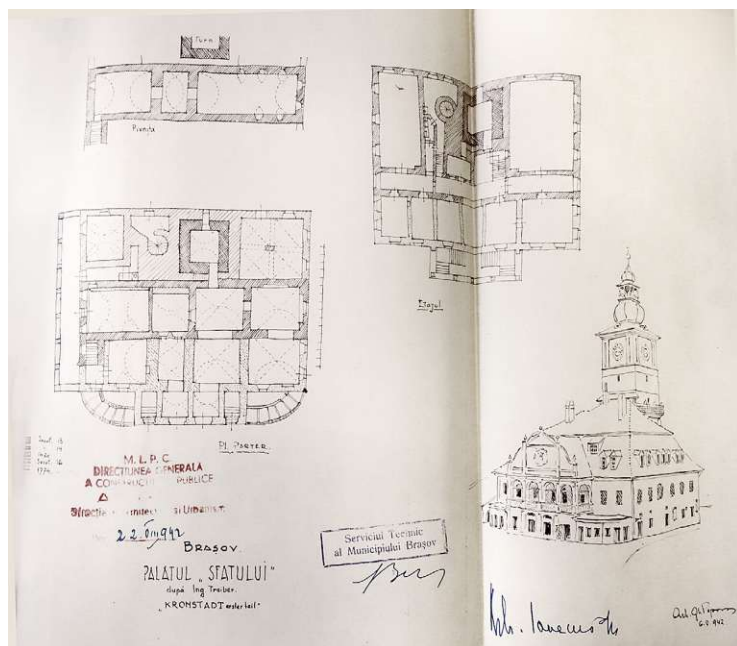
FIGURE 3   Palatul Sfatului, Brașov [City Council building restoration plan, 1942]. (From National Archives of Romania, Bucharest, SANIC, Fond 2764, MLP 55/1942, p. 96, CC BY-NC)

FIGURE 4   Extras din Planul Director de Sistematizare al Brașovului [Systematisation plan section indicating the plot designated for the Commercial Agency (in orange)]. (From National Archives of Romania, Bucharest, SANIC, Fond 3420, SAOT, File 19/1946, p. 20, CC BY-NC)
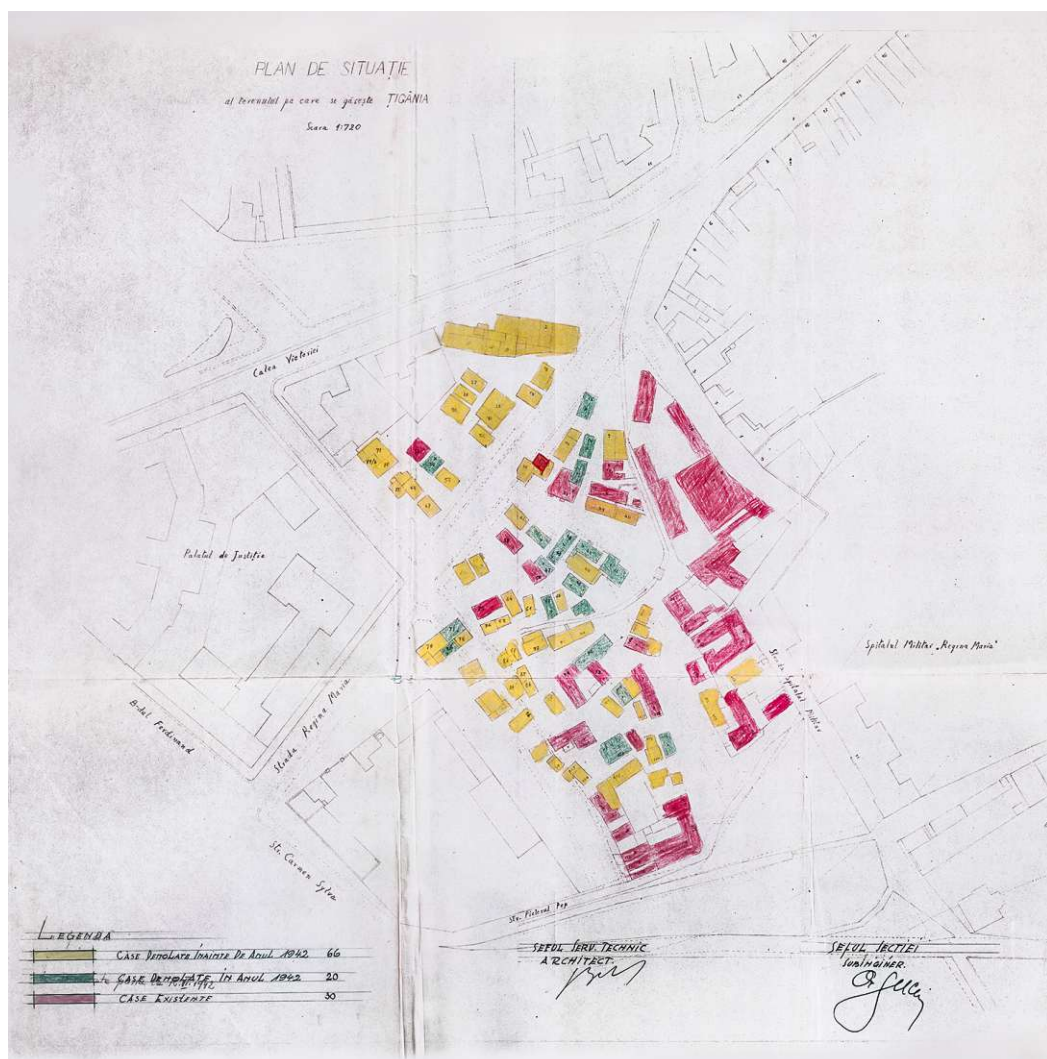
FIGURE 5   Plan de Situație Țigănia [Situation plan of the Roma settlement indicating houses demolished before 1942 (yellow), houses demolished in 1942 (green), and existing houses (pink), scale 1:720]. (From Municipal Archives Brașov, SJAN, Fond Primaria Municipiului Brașov, Serviciul Contencios, File 2/1942, p. 55, 1942, CC BY-NC)

sation of the historic city and its peripheries (Figure 4) (SANIC, SAOT, 32/1943, p. 12).

For the systematisation of the northern part of Brașov, Marcu elaborated a plan that proposed a new civic centre. Its location was in the proximity of the historic fortified city, encompassing the Roma settlement of "Țigania", which had once been located at the periphery of the historic city, as indicated in the 19th century Habsburg maps. This proposal advanced solutions for the area behind the courthouse building, expanding over the Roma settlement, which would have been cleared to build the new Orthodox Cathedral (SANIC, SAOT 38/1945, p. 106). For the demolition of the Roma settlements, inhabited by "Roma musicians", unsanitary conditions and the perceived "danger" of the settlement were argued (SJAN, Prefectura BV, Inspectorat General Admini-

strativ, 120/1942, p. 1). Marcu's final solution was preferred by the local municipality as it would prevent the demolition of a great number of buildings and largely retain the street alignment. The location of the new Orthodox Cathedral, which was significant for the post-1918 Romanian national identity, on the eastern side of the central park was agreed upon by the religious authorities and the local population. These eventually refused the construction of the Cathedral in the former neighbourhood "Țigania", considered unsuitable for a project of such national relevance, while the expropriation and systematisation of the Roma settlement were eventually carried out, to a large extent (SANIC, SAOT 38/1945, p. 28; 107). (Figure 5)

Marcu's proposals also included the rehabilitation of the war-damaged area around the train station. The relocation of the main train station and the removal of railway tracks that crossed the city was also suggested (SANIC, SAOT 38/1945, p. 3). The idea of reconstructing the war-damaged buildings in the proximity of the railway station, as they were before the war, was dismissed on the grounds that it would hinder the city's development and that the buildings were of modest quality (SANIC, SAOT 38/1945, p. 4). Further debates following WWII focused on relocating the city's industrial area to the suburban northern part of the city, an area which had expanded over the previous 20 years and had been heavily damaged during the aerial bombardments of 1944 (SANIC, SAOT 19/1946, p. 12).

3   SYSTEMATISATION OF THE HISTORIC CITY CENTRE UNDER
     THE COMMUNIST REGIME (1948–1965)

The 1948 change of political regime, which ultimately brought the Communist Party to power for the next four decades, triggered a series of interventions that significantly influenced the transformation of the multicultural and ethnically diverse city of Brașov into an important industrial hub.

Due to its established industrial infrastructure already from the late 19th century, interwar, and war periods, debates concerning the expansion of the industry at the periphery of the city continued under the communist regime. This eventually contributed to rapid demographic growth over a short period, with Brașov's population increasing from 59,234 inhabitants in 1930 (SANIC, SAOT 56/1944, p. 37) to 129,834 in 1956, and 135,000 in 1961 (INP, File 1434, p. 19). It should be noted that this increase occurred due to the influx of the Romanian ethnic group, against the background of the deportation of the ethnic Germans to the Soviet Gulags in 1945, and the nationalisation policies of the communist regime.

The urban transformation from 1948 to 1958 focused on the city's periphery, where industrial and housing projects of Soviet inspiration for workers were located, and named after nearby factories. According to Pintilescu (2014, pp. 137–138), the historic city centre was mostly ignored in the initial postwar years, with interventions limited to individual projects such as maintaining the city walls, renovating war-damaged buildings, and constructing the new Polytechnic Institute. As the author argues, the renaming of Brașov as *Orașul Stalin* (Stalin City) in August 1950 until 1960, was part of

a broader process initiated by the communist regime between 1948–1950. It included renaming streets, squares, neighbourhoods, and cities nationwide. Streets were renamed not only after the Soviet leader but also after local leaders and personalities. The renaming of Brașov after WWII under the Stalinist regime of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej (1948–1965) was justified by its intensive industrialisation and urban transformation during the 1940s, which places it along other European cities renamed after the Soviet leader, such as Eisenhüttenstadt (GDR), Katowice (Poland), and Varna (Bulgaria). The street names of medieval Brașov had been retained over centuries until 1918. They reflected the socio-economic functions or professions located in different areas of the historic city, for example the Horse Market and various equine-related professions, which were often named in German. During the socialist regime, a policy was pursued of renaming streets in the historic city after important cultural figures such as Romanian poets, composers, historians, or historical events associated with the Romanian Communist Party (INP, File 1434, 1965, p. 7). This was the end of many historically preserved street names in the historic city, which had already experienced a wave of renaming and Romanisation of the city's toponymic landscape in the interwar period.

The politics of systematisation under the socialist regime continued throughout the 1950s and intensified, with a focus on the historic city centre, in the 1960s. Ideas debated during the 1940s were further explored in this period. These included the relocation of the train station, the development of the new civic centre, and the restoration of the City Council building in the historic centre, a proposal already debated in 1942 (SANIC, MLP 55/1942, pp. 3–102). The creation of new cadastre plans was deemed a priority, as these focused mostly on the historic city and had not been regularly updated (SANIC, PCM Consiliul de Miniștri, 423/1953, p. 7; 16).

In the 1960s, the systematisation of the historic city centre was discussed by the institutions responsible for monument protection, the Directorate for Historic Monuments, and the Institute for Studies and Planning of Architectural Constructions and Systematisation. The first comprehensive project, proposed by the architects Gheorghe Pavlu (project director), B. Grumberg (lead architect), and Virgil Bilciurescu (project leader) in September 1965, was initiated at the municipality's request. This study draws upon Erich Jekelins' (1928), *"Das Burzenland". Dritter Band, Kronstadt, I. Teil*, a comprehensive historical study on the urban and architectural development of Kronstadt. According to the 1965 study, few "historic ensembles" in postwar Romania were recognised as protected historic monuments. They included the fortification in Sighișoara and the historic city centres of Brașov, Sibiu, Sebeș, Mediaș, and Bistrița (Bilciurescu,1973, p. 20).

The 1965 study aimed to provide a comprehensive overview of the current state and historical development of Brașov's city centre (known as Cetate/Burg) to better argue the proposed systematisation solution for this area. The study comprised two main sections: a written part and accompanying drawings. The written section included documentation on existing and planned systematisation and architectural solutions, as well as documentation on mobility and infrastructure, water, energy, and gas systems. The drawings section featured systematisation plans (1:20.000) (from 1961 for an estimated

FIGURE 6   Centru Istoric Brașov, [Systematisation plan for the proposed transformation of the historic centre of Brașov, scale 1:1000. Indicated in the legend are city walls (purple), retained buildings, proposed constructions (dark blue), existing streets (yellow), proposed streets (orange), proposed alley (grey), and areas designated for car parking (hatchings)]. (From INP, File 1434,1965, Plan 3, CC BY-NC)

population of 135,000 inhabitants), plans covering the existing situation (1:1000) (1965), plans for the proposed transformation (1:1000) (Figure 6), building age maps in the area studied (1:2000), traffic and mobility plans for the city (1:2000), mobility and traffic plans for the historic city centre (1:1000), and plans of the gas, electricity and water supply networks (all at 1:1000 scale).

According to the study, the historic centre covered 110 hectares (with 85 hectares within the city walls), serving various functions including commerce (covering several streets such as Str. Republicii, 7 November, Ciucașului,
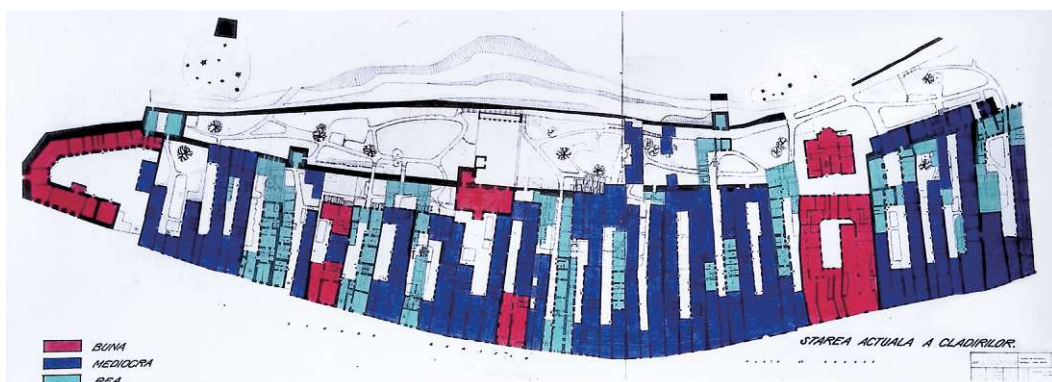
FIGURE 7   Starea Actuală a Clădirilor [Map indicating the condition of buildings (red: good, blue: medio-cre, turquoise: bad)]. (From INP, File 1435, 1966, CC BY-NC)

Barițiu-Armata Roșie, 23rd August Square); tourism; administration; and as a cultural and educational hub (INP, File 1434, 1965, p. 1). It also identified that numerous medieval historic monuments had been preserved, such as the Black Church, the Hirscher House, the Greek Orthodox Church, the city walls with some of their towers and bastions, and numerous houses dating from the 16th century onwards. These were considered significant architectural elements in the 1965 systematisation proposal, but above all, as relevant parts of the "ensemble" (INP, File 1434, 1965, p. 2). Plans for the restoration of such significant architectural elements, including the Black Church (INP, File 1438, 1968), the Hirscher House (INP, File 1440,1969), several houses along Republicii Street and surrounding the former Marktplatz (renamed 23rd August Square in the 1960s, and currently Piața Sfatului) were proposed. The vernacular architecture and housing conditions in the historic area were assessed as only 29 percent good, while 64 percent were mediocre and 7 percent were in a poor state (INP, File 1434, 1965, p. 23) (Figure 7). The deterioration of buildings was attributed to a lack of maintenance and consolidation work, the absence of sanitary installations, or the improper use of the buildings (INP, 1435, 1966, p. 2). Despite the poor state of housing, these structures were considered historically and architecturally valuable. Hence, their conservation, protection, and enhancement were proposed.

After identifying these issues in the historic city centre, the study proposed the following solutions to be implemented in the process of systematisation of the area:

1. Renovation of housing, city walls, towers, and bastions,
2. Creation of green areas, including in densely populated areas,
3. Improving mobility in the historic centre by diverting heavy traffic and public transportation from historic streets and establishing pedestrianised areas,
4. Enhancement of the commercial area to increase its tourism potential,
5. Repurposing some facilities with new functions (e.g. galleries, museums),
6. Valorisation of historic monuments, particularly the city walls, towers and bastions and significant individual buildings for tourism purposes (INP, File 1434, 1965, p. 2)

FIGURE 8   Desfășurarea Frontului Spre Piața 23 August [Façades of buildings facing the former 23rd August Square, (now Piața Sfatului)]. (From INP, File 1434, 1965, Plan 5, CC BY-NC)

The plan aimed to establish appropriate uses for buildings according to their character and to identify those buildings (or parts of them) with significant architectural value. Twenty-nine buildings were made subject for rehabilitation, six of which were considered of significant architectural value. Most of the retained facades in the historic centre dated back to the 19th century, with some medieval structures also being preserved (Figure 8). Preserved architectural styles varied from late Baroque to Classicist, and Neo-Renaissance. Also, due to the high housing density, increased humidity, and limited sunlight, it was proposed to demolish ca. 18,000 m² out of 136,000 m² in the area, covering unsanitary areas, improvised structures, and auxiliary buildings (INP, File 1434, 1965, p. 28).

The project also aimed to establish a clear division of functions, such as public and private. For public buildings, access would be facilitated from the main streets, while in the case of private housing, interior courtyards would be redesigned for this purpose (INP, 1435, 1966, p. 7). The plan also envisioned the transformation of some buildings for cultural purposes, such as regional museum or public art galleries, while smaller spaces were allocated for commercial activities serving tourism.

Hence, one could argue that the first comprehensive project of integrating the restoration and conservation of the historic city centre in the systematisation plans, which aimed at the modernisation of the historic city centre, was issued by the communist regime during the 1960s and emphasised the tourism potential of the "historic ensemble". This foresaw the valorisation and preservation of the street layout, craft workshops, and vernacular housing, and proposed the restoration of the city walls, fortifications, and bastions, in addition to the already protected individual historical monuments (INP, File 1434, 1965, pp. 27–28). The main aim of this proposal was to preserve and conserve the "ensemble of the walled city" for its historical and architectural value, illustrating its "medieval value of a commercial city". No reference was made whatsoever to the diverse ethnic, cultural, and religious legacies of the architectural structures and their respective historical functions.

The proposed comprehensive systematisation plan had to respond to demographic growth and identify new functions while maintaining the historic city centre, which was defined as the area within the city walls. To address demographic developments, new social, educational, cultural, sanitary,

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commercial, and industrial constructions were planned, along with green areas and spaces for public recreation. For this, the development of a new centre in the form of the civic centre, encompassing and responding to socialist needs, became part of Brașov's systematisation process. This concept built upon the civic centre idea that had been elaborated during the 1940s, with the selected area for its development again located in proximity to the historic centre, now envisioned as an important touristic area.

4   CONCLUSION

This chapter adopted a *longue durée* approach to highlight the urban transformation and planning of former Habsburg cities in the processes of nation-state formation after 1918. These were impacted by the modernisation debates in the interwar period, the consequences of the Second World War, and the changes triggered by the integration of cities such as Brașov into the communist modernisation agenda from 1948 until 1965.

After a short historical overview of Kronstadt/ Brașov's development from medieval times until its emergence as a multiethnic trade city under Habsburg and eventually Austro-Hungarian rule, this chapter highlighted interventions aimed at the modernisation and systematisation of the city. Specifically, it scrutinised the urban transformation of the city during the period of nation-state formation after 1918, revealing how urban interventions were shaped by the political agenda of Romanisation and nationalisation of the urban space. This is particularly relevant as Transylvanian cities have been shaped throughout centuries by their multiethnic communities. By discussing the systematisation politics of the historic centre and the ambitious plans to modernise the multiethnic city, this chapter further contributes to the debate on Transylvanian multiethnic cities, which have predominantly focused on the Hungarian and German-speaking communities. By highlighting the systematisation of the Roma settlement in the course of 1940s urban-planning transformations, this chapter also brings attention to a less discussed aspect of modernisation and systematisation of Romanian cities post-1918.

In addition, it has demonstrated how the debates on modernisation and systematisation carried out in the first decade under the communist regime of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej neglected the multiethnic aspect of the Transylvanian cities in favour of attributing new historical values and functions, such as tourism, to medieval cities like Brașov. Nevertheless, this chapter has shown how the politics of urban transformation throughout the interwar and post-war periods integrated debates on historic monuments preservation and, eventually, of historic city centres, into urban planning and transformation processes.

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BIOGRAPHY

Laura Demeter is a researcher at the Centre for Heritage Conservation Studies and Technologies (KDWT) at the University of Bamberg. Until October 2024, she was part of as part of the interdisciplinary research consortium *UrbanMetaMapping: Mapping and Transforming: An interdisciplinary analysis of city maps as a visual medium of urban transformation in Central and Eastern Europe, 1939–1949*, funded by BMBF. The objective was to analyse the impact of the Second World War on the urban space in Romania and the Republic of Moldova and the role of heritage preservation in the context of transformation processes. Her further research interests cover issues, such as heritage-making processes, value creation, and transitional heritage in the context of authoritarian regimes and regime changes in Eastern Europe.

Part II

CULTURAL, SOCIAL AND FUNCTIONAL TRANSFORMATION

Long-term Consequences for Heritage and Public Discourse

PRESERVING THE UNWANTED? HOW VIENNA'S INFORMAL FRINGE WAS STUDIED, DISCUSSED, AND REFORMED AFTER 1945

Friedrich Hauer, Andre Krammer

Abstract

After the end of the First World War, many of Vienna's two million inhabitants were suffering from famine, cold, disease, and desperate housing conditions. Many resorted to self-empowerment: Illegal forest clearings, vegetable gardens, and the building of basic shacks on squatted land expanded to the Danube floodplain, the alpine foothills, and the wastelands on the outskirts of the city. Albeit reduced in scale, this type of "internal colonization" (Robert Hoffmann) would reoccur during the world economic crisis of the thirties and in the precarious years during and after the Second World War. In the late 1940s it became clear that this transformation of the city's peripheries, unwanted by authorities and planners, could not be rolled back in its entirety. While some important shantytowns were cleared, from the 1950s to the late 1990s most former illegal settlements were upgraded, connected to public utilities and legalised in terms of zoning and construction law. Consequently, former *Bretteldörfer* (shantytowns) began to transform into (more or less) regular suburban residential areas.

This chapter elaborates on this largely unknown history of Vienna, focusing on the period of post-war reconstruction from around 1945 to 1965. It discusses findings of the research project *Wien informell* (2021–2023), particularly those that concern the public and expert debates on the legacy of Vienna's "wild" fringe; surveys of its social, urbanistic, and architectural forms; and proposed reform concepts. It thus sheds new light on an important, yet often neglected aspect of a major European city in post-war transition. Not only are debates on urban sprawl and the disintegration of peripheral urban space older than is commonly thought of. Today's "suburban archipelago" is the result of a long period of mitigation and mediation between planned and unplanned developments, while the (re-)organization of the urban fringe remains as important as ever.

Keywords

Informal urbanisation, urban morphology, public discourse, slum upgrading, zoning, post-war Vienna

"The structural disintegration of the city, which has taken us by surprise in recent decades and which we were unfortunately not able to master due to the bitter hardships of two wars, worries me ever more seriously. This applies to all areas in which puny individual buildings or rows of houses and disorderly groups of houses are scattered, from which children have to walk long distances to school, women long distances to the shop, and men long distances to work. We must all feel obliged to oppose this disorderly development so that the outskirts of our city do not become an uncharitable agglomeration of "wild" settlements in which

the settlers' well-intentioned but ill-advised personal ambition works to the detriment of the general public." (Jonas, 1955, pp. 122–123)[1]

1   INTRODUCTION

As in many other European cities, informal settlements shaped the fringe of mid-20th century Vienna. Albeit largely neglected in common accounts of modern urban development in the Global North, "wild" developments represent a persistent feature of the urban fabric in European and American cities and significantly shaped the transition towards the Fordist city and its planning instruments (for an overview of the European context see Manzano, 2018; Manzano 2022). The Austrian capital is a case in point. After the Second World War, Vienna's urban planners and authorities saw themselves challenged by what some called the "structural disintegration of the city" (Jonas, 1955, p. 122) from the outskirts in. Exuberant illegal construction, pressing social problems and feeble planning frameworks raised the question of how to deal with the unwanted legacy of decades of deep societal crisis. This chapter outlines Vienna's disordered fringe zone as a centrepiece of urban analysis and discussion: The "sick fringe" was first identified in the interwar period and became a major topic in debates about the aspired – but never attained – "new order" for the urban periphery after 1945. Drawing on original planning documents and academic publications, this chapter traces how the discourse shifted from clearance and disentanglement of "impure forms of use" towards containment, reform and upgrading, public relations, and "silent integration". In doing so, it draws on spatially explicit long-term studies of 20th century Vienna informal urbanisation (Hauer & Krammer, 2023; Krammer & Hauer, 2023a&b), which also provide an outline of the GIS-based mapping methods and archival sources used and feature detailed discussions of the wider state of research.

2   URBAN DEVELOPMENT FROM THE INSIDE OUT

The expansion of Vienna has taken place in several concentric stages since the Middle Ages. Former fringe zones – which already bore a peri-urban, agricultural, or natural imprint – were thus transformed and urbanised in several steps (Eigner & Schneider, 2005, pp. 38–24). The urban fabric spread across a territory that to some degree resisted rigid urban layouts. Inner and outer peripheral zones, transitional and intermediate spaces, emerged, which, in contrast to the solidified core area of the city, were characterised by a tendency towards spatial and functional disparity. This dialectic still characterises most European cities today.

Present-day peripheries typically consist of outsourced urban functions, suburban settlements, large-scale infrastructural developments, areas used for agriculture, and fragments of old natural spaces – often resulting in close coexistence and glaring juxtapositions. Depending on the per-

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1   Unless otherwise stated, this and all subsequent translations from non-English-language sources are by the authors.

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spective, this archipelago of fragmentation is either perceived as deficient or exciting and intriguing. The relatively young discipline of "strollology" (*Spaziergangwissenschaft*), as coined by Lucius Burckhard (2006), among others, and continued today e.g. by the Rome-based Stalker Collective (Careri, 2017), is particularly interested in urban peripheral zones where the organising power of centralised planning is dwindling. Not only analytically and physically, but also conceptually, the peripheral twilight zones often elude easy access. Here, urban landscape remains a *terrain vague*, as terms like urban sprawl, the Italian *città diffusa* or Thomas Sieverts' German term *Zwischenstadt* (Sieverts, 1997) suggest.

3   VIENNA'S UNCHARTED FRINGE

Over the course of the 19th century, Vienna's rapidly growing suburbs were incorporated in several stages: Firstly in 1850 and 1892, then large areas on the left bank of River Danube were added in 1905. Radical urban schemes for expansion such as Otto Wagner's *Die unbegrenzte Großstadt* (Unlimited Metropolis) of 1911 remained an exception and failed to materialise, not least because the population curve of the former metropolis of two million was falling after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918. Moreover, the city's topography put up some resistance to its physical growth. In the west, Vienna is bordered by the hilly *Wienerwald* (Vienna Woods), while in the northeast the widely branching Danube acted as an aquatic barrier. The riverine landscape was only "tamed" and urbanised from the 1870s by means of several regulations (Hauer & Hohensinner, 2019). By contrast, urban expansion to the south and south-east was less inhibited.

From the First World War onwards, an unplanned urban fringe zone developed on both sides of Vienna's changing administrative limits (the 1905 boundaries were vastly expanded in 1938 by the Nazi government, only to be largely rolled back after the Second World War in 1954 for political rather than planning reasons; cf. Figure 1, Figure 7).

The separation of Vienna and Lower Austria in 1920/21 and their new status as federal states had decoupled the capital from its hinterland in administrative terms, which makes coordinated urban-rural planning difficult to this day. The changes to Vienna's administrative limits in the 20th century meant that political responsibilities for peripheral areas shifted multiple times, handicapping the reorganization of the city's "disorderly urban fringe". This fringe was characterised by shantytowns, transport infrastructure (railroads, waterfronts etc.), brownfield sites, and rural and suburban fragments. Vienna thus already discovered its *Zwischenstadt* in the interwar period (cf. Schuster & Schacherl, 1926), while prior to that the establishment of a comprehensive regulatory framework (*Bauzonenplan, Generalregulierungsplan*), the embellishment of the cityscape, and infrastructural projects had dominated the planning discourse. However, the unruly peripheral areas were only really surveyed, researched, and encouraged to reform after 1945. What drove this push to engage the unwanted legacies at the margins was mainly the challenge posed by Vienna's "wild", i.e. informal settlements: Since the end
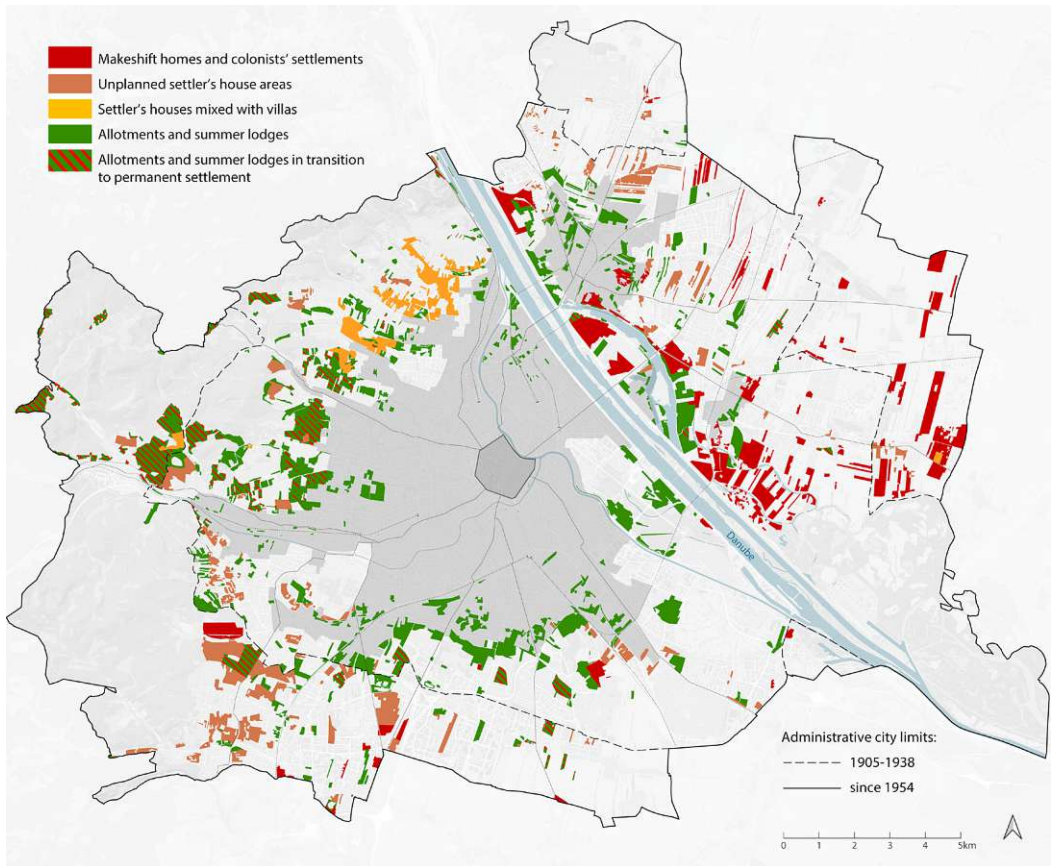
FIGURE 1   Vienna's "wild" fringe as of 1956, showing only area within current city boundaries. (Map: Friedrich Hauer & Thomas Bozzetta (2024), basemap from Stadt Wien, MA41. Edited from "Tracing the informal fringe: A large-scale study of 20th century 'wild' settlements in Vienna, Austria" by F. Hauer & A. Krammer, 2023, Habitat International 141; CC BY-NC-SA)

of the First World War, more than a hundred thousand urbanites had resorted to self-empowerment: Illegal forest clearings, vegetable gardens, allotments and squatted land with basic houses were expanding in the Danube floodplain and the alpine foothills, in the wastelands on the outskirts of the city. As a 1922 report in National Geographic magazine curiously noted, makeshift garden homes "surround the city like a ragged girdle and are the result of the housing famine that has driven thousands of families to live here in huts, even in cold weather, where they add to the city's food supply by raising vegetables about the front door" (Solano, 1923, p. 79).

Albeit reduced in scale, this type of "internal colonization" (Hoffmann, 1987) would reoccur during the Great Depression of the thirties and in the precarious years at the end of and following the Second World War (Hauer & Krammer, 2019, 2023). When the Second Austrian Republic was constituted in 1945, it soon became clear to the governing bodies that this "unwanted transformation" of the capital's periphery was neither quantified nor understood in its entirety. As early as 1948, the Commission for Spatial Research and Reconstruction at the Austrian Academy of Sciences and Vienna University's Institute of Geography were commissioned by the city council to carry out

extensive investigations of the city's built-up areas, including vast swathes of its "wild fringe" (e.g., Trimmel, 1958; Bobek & Lichtenberger, 1966). Based on the spatially explicit surveys carried out by these institutions, it was possible to map and quantify the considerable extent of the city's informal fringe (Hauer & Krammer, 2023, pp. 5–7): In 1956, Vienna's peripheries featured a staggering 17.5 km² of unplanned housing and makeshift settlements (totalling at least 15,000 buildings), 16.8 km² of allotment gardens and summer lodge compounds (with at least 30,000 plots) and 6.4 km² of allotment gardens in transition to permanent settlement (with at least 9,000 buildings) (Figure 1).

4 THE SICK FRINGE: HEALING FROM THE OUTSIDE IN?

In the incipient phase of post-war reconstruction following the occupation of Vienna by Soviet troops in April of 1945, Viennese urban planning had to reform and realign itself. Clean-up efforts, construction measures, and future development issues were discussed simultaneously. Amongst other things, the issue of the largely fragmented urban peripheries was broached. An international committee of inquiry (*Enquête für den Wiederaufbau der Stadt Wien*), convened between 1945 and 1946, called for the prevention of further "wild" settlements as an urgent "emergency measure" (Maetz, 1946). In the monthly magazine *Der Aufbau*, published from 1946 onwards by the *Stadtbauamtsdirektion* (Urban Planning Directorate), the "problem of the wild settlements" soon became the subject of intense professional debates (Figure 2).

Planners and politicians wanted to seize the chance to finally do away with the conundrums inherited from the violent past, while simultaneously instilling a uniform and orderly "building spirit" into the battered urban population: "Rebuilding means making things better" was a slogan widely used by the city administration's public relations department that later fed into the powerful narrative of urban "rebirth" (Ziak, 1965). An analysis of the metaphors for the urban fringe zone used in planner's lingo and public communication is illuminating: There is talk of a "confused,

FIGURE 2   Cover of *Der Aufbau* featuring illegal buildings in the Vienna Woods with the leading article "Protect the Viennese landscape! A last-minute alarm call". (Source: © Magistratsdirektion der Stadt Wien, Stadtbaudirektion, Der Aufbau, March 1952, cover and p. 97)

ugly conglomerate that disfigures the landscape", of "habitable piles of bricks" and "Wild West colonists", whose shacks and poor gardens "spread like a cancer on the body of the city" (Stadt Wien – Presse- und Informationsdienst. 1947, p. 3). Many an architect wondered whether one ought not be

"grateful for every bomb" that hit decrepit residential areas, because it offered precious opportunities for urban redevelopment according to modern principles (Löwitsch, 1946, p. 99). While such criticism often referred equally to the redevelopment zones in the consolidated city (e.g. workers' residential quarters) and to the chaotic periphery, there was a consensus that the ailing urban body must recover from the outside in: "The bleak image of the battle zone between city and countryside will have to give way to a friendlier design if the city is ever to recover" (Schimka, 1954, p. 201).

While some had hoped for radical surgery, the sheer size of the problem meant pragmatism soon set in. The conservative daily *Die Presse* claimed in a headline that Vienna's "wild settlements shall disappear" but conceded that "only gradual elimination" was feasible and that "improvement" was the other, maybe more realistic option (Die Presse, 1948, p. 3). As late as 1967, when yet another "slum on the outskirts of the city" was to be cleared with much publicity – in this case a shantytown (*Bretteldorf*) in Breitenleer Straße in Vienna's Donaustadt district – the pickaxe was dubbed the "surgeon's scalpel", with which the "tumours and outgrowths on the urban organism" had to be removed in order to secure the "healthy development of our hometown". The regulatory, "untangling" activity the authorities propagated "has nothing light-hearted to it, but is a necessity that one cannot escape, whether it may be pleasant or not" (Stadt Wien – Presse- und Informationsdienst, 1967, p. 1, 3).

5   TOWARDS A NEW (DIS)ORDER

For the proponents of the desired "new order" at the margins, the urban periphery's deficits in design and hygiene were not least a symbol of the powerlessness of the authorities. Administrative boundaries, legal restrictions, "centrifugal" economic forces due to flaws in tax and land policies: In the post-war period, suburbanisation as a whole appeared "wild" and unruly in a broader sense, not just in terms of the many actual developments that were taking place outside the law. As Karl Kupsky, architect, professor at *Technische Hochschule Wien* and an ardent advocate of regional planning, put it in a programmatic essay in 1947:

> The urban planner's sphere of influence ends […] at the political boundaries of the urban organism. […] This is most evident […] in suburban development, […] that confused, ugly and landscape-disfiguring conglomerate that [...] always heralds the approach of a larger settlement. Such suburban settlements epitomise the influence exerted by the city on its surroundings – but they also epitomise the powerlessness of the municipal authorities. In essence, they are exactly the kind of "wild settlements" that everyone is familiar with […], though unfortunately only very few are aware of the financial havoc they wreak on the municipality […]. (Kupsky, 1947, p. 2)

In 1949, Roland Rainer, later a famous modernist architect who was to exert formative influence on Viennese urban planning around 1960, joined the

discussion. Contrary to many of his colleagues he held some hopes for the "wild settlements" and suggested using the settlers' "elementary power" and their "will to settle" to create *Die gegliederte und aufgelockerte Stadt* (i.e. the structured and de-centralised city; cf. Göderitz, Rainer & Hoffmann, 1957; Diefendorf, 1993, p. 123, 159). Despite all their deficiencies in urban layouts, design, and materials, Rainer believed in the "wild" settlement's potential for "synthesis" on the urban fringe, suggesting that behind the planners' backs, a kind of spontaneous garden city had been forming in the peripheral zones since 1918:

> After considering the possible ways to order and heal the existing wild settlements it has been recognised that this is a very difficult, almost impossible task. But even if the upgrading of the wild settlements existing today should one day be accomplished – the emergence of new ones is by no means precluded and will be just as impossible to prevent in the future as it has been up to now! Therefore, it is not the symptoms that need to be cured, but the disease that causes these symptoms.
>
> But where does this disease lie? In the settlers themselves – or perhaps more in their environment, the stone city from which they want or need to escape? The flight of barracked city dwellers to the green outskirts has been going on for over 50 years […]. Its most visible embodiment are allotment gardens, which have always been particularly welcomed and promoted in all times of need, only to be pushed back and eradicated shortly afterwards for various reasons. Nevertheless, almost all "war gardeners" understandably tried to cling to their gardens permanently. Allotment gardeners, summer cottage owners, and wild settlers have two needs in common: the need for a small garden of their own and for a simple, natural dwelling to stand in it. They obviously also share a willingness to make sacrifices to achieve this goal. These are the same ideas that Ebenezer Howard had in mind in 1898 when he proclaimed his "garden city of tomorrow", which, in his own words, was to "unite the amenities of city life with those of country life": nothing other than the "synthesis of city and country", practically understood – and realised! (Rainer, 1949, p. 324)

For Rainer, the "wild" fringe appeared as the mere symptom of a curable disease: the dreadful, overcrowded, and mixed-used city of the 19th century. This was something that was to be radically combated by means of large-scale planning according to modernist principles: the re-structuring of the densely built-up areas and the thoughtful functional and architectural (re-)organisation and improvement of the unplanned peripheries, including the insertion of new suburban centres.

6   CONFUSION AND DISENTANGLEMENT

While the *urbanistic* and *architectural* flaws of Vienna's "wild" fringe had been documented and bemoaned since their emergence in the 1920s, discourses and measures under the Nazi regime (1938–1945) are contradictory and have
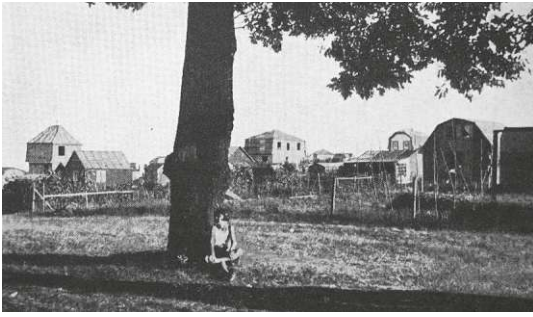
FIGURE 3   Picturing the "initial stages of urban disaster": 1920s "wild" settlements, photographed by the city's later chief urban planner Karl Heinrich Brunner. (Photos: © K. H. Brunner, 1952, Stadtplanung für Wien: Bericht an den Gemeinderat der Stadt Wien, pp. 186, 188)

barely been studied (cf. Weinberger, 2015, pp. 249–252) (Figure 3). Informal settlements and practices were starting to be scientifically scrutinised as *social* problems only from around 1950. The inhomogeneity of the zone turned out to be largely due to the inhomogeneity of the settlers and their diverging interests, which had shaped vast swathes of land in the absence of any general planning measures. Urban researchers distinguished between the "will to settle" (i.e. the urge to own a home and garden), the "compulsion to settle" (driven by housing and food shortages), and speculation (the possession of land and buildings as investment) as the main driving forces behind disorder, fragmentation, and the squandering of resources (MA18, 1949). The problems were to be tackled through reorganisation and urban redevelopment. Architect Werner Jäger (1913–2002), one of the proponents of this innovative approach, known as "disentanglement", recommended "breaking new ground in redevelopment" and relying on the "consolidation of the settlers into a cooperative" to create locally responsible bodies (Jäger, 1950, p. 523). In order to carry out the long-term programs of

> […] redevelopment in cooperation with the organised settlers […] all negotiations and implementation should be regarded as an internal matter for the settlers and carried out by their organisation […]. The architect in charge belongs to such a settlement; he must be for the settlement what the family doctor used to be for the family. (Jäger, 1950, p. 523)

Of course, the "family doctor" should also be assisted by the inevitable "public health officer" from the higher-level planning authorities, to whom Jäger directed his propositions. In a concerted "disentanglement campaign" at several scales, not only the outskirts of the city, but also more centrally located allotments that had mutated into "wild" settlements, were to be "untangled" and converted into "pure forms of use", i.e. re-organised upgraded settlements and permanent allotment garden sites (Figure 4). Some "wild" compounds were to be abandoned altogether, and the land reassigned to "higher purposes" (industry, traffic infrastructure, etc.), while zoned but undeveloped land would at the same time be converted into arable land or recreational green spaces. According to social *and* spatial criteria, candidates for housing sites and allotment gardens were to be selected and managed centrally. "Exchange and
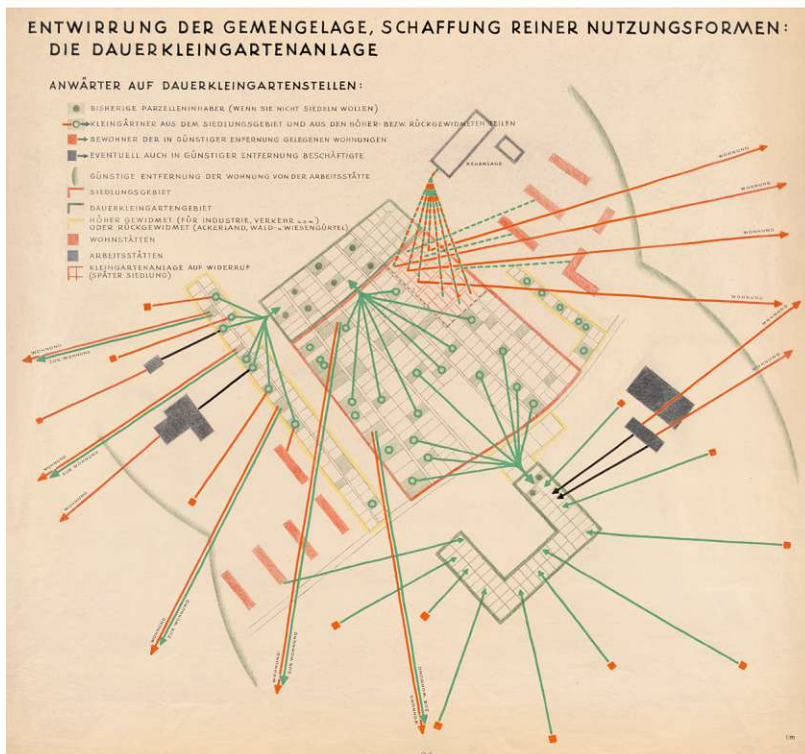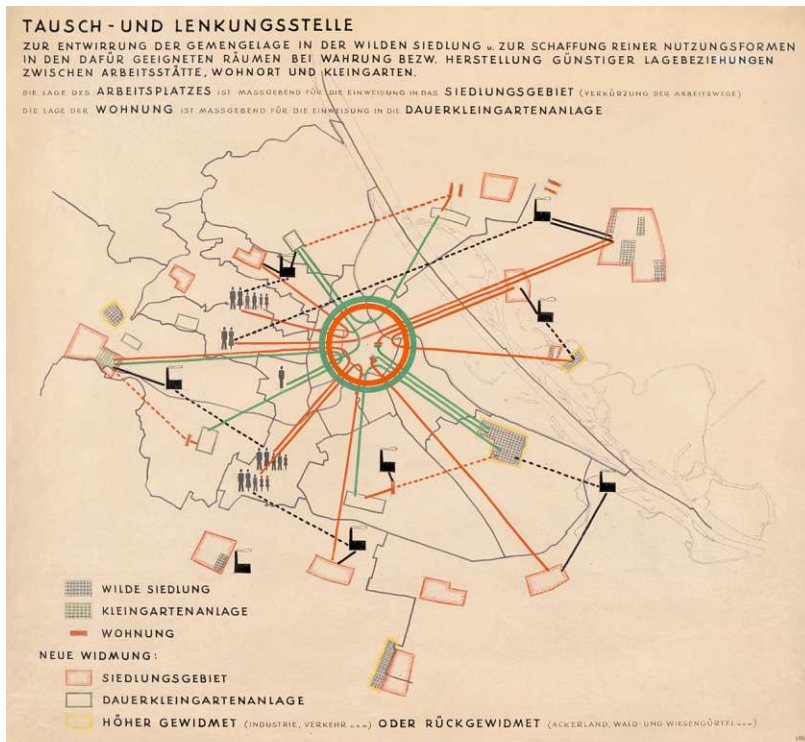
FIGURE 4   Schemes for the "disentanglement of mixed situations, creating pure forms of use" and the functioning of a central board for "exchange and steering". (Graphic ©unknown creator, source: Vom Grabeland zur wilden Siedlung, ca. 1949, Stadt Wien, Facharchiv Magistratsabteilung 18 – Stadtentwicklung und Stadtplanung, Reference no. SEP-P05226)

FIGURE 5   The consolidation of the "wild" settlement Essling Süd, with the central strip highlighted in green. Wild settlements on subdivided former farmland south of the old village centre of Essling (1938). (Source: Datenquelle – Stadt Wien, MA41, CC BY)

FIGURE 6   Reform plan aiming at the creation of a community structure in the middle of the strip

steering boards" would ensure "favourable spatial relationships between workplace, residence, and allotment garden" in a way that market mechanisms could not. The general aim was "to direct the interested individuals to the right spaces for them and for the city" (Jäger, 1950, p. 525).

The organisational integration of settlers and gardeners into cooperatives and associations that Jäger was striving for was in fact implemented in many cases, often forming the prerequisite for legalisation, e.g. in the case of allotment compounds (Jäger, 1951). However, the homogenisation and consolidation of the settlements mostly took place as a piecemeal process and was not centrally planned and steered according to modern ideas of functional segregation. What was a patchwork of developed and undeveloped, inhabited and uninhabited properties of varying quality in the early 1950s gradually became a single-family housing suburb in the 1960s and 70s. Garden use became less important as the food crisis eased and then ceased, speculative bets often paid off in one way or another: Derelict plots were sold on at a profit, and the development of plots became a solid investment or a source of revenue via rents. Exceptions such as the area Essling Süd (Figure 5, 6 & 7), where early reform concepts have indeed left their mark,[2] prove the rule of incremental, rather smooth consolidation without much planning coordination (cf. Krammer & Hauer, 2023b, pp. 24–27).

2   Immediately after the war, urban planners had become aware of the extensive and ramshackle scattered settlements on subdivided former farmland south of the old village center of Essling (Figure 5 A) in the Donaustadt district on the left bank of River Danube. The area had become part of Vienna only in 1938. Karl Brunner's 1952 book *Stadtplanung für Wien* features an elaborate reform study "for the purpose of subsequent creation of a community structure" in the middle of the "strip settlements" (Figure 5 B) dating from 1949. The entire area was to be developed with paved roads, sewers, electricity and water; as yet unsettled farmland was to be built on with closed rows of terraced houses to mitigate the low density. In turn, 25 percent of the development zones were to be transferred to the public domain and used for amenities such as sports facilities, recreation areas, schools, and administrative facilities. The area's current state shows a relatively

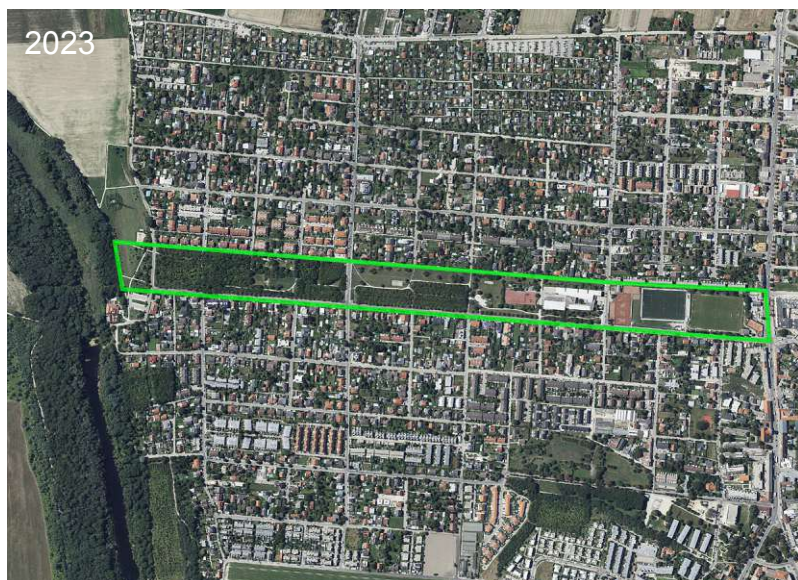settlements (1949). (Source: Graphic by ©K. H. Brunner, 1952, p. XII)

FIGURE 7   Current state dominated by detached homes (2023). (Source: Datenquelle – Stadt Wien, MA41, CC BY)

7   CONTAINMENT AND IMPROVEMENT

In the early 1950s, municipal authorities sought to stop the further spread of the "wild" fringe. The main argument put forward to the wider public stressed landscape conservation (cf. Figure 2). In 1952/53, an *Eight-point programme of social urbanism in Vienna* was presented. Two points dealt explicitly with the problematic legacies of the "struggle between the big city and the free, naturally grown landscape" (Schimka, 1954, p. 200). Point 6 called for the redevelopment and improvement of "wild" settlements, emphasising that they "are not only slums in disguise but also entail enormous economic losses due to the inefficiency of their development". They have arisen "from the selfishness of a few to the detriment of the whole". Point 7 referred to the urgent need for landscape protection:

> It is unacceptable that these important open spaces are gradually being stolen from the recreation-seeking Viennese through inappropriate and unauthorised construction! Our planning goal must be to expand Vienna's protective legislation, but also to work together with the responsible authorities in Lower Austria to protect the Vienna Woods and the Danube floodplains! (Magistratsdirektion der Stadt Wien, Stadtbaudirektion, 1953, title page of the July issue)

homogeneous residential district, dominated by detached houses (Figure 5 C). In some spots, plot mergers have resulted in terraced house estates or multi-story residential buildings in recent decades. While parts of the original reform concept had to give way to pragmatic integration, the central strip of public land as the area's open space backbone has prevailed. Today it contains public infrastructure (sports facilities and a school complex) and is otherwise zoned as public park area and protected nature reserve.

The *Wald- und Wiesengürtel* (Forest and Meadow Belt) adopted into law by the Vienna City Council back in 1905 had been designed to protect the green space around Vienna, to keep it accessible and free from construction. However, both the foothills and the floodplains had been decimated by informal settlements and allotment colonies since the First World War (Wurzer, 1990). The protected landscape was to surround the city as a *cordon sanitaire* and thus not only guarantee a reservoir of fresh air for everyone, but also provide a clearly defined boundary to the peri-urban chaos. To this end, the municipality also started to purchase large plots of woodland, both to open them up to public recreation and to tackle squats more effectively. From around 1955, the fight against illegal land grabbing was flanked by a broad PR campaign that sought to persuade the Viennese public of the "great problem of order" at the margins – with only moderate success at first.

Besides radio broadcasts (Jonas, 1955, pp. 117–132), exhibitions and international congresses were an integral part of this campaign. The *XIII International Congress on Housing and Urban Planning*, held in the city hall in July 1956, was dedicated to "The City of Today and Tomorrow and its Environs". Along with case studies from 13 European and six non-European countries, the Austrian contribution procured by the city council focused on "Vienna and its environs". The exhibition catalogue contains a section that highlights the "chaotic urban periphery" in Vienna as a "major problem of order". The organisation of the outskirts of the city, a mixture of "settlements, factories, storage areas, allotments, market gardens, sand and gravel pits" (IkfWS 1956, p. 22, point 16), was described as the most urgent task of urban planning. "Lack of planning" and failures in zoning were identified as the root causes, resulting in disorderly parcelling of land determined by individual interests and randomly scattered compounds – many of them illegal and without any infrastructure (Figure 8). Once more, reference was also made to the perennial "problem of Vienna's city limits":

> Essential metropolitan areas for living and working, recreation and transportation lie outside [the city's] administrative boundaries. For the City of Vienna and the Province of Lower Austria, this results in numerous difficulties in the zoning of new residential and industrial areas, the redevelopment of disorganised settlements, the development of focal points, the preservation of the recreational landscape, traffic planning, and the creation of viable municipalities in the surrounding areas. (IkfWS 1956, p. 22, point 21)

The incongruity of the actual metropolitan area and the different administrational ambits was obvious and well documented. A map featured in the 1956 exhibition (Figure 9) contrasts the boundaries of Vienna's administrational ambit in the 20th century with the actual inhabited metropolitan area of the mid-1950s. It maps the fringe zone outside the current city limits (which date only from 1954), identifying ample zones of "wild" settlements in need of redevelopment and projecting future zones of housing, industrial and infrastructural development. Regional planners demanded, among other things, superordinate planning boards, "land procurement laws", and
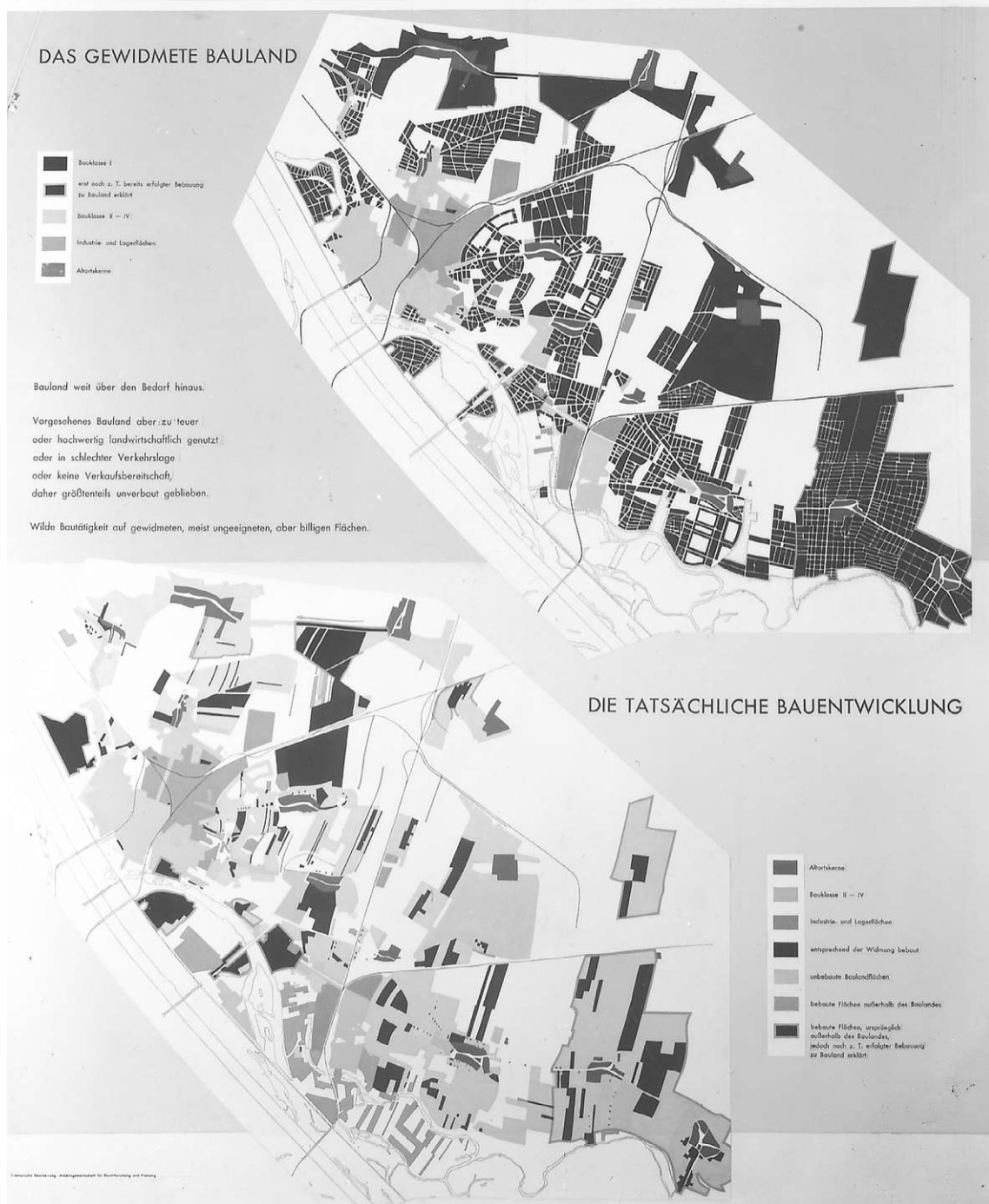
"coordinated green space planning" (IkfWS 1956, p. 22, point 25). At the conference, an international study group dedicated to the "redevelopment of decaying fringe-zone-neighbourhoods" was set up, focusing on the problems of conceptual and spatial definition of redevelopment zones, the necessary planning tools and stages, as well as legal and financial issues (Conference folder, 1956, Studiengruppe V).
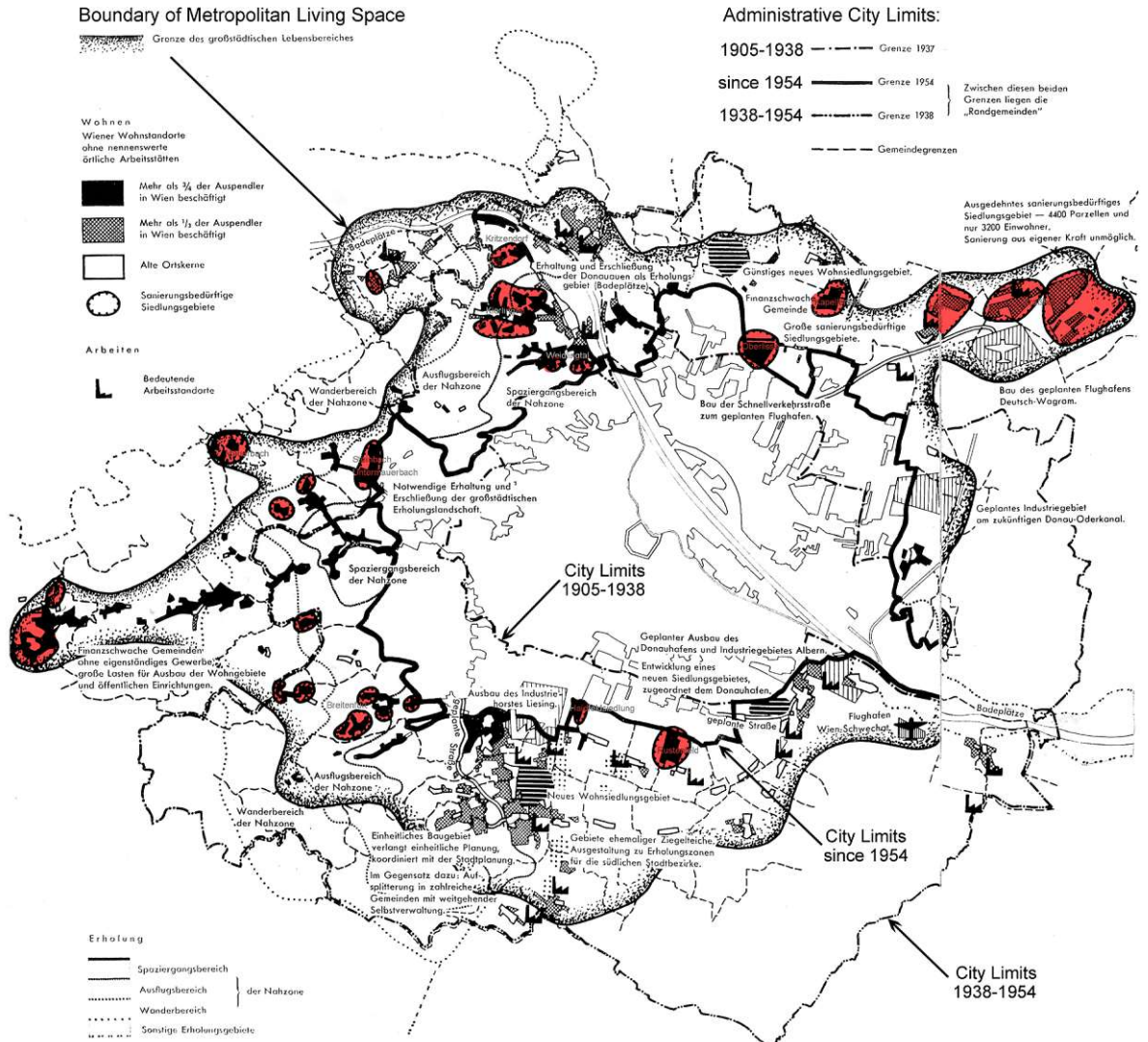

FIGURE 9　　　　Vienna's metropolitan area and administrative city limits in the mid-1950s. (Plan by © unknown creator, source: Stadtbauamt Wien, 1956, p. 22; highlights, English captions and arrows added by Friedrich Hauer)

8 "EDUCATIONAL PROCESS" AND SILENT INTEGRATION

Despite these efforts, it was not until the early 1960s that the situation on the outskirts of the city actually stabilised and complaints about the onerous legacy of the "wild" fringe decreased noticeably. Most existing compounds prevailed (Hauer & Krammer, 2023, p. 9). In 1962, for instance, approximately 3,000 illegal settlers from *Biberhaufen* island in the Danube floodplains, who were threatened with eviction, won their "Thirty Years' War" against the "Forest and Meadow Belt", their resistance being (gradually) rewarded with residential zoning, building permits, and land improvement. However, the objective of "this far and no further" led to the creation of a "Campaign to combat wild construction" by the building inspection department in the same year. Among other things, it acted as a "flying commission" that was tasked with halting and fining "wild" settlers and illicit workers on the outskirts of the city at weekends. Building work was stopped and building materials were confiscated (Verwaltungsbericht 1962, p. 150). Ensuring "building discipline" in this way was seen as part of an unpopular but necessary "constant educational process". Officials emphasised that it should in no way be confused with a "snitch campaign" (Der Aufbau, 1970, pp. 32–33).

The attempts to tackle new informal construction were paralleled by a big push to legalise the extensive "wild" fringe. This process (dubbed *Baurechtliche Sanierung*), headed by the departments of building regulation and zoning, lasted more than four decades. Despite ambitious surveys and proposals put forth after 1945, most informal compounds were integrated into the formal city without much noise, reconciling the unwanted legacy at the margins with the legal frameworks and modern public amenities. This form of more or less "silent pragmatic integration" was to dominate the coming decades (Krammer & Hauer, 2023).

By 1970, authorities had already surveyed 325 out of 470 "wild" settlements, containing an estimated total of 40,000 buildings (Verwaltungsbericht, 1970, p. 104). To facilitate the legalisation of allotment compounds, the zoning category of "garden settlement" (coded "GS") was introduced in 1976. Allotment garden laws were amended in 1978 and 1985, loosening restrictions on floor area, building materials, and use. A 1992 amendment finally allowed for permanent residence in allotments and buildings with a base area of 50m² and two to three levels (Seiß, 2013, pp. 155–162; Autengruber, 2018). For that purpose, another new zoning category "Eklw"[3] was introduced, which has been widely applied since (applying to 24,400 plots in 2022; Statistisches Jahrbuch 2023, p. 37; cf. Hauer & Krammer, 2023, pp. 6–7, 11). Although this can be seen as the final stage of successful bottom-up housing practices that had started eighty years earlier, legalisation procedures had yet to run their full course. Even in the early 2000s, inspectors detected hundreds of irregular buildings in allotments each year (e.g. Verwaltungsbericht, 2002, p. 235).

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3 Erholungsgebiet Kleingartengebiete für ganzjähriges Wohnen – Recreational Area, Allotment Areas for Year-Round Living.

9   TODAY'S "SUBURBAN ARCHIPELAGO"

During the Fordist boom between the 1950s and the 1980s, the "wild" fringe inherited from the great crises of the first half of the 20th century became a major strand of residential suburbanisation and a trigger for further urban sprawl both inside and outside the city limits. As previous research has shown, bottom-up urban development has by and large stabilised in low-density detached housing patterns (Hauer & Krammer, 2023, pp. 9–11): More than 70 percent of today's allotments (Eklw) and garden settlements (GS) and 42 percent of low-density housing (W I)[4] originate in the infamous mid-century "battle zone between city and countryside" (Schimka, 1954, p. 201). Depending on urban grain, dimension, and state of dwellings, timeframe and the desires and agency of the residents, legalisation often translated into small-scale zoning mosaics that evolved over several decades – hence the legal versions of the spontaneous entanglements that urban planners had so eagerly struggled to unravel after the Second World War. Integrated regional planning in the Vienna region remained just as much a pipe dream as the large-scale clearance of "wild" settlements and the "surgical" clean-up of the urban fringe according to functional and formal criteria. Clearances usually only took place in the context of overarching infrastructure projects (freeway construction etc.) or in favour of recreational areas; allotments repeatedly had to make way for large housing estates (Hauer & Krammer, 2023, p. 10).

What materialised, however, were measures of gradual integration of the "wild" fringe into the formal city – a lengthy process of preserving what was initially a repudiated peri-urban legacy. In turn, retrofitting fed back on both the agglomerations' spatial structures and on planning instruments. Paved roads, public transit, schools, sewage systems, water and electricity supplies ensured that compounds were fit for formal construction in terms of zoning and building codes. As both transport infrastructure and the further expansion and densification of the built-up area mitigated their initial disadvantages of peripheral siting, they were integrated within the existing city. Thus, not only were large parts of the peripheral urban fabric redeveloped and "standardised" (at least to some extent) but "preserving the unwanted" meant organising and structuring marginal areas of the city more generally, embedding, for instance, old village structures or natural features such as oxbow lakes or heathlands. "Wild" Vienna also left an important imprint on the mid-century professional and wider public urban-planning discourse, not least of which was to trigger a determined push to renew nature/landscape preservation in terms of land policies, legislation, and landscaping measures (protective forest plantations etc.) in the 1950s.

Quite a few formerly "wild" compounds have since become expensive low-density residential neighbourhoods. However, a spatial "synthesis" in the sense that Roland Rainer (1949) had hoped for did not materialise. Today, former shantytowns are located between transport corridors, next to high density social housing complexes, between outsourced supply and disposal facilities such as landfills or wholesale markets, between protected green

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4   Wohngebiet Bauklasse 1 (Gebäudehöhe max. 9m) – Residential Area Building Class 1 (max. building height 9m).

spaces and the remnants of industrial agriculture. The components of this peculiar "urban fringe archipelago" (Krammer & Hauer 2023a) are seemingly self-sufficient functional clusters, often isolated from each other by the concrete ribbons of the "automobile city". Current development pressures endanger existing open spaces whose green networking potential has not yet been fully exploited. Zones today designated as "green reserves" (MA18, 2020) run the long-term risk of being converted into building land, while Vienna's city boundaries still act as an important demarcation line. Regional planning perspectives and concepts that focus on peripheral zones, including areas both within and outside the formal administrative boundaries of the city, seem pressing. While the city remains in constant transition, the "organisation of the urban fringe remains [as] urgent [a] task" (IkfWS 1956, p. 33) as it was in the post-war period.

The material discussed in this chapter proves that informal urbanisation and the challenge it posed to top-down planning was able to exercise a lasting impact (1) on the general spatial disposition of the city and urban fabrics; (2) on concepts and instruments in urban planning, bringing forth innovative and still largely unstudied attempts at creating "pure forms" according to functionalist ideas of spatial order; (3) on planning law – either directly via legislative changes aiming to promote development and facilitate legalisation or indirectly by strengthening established instruments (such as the green belt legislation) in a bid to contain unwanted settlements. The case of Vienna thus contributes to a growing number of long-term studies of informal urbanisation in the Global North with an emphasis on suburban development (e.g. Hardy and Ward, 1984; Harris, 1999; Diener, 2012; Granier, 2017; Winckler, 2021). Understanding the makeshift landscape of Vienna's "wild fringe" may also contribute to a "more nuanced reading" of today's "(sub)urban blendscapes in terms of housing, morphologies, densities, land uses, socio-cultural diversity, and governance" (Maginn & Phelps, 2023, p. 5). It is a case in point for understanding 20th century suburbanisation as a process shaped by both unplanned expansion and planned decentralisation – a dynamic that has been demonstrated for a variety of German cases (Harlander, Hater & Meiers, 1988; Kuhn, 2001; Urban, 2013; Hilbrandt, 2021). Overall, our study strengthens Manzano's (2022) hypothesis that despite the "official" history of urban planning, informal urbanisation was a major driver of the differentiation of urban planning in Europe. How Vienna's informal fringe was studied, discussed, and reformed after 1945 is also a compelling story of co-evolution between "facts on the ground" and top-down planning frameworks, between ideas of radical "disentanglement" and selective preservation.

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BIOGRAPHY

Friedrich Hauer was trained as an architect/urbanist and historian in Vienna, Austria. Since 2010, he has been a member of various inter-disciplinary working groups in urban design and urban environmental history, focusing on questions of structural spatial development and urban metabolism. His PhD in urban morphology (2019) addressed the impacts of water(s) on Vienna's urban formation over the past 500 years. In addition, he has published on topics in architectural history, has organised symposia and curated exhibitions. In 2018, together with Andre Krammer he began researching the previously neglected topic of informal settlements in 20th century Vienna. In addition to his activities as a freelance scientist, he is currently a lecturer and post-doctoral researcher at the TU Wien's Institute of Urban Design and Landscape Architecture and freelance scientist.

Andre Krammer is a freelance architect and urbanist based in Vienna, and doctoral researcher at the TU Wien's Urban Design Research Unit. He studied architecture under Nasine Seraji at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna and has completed several projects, both practical and theory-based, in the fields of urban research, urban planning and architecture. He has published numerous papers and articles in journals, magazines and newspapers such as Arch+, Planning Perspectives, KONstruktiv, Werk, Bauen+Wohnen, Architektur & Bau Forum, dérive and Salzburger Nachrichten. Andre Krammer is a long-standing editor of dérive – Zeitschrift für Stadtforschung and teaches courses in urban design and housing at TU Wien.

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REMAINING VISIBLE: THE VISUAL TRAJECTORY OF A DEMOLISHED GASOMETER IN THE CONFLICTING DISCOURSES ABOUT SOCIALIST HERITAGE IN THE FORMER EAST BERLIN SINCE THE 1970s

Kathrin Meissner

Abstract

The urban landscape is more than just its structural manifestation. It is subject to ongoing transformations as a result of everyday usage, narratives, and long-term social changes. It represents a materialisation of socio-spatial discourses and practices. In the historical transition process, the urban space becomes a palimpsest of shifting appropriations, interpretations, and thus multiple realities. We need to critically reflect on these layers of attributions to understand the complex interrelation of built space, cultural heritage, and constructions of identity. Analysing them in terms of visual relevance and transformation offers a new approach.

This chapter traces the social-discursive negotiation and narrative of a visual symbol derived from the structural form of the gasometers in the East Berlin district of Prenzlauer Berg. In the early 1980s, the gasometers formed a landmark within an outdated industrial plant. With the modernisation of the gas supply, the area was to be transformed into a large, green park. As identification points visible from afar due to their size and metal construction, the gasholders were recognised as possessing architectural value and were even considered by some to be historic monuments.

After years during which both East Berlin society as a whole and professionals in relevant fields assumed that the gasometers would be preserved and converted, in 1983 this view was marginalised in favour of prestige projects favoured by the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED). The sudden political decision to demolish the gasometer containers, which had been considered "untouchable", provoked widespread public disapproval. In the end, even organised protests were unable to prevent their demolition in July 1984. However, the material disappearance of these significant structures from the urban landscape by no means entailed their disappearance from people's minds. Instead, the demolition provoked a new visual discourse around the buildings. Particularly during the GDR's crisis years, caused largely by the SED leaders' inability to act and unwillingness to undertake state reform, the gasometers became a symbol of civic resistance to the authoritarian dictatorship that supposedly represented "actually existing socialism" (*Realsozialismus*).

This chapter argues that this immaterial significance of the gasometers emerged particularly through their physical and material absence. The collective experience of the collapse of the GDR in 1989/90 and the political and social transformation in the 1990s led to their recognition as local intangible heritage. To this day, a visual image of the gasometers manifests itself in many ways in the local discourse on the history and presence of Prenzlauer Berg as an essential part of local realities.

Here, the focus lies on two negotiation processes. Firstly, between the political decision to demolish and societal efforts to preserve the (industrial) heritage in the context of socialist urban renewal and GDR planning culture. Second, the text focuses on how the immaterial significance

of the gasometers transferred into the current area of conflict between local GDR remembrance culture and local everyday discourses. While the gasometers were lost as industrial monuments in the socialist planning culture, they became intangible heritage of the GDR's social(ist) history.

1   INTRODUCTION

It is July 28, 2024, and I am walking through *Ernst Thälmann Park* in Berlin on a sunny Sunday. This park, inaugurated in 1986/87, is a notable example of socialist urban planning from the late GDR and was designated a protected heritage ensemble in 2014. To this day, it remains a controversial topic. Narrow paths wind through the park, which is named after Ernst Thälmann (1866–1944), a communist politician and key figure in GDR antifascism culture. Passing the significant monument of Thälmann built by the Soviet sculptor Lev Kerbel (1917–2003) between 1981 and 1986, the noise of the nearby main roads becomes quieter along a small lake and between the 15-storey apartment blocks. I walk by a primary school and an indoor swimming pool built in the late East German modernist style. At the end of the park, I reach the *Zeiss Planetarium*. Forty years ago, on 28 July 1984, the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) leadership had three gasometers blown up on the exact spot where the popular planetarium stands today. Nothing would tell me about this if I did not know already.

Interestingly, on my way along the main avenue connecting the planetarium with the former East Berlin city centre of Alexanderplatz, the shape of the gasometer looms. I can see the schematic sketch of the gasometer above the words "*Museum Pankow*" on large exhibition banners flapping in the wind at the side of the road. The museum is located about a kilometre further south of the park. It has been exhibiting the history of the Prenzlauer Berg district since 1992 and uses the gasometer silhouette as a prominent visual image. This chapter illustrates why the widely visible gasholders in the middle of the densely built-up residential neighbourhood of Prenzlauer Berg in inner-city East Berlin disappeared from the urban landscape forty years ago. It also explains how they reappeared just a few years later, during the socio-spatial and political transformation process of the early 1990s, as part of a critical cultural processing of the SED regime, and remain present to this day.

This chapter illustrates an aspect of industrial heritage (Oevermann & Mieg, 2014) in terms of the (disputed) understanding and adaptation of the gasometers in everyday life via their visual significance. To undertake this, the analysis is located in an interdisciplinary research context that touches upon transformative planning culture (Christmann et al., 2020; Healey, 1992; Hein, 2018), the urban social history of the GDR (Barth, 2001; Breßler & Kurth, 2022; Saldern, 2003), and heritage culture (Atmadi, 2012; Keltsch, 2012; Klemstein, 2021; Weirick, 2018; Wüllner, 2016). The shifting discursive approach to the gasometers as "socialist heritage" will be traced with reference to two negotiation processes. Firstly, between the political decision for demolition and social strategies, such as professional (industrial) heritage preservation, in

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socialist urban renewal and GDR planning culture. Second, the text examines how the immaterial significance of the gasometers transferred into the area of conflict between local GDR remembrance culture and local everyday discourses. While the gasometers were lost as industrial monuments in the socialist planning culture, they became part of the intangible heritage of GDR socialism. In particular the text traces the visual manifestations of the multiple productions and renegotiations of meanings of the monuments (Oevermann et al., 2016) within different individual and collective experiences, such as retrospective assignations of meaning or value by local residents, gasworks employees, urban planners, artists, or critics of the state. It addresses how the demolition of the gasholders became part of a formal commemoration culture, linking it with the socio-spatial manifestation of (im)material cultural heritage in the urban space of Prenzlauer Berg.

This example is not just well-documented but offers a variety of different types of sources. Visualisations are a product of individual and collective attributions of meaning/value and are aspects of communication, historical storytelling, and projections of future visions (Singh & Meißner, 2021). Examining the significance of visuality as an instrument and a tool within communication can provide a valuable alternative to the dominance of written sources (Benke & Betker, 2010; Fischer & Altrock, 2018). Furthermore, as a third type of primary source, alongside written and oral data, visual data offer another methodological approach that expands the established methods of oral and visual history (Shanken, 2018; Sturken & Cartwright, 2009) and stimulates a "visual urban history". This approach seems particularly fruitful when focusing on urban planning culture, a discipline with many immanent visualisations. In this case, the visual representation of the gasometer site and its effect on various social practices reveals how powerful the visual element is for socio-spatial re- and de-construction as an approach for interdisciplinary urban historical analysis.

This text is based on a detailed analysis of communication and inter-action practices around urban renewal negotiations as part of the culture of social planning and everyday life in the late GDR (Meissner, upcoming). This previous research highlighted how various layers of individual and collective perception were brought together in social identification and urban transformation. This text applies these findings to the discourse on the industrial heritage of gasometers (Bogner et al., 2018; Mieg et al., 2014; Oevermann, 2012). It questions who shaped the local heritage by critically reflecting on power hierarchies, influential positions, and sovereignty of interpretation within the local society and their impact on the narrative of the gasometer as intangible heritage. An actor-centred approach allows us to examine multiple conflicting and ambivalent positions by subjecting samples of visual documents, such as contemporary oral eyewitness reports and retrospective interviews about the visual appearance of the gasometers, to discourse analysis. Here, four of the semi-structured, anonymised interviews conducted by the author in 2022/2023 as part of the aforementioned research are used to present a variety of voices and perspectives in the negotiation process. These voices include those of actors from top-level planning policy and academia alongside neighbourhood residents.

In undertaking this, the text questions how the accessible source material reproduces the imbalance of opinions and marginalises experiences and to what extent this narrative was passed from a generation of former GDR citizens and eyewitnesses of the demolition to younger generations in Prenzlauer Berg. In this way, the text demonstrates how the intangible heritage discourse shapes the appearance of a city (Ethington & Schwartz, 2006; Hauser, 2018; Kamleithner & Meyer, 2011) and, by doing so, expands on established oral and visual history methods (Shanken, 2018; Sturken & Cartwright, 2009) to stimulate a "visual urban history".

2 THE EMPIRICAL DISCOURSE

2.1 The state of urban renewal and heritage in the mid-1970s

The three gasometers belonged to the fourth municipal gasworks, commissioned in 1871 during the industrial urbanisation of Berlin's outskirts. Berlin's rapid growth from the residence of the Prussian rulers to the capital of the German Empire and a modern metropolis in the early 20th century meant that a densely built-up tenement structure enclosed the gasworks. Prenzlauer Berg emerged from this residential area as an independent district in 1920. The large local energy requirements of the growing city made the gasworks indispensable. Although severely outdated, they operated for over 100 years until the 1970s (Bärthel, 1997).

In the GDR, the gasworks were perceived as significant in many ways: not just as an important workplace for many people but also as a source of air pollution, fumes, and noise. As one resident describes: "We lived nearby. And there was always dirt – the shutters were always black"[1] (Meissner, anonymised interview on 6 October 2022). Another resident described a childhood memory of soot fluttering through the air: "The gasworks were always present. It always stank. Sometimes more, sometimes less. […] And black flakes. I found that quite nice. In summer there was black snow, in winter both [black and white]" (Kuntzsch, 2021). The chimneys and domes of the gas tanks were also a local reference point and a significant architectural landmark in the urban landscape of East Berlin (Figure 1). "I always remember a foggy image of the smoking chimneys and the growing domes when I returned from the city train," as a young construction worker described her view during the daily commute to a nearby building site (Meissner, interview on 27 October 2022). This was just one of many memories of passengers on public transport or pedestrians (Brotfabrik, 2014). One of the gasometers had an iron dome and was visible from afar. Artists and creative people living in the district captured its presence in contemporary works of local everyday culture in various forms (Figure 2). Several times, local planners or architects referred to the iron dome as the "Colosseum of Prenzlauer Berg" (Tacke, 2011) – a unique structure.

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1   Unless otherwise stated, this and all subsequent translations from non-English-language sources are by the author.

FIGURE 1   Photograph of the three gas holders. The significance of the gasometer with the iron roof dome in the city skyline is particularly obvious. (Photo by Betina Kuntzsch, photo series "Filmstaub Altes Gaswerk", 1982/83, CC BY-NC-SA)

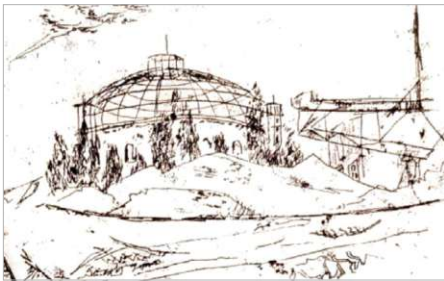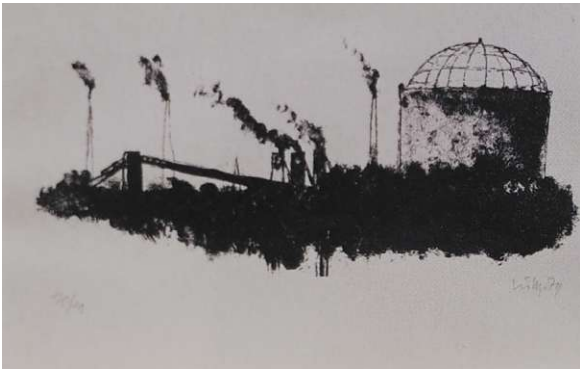FIGURE 2   Various illustrations showing perceptions of the dominant character of the gasometer in everyday culture. (top left picture: lithograph by Roland Nicolaus, undated, Kunstsammlung Pankow, CC BY-SA; lower left picture: Harry Lüttger, radiation, Gaswerk, 1979, Kunstarchiv Beeskow, CC BY-SA; right picture: photo by Roger Melis, Gaswerk Dimitroffstraße, 1978, CC BY-SA; all printed in Bielefeld et al. 2014, pp. 57 and 105)

While the gasometers were mainly a reference point for the local population, they became the focus of national discourses in two regards. On the one hand, the socialist planning culture of the GDR had been focusing on dealing with the existing and decaying stock of old buildings since the European Year of Heritage Conservation in 1975. This international event proclaimed the relevance of industrial heritage conservation and initiated a debate on industrial monuments (Wächter & Wagenbreth, 1973). On the other hand, GDR planning policy was shifting its orientation toward socialist modernisation and urban renewal. Erich Honecker (1912–1988) proclaimed that the ambitious housing programme of 1973 manifested the unity of economic and social policy (Topfstedt, 1999). Thenceforth, the political narrative of progress and modernity was supposed to materialise structurally and socially in the appearance of East Germany's cities. The confrontation of the Cold War required a prominent public demonstration of state sovereignty, especially in divided Berlin. From 1976 onwards, the party government intended to transform East Berlin into a "socialist capital" (Bernhardt & Reif, 2009).

Like many other districts, Prenzlauer Berg suffered from the lack of green and open spaces back then. Large radial highways from the city centre cut through residential areas. Backyards provided space for small businesses and workshops. The socialist ideology rejected the contemporary image of the industrial workers' district. It explained the housing shortage and poor living conditions as the legacy of capitalist urbanisation (Betker & Bräuer, 2006). The urgently needed improvements and the homogenous building structure led the *Büro für Städtebau* (Office for Urban Planning, BfS) to declare Prenzlauer Berg as the first inner-city redevelopment area in 1977. As a result, the district became a primary construction site for experimental planning projects that aimed to overcome the negative perception of Berlin's urban fabric.

Accordingly, the shutdown of the gasworks, publicly announced by SED State Secretary Honecker himself at the party's conference in 1976, was driven by political motives. Alongside the modern infrastructure of a long-distance heating and gas supply from the Soviet Union, he emphasised: "The site of the Dimitroffstraße plant can then be used for a park or housing construction" (Anonymous Author, 1976, p. 3). The new approach to planning culture took account of both local urban characteristics and everyday social practices. Thus, the urban development master plan envisaged a multifunctional community centre to "improve design quality through […] dominant urban landmarks […] reflecting the socialist and communist mindset" (Bauakademie, 1977, pp. 6, 10). In practice, prestigious projects meant demonstrating the party's power on site (Meuschel, 1992). Street names and monuments were also dedicated to the antifascist resistance (Roder & Tacke, 2004). The local history of working-class struggles in Prenzlauer Berg was highlighted, too.

Interestingly, arguments about industrial heritage and its value for preservation had to fit into the official socialist narrative of GDR politics (Lehmann, 2021; Atmadi, 2012). Here, the gasworks were seen as an outdated building from the ideologically rejected Gründerzeit period (ca. 1840–1918), a structural relic that needed to be replaced (Bielefeld et al., 2014).

2.2 Creating a "presumptive" monument

Urban renewal in the inner-city and addressing extraordinary structures like gasometers required new approaches and strategies. The planning commission concluded that their demolition would be expensive and technically complicated (Bezirksbauamt Berlin, 1978). The construction sector was subordinated to the Ministry of Economics at the Central Committee of the SED party (*SED-Zentralkomitee*). It was therefore primarily subject to the political interests of the centrally planned economy (*Planwirtschaft*). By contrast, the Ministry of Culture was in charge of matters related to urban planning, aesthetics, and architectural design, as well as the preservation of cultural heritage. The government aimed to quickly achieve visible "successes" in urban modernisation and initially neglected to make any specific plans to deal with the gasholders. This lack of political interest left an opportunity for the creation of plans for the industrial area containing the gasworks. As a result, the relevant planning authorities, such as the Municipal Bureau for Construction (*Bezirksbauamt*, BBA) and the Office for Urban Planning (BfS), developed conversion plans. Proposed designs (Figure 3) suggested the demolition of the industrial plant followed by a transformation into the *Ernst-Thälmann Kultur- und Erholungspark* (Ernst Thälmann Culture and Recreation Park)
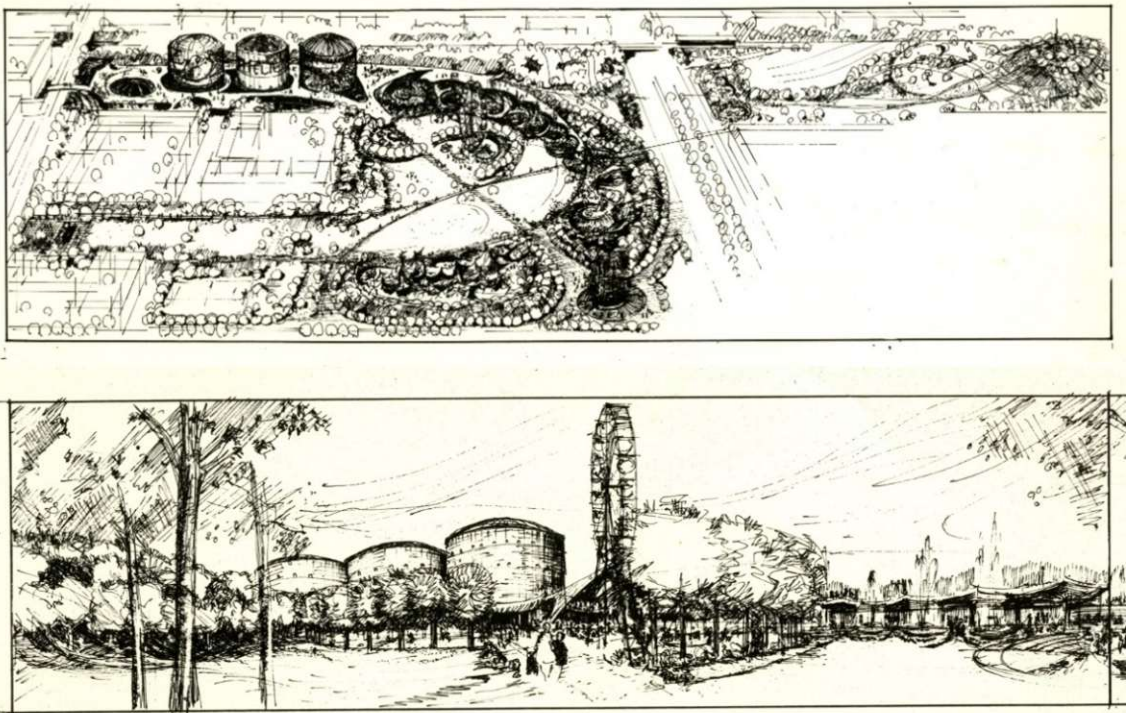

FIGURE 3   Perspective studies for the redesign of the gasworks site by the Office for Urban Planning (BfS). The converted gasometers were widely visible, while the Ernst Thälmann memorial was located at the edge of the site at the bottom right on Prenzlauer Allee with a direct view of the gasholders. (From Archive IRS Erkner, stock of Hubert Matthes, C14_U4-001 and 002, 1978, CC BY-SA)

(Bezirksbauamt, 1978). Internal correspondence shows that representatives of the construction authorities, planning office, and heritage conservation argued for preservation and rejected demolition (Büro für Städtebau, 1980).

Though these negotiations were held behind closed doors, their results were reported in the media (Otten, 1981) and fostered public discourse over heritage. Construction experts confirmed that the gasometers were in good structural condition. This legitimised the preservation of the gasometers as architecturally significant urban landmarks and their preservation as part of the GDR's flagship urban renewal programme (Bielefeld et al., 2014). Shortly afterwards, several media reports carried the argument further and labelled them "industrial monuments" (Schulz, 1981, p. 11; Trost, 1983, p. 411). As a result of this, public opinion consolidated resolutely in favour of the preservation of the urban landmarks and their conversion into historical monuments – (visual) testimony of the past.

Meanwhile, the overambitious housing construction programme was severely behind schedule. This lead the Council of Ministers (*Ministerrat*) to proclaim in February 1981 that residential buildings would be added to the original park and open space design (Ministerrat, 1981) and to assume responsibility for planning. In addition, Honecker commissioned the renowned Soviet sculptor Lev Kerbel to design the monument to Ernst Thälmann (Bielefeld et al., 2014). They wanted the complex project to be completed by Thälmann's 100th birthday in April 1986, or for Berlin's 750th anniversary celebrations in 1987 at the latest. This placed even more "pressure to succeed" on the flagship project, now renamed *Ernst Thälmann Park*. Due to the change in planning authority, all previously made plans were withdrawn. Designs by local GDR artists for the conversion of the gasometers, e.g., into a technology museum, a theatre, a swimming area, or a planetarium, were rejected without further explanation (Roder & Tacke, 2004).

The expensive prestige project absorbed enormous resources in the construction industry, which was already suffering from shortages and delays. Nevertheless, the key organ of the Central Committee, the *Politburo*, launched an architectural competition in 1982 to demonstrate socialist participation in the planning process to design the area as a residential park. Its central objective was to "strengthen the impact of the monument" and "combine it into a design unit of high urban quality" (Aufbauleitung Sondervorhaben, 1982, p. 2). Since the conversion of the gasometers was not part of the planning or the political decision-making process, it was left out of the competition stipulations (Figure 4). Considering the gasometers as sites of industrial heritage and identification was not compatible with the ideologically charged urban de-velopment ideas of socialist modernism. Hence, they were not formally included in the redevelopment process and contributions were not supposed to contain any proposals for their future usage. The state-run media coverage and public presentation of the competition reproduced this absence.

By then, not only were the design of the *Ernst Thälmann Park* and the development of the gasworks treated separately in terms of redevelopment plans, both projects appeared almost entirely disconnected in (official) public documents and statements. At the same time, the park served as a symbol of modernist socialist planning and political sovereignty. By contrast, dismantling

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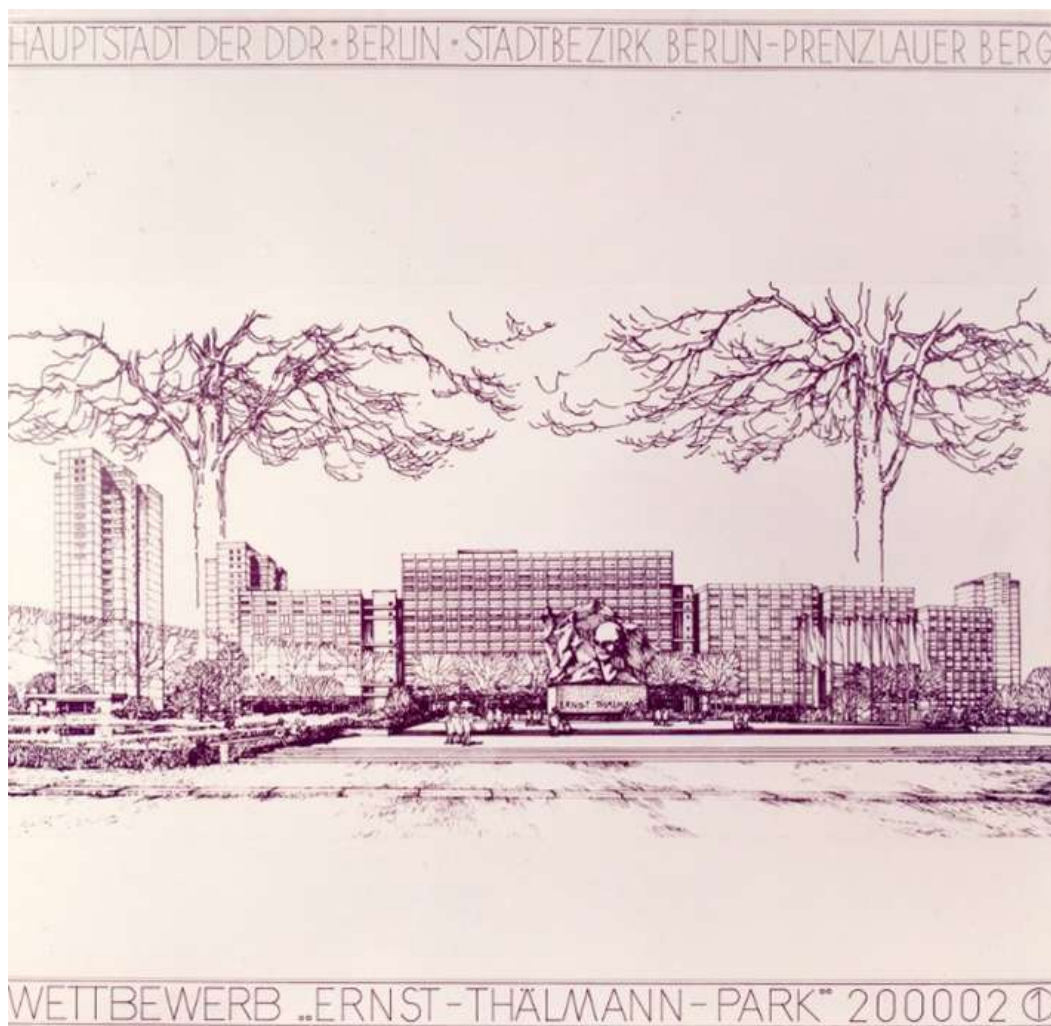WETTBEWERB „ERNST-THÄLMANN-PARK" 200002 ①

FIGURE 4   Design by the collective of the Academy for Construction (Bauakademie der DDR) led by Wilfried Stallknecht. In a realistic localisation of the design, the perspective would have shown the gasometers on the right-hand edge of the picture, behind the modern residential housing blocks. This design proposal was ultimately awarded third prize. (From Archive IRS Erkner, stock of Wilfried Stallknecht, C22_9-002, 1982, CC BY-SA)

the industrial plant embodied a turning away from – a kind of "clearing out of" – historical legacies and structures. The characteristic visual appearance of the gasometers thus became invisible in this authorised socialist urban vision in two ways: visually and discursively.

By contrast, media reports, including those in national and local newspapers and magazines less tightly controlled by the state apparatus, referred to everyday matters of interest to the local population. From 1981 onwards, this included energy supply issues, and related matters such as efforts to improve the quality of life and to secure jobs. In addition, magazine photo features and documentary films focused on human-interest stories, such as everyday life, and people's memories, and anecdotes. Such local reports

defined the significance of the gasworks and its gasholders by connecting them to emotionally affecting stories of local society and identity.

Up to the spring of 1984, both specialist journals and daily newspapers continued to consider the gasometers as industrial heritage: "The three gasometers along the Reichsbahn site will be preserved as monuments and later put to a new use" (Gißke et al., 1983, p. 598). The repeated calls for their preservation and the visual appropriation of the gasometers in media reports, underlined by planners' arguments, manifested their presumptive status as landmarks and heritage buildings. As a result, the gasometers were firmly embedded in the cultural heritage of many Prenzlauer Berg residents – leaving no doubt that their future as converted heritage sites was assured.

2.3   Negotiating over a "socialist" monument

Precisely how the decision to demolish the gasometers in the spring of 1984 was made cannot be reconstructed. It was determined by the political significance of the *prestigious Ernst Thälmann Park* project, the sculptor Lev Kerbel's dominant influence, and the need to complete preparations for the 1986/87 celebrations. In addition, the immense costs of dismantling the gasworks, the remediation of the contaminated soil, and the lack of a binding concept for the redesign increased the sense of urgency (Bielefeldt et al., 2014). This led to the previously isolated matters of the park and the gasometers being joined. The new plan was to extend the residential park and remove the gasholders. Aware of potential disagreement, information in media reports about the new plan was vague, and no mention at all was made of the planned demolition of the buildings. Only attentive readers could recognise from the attached planning model that the gasometers were absent.

At the same time, rumours that the gasometers were going to be demolished began to spread, originating with construction companies involved in the work. This was the first time that either the general public or relevant professionals became aware of the plans. Many citizens and planners reached out to political officials, asking for reliable information via formal and informal communication channels. Many people, especially those who were used to addressing complaints to the authorities, expressed their concerns and disapproval verbally during office hours and by handing in written complaints and petitions. Their most serious argument against demolition was the value of the building as an "identifying structure" for the urban landscape and residents. Interestingly, the petitioners often referred to previous heritage discourse in the media, legitimising the relevance of the gasometers as a socialist memorial commemorating a local "labour tradition, […] monument to cultural history and proletarian productivity" (Ministerium für Staatssicherheit, 1984, p. 9).

Their comments also addressed the gasometers' presumptive monument status based on previously published information: "At the beginning of the year, the listed buildings were presented to citizens on the model in our Palace of the Republic and in the daily press as part of the project to build a *Thälmann Park*" (Anonymous Author, 1984, p. 1). Most of the complaints were argument-based and attempt to negotiate using socialist language (Fix, 1996;

Kotkin, 1995). They often included detailed proposals of how to avoid the demolition, e.g., by remodelling or compensating for increased maintenance costs. Ultimately, they did not affect the political decision, which had already been made (Flierl, 1992).

In the early summer of 1984, a debate emerged between social and professional actors, on the one hand, and those responsible for planning policy, such as the *Politburo*, on the other, over the legitimacy of the planned demolitions. Much of the communication – both written and oral – took place out of the public eye. Thus, reconstruction of the authors' motives, biographies, and social functions remains fragmentary. At this time, the volume of communication expressing disagreement with the decision in provocative and reproachful ways increased. Some authors even accused the state leadership of acting unconstitutionally:

> Indeed, you are also aware that a review procedure for recognition as a "technical monument" has been underway for over a year and that, according to the applicable laws of the GDR, no interventions may be carried out on the buildings in question during this time. Demolition would, therefore, be tantamount to an illegal act. (Anonymous Author, 1984, p. 1)

The *Politburo* had not yet issued an official written statement on the demolition. This suggests no information and communication strategy existed at the time. Reconstruction of internal correspondence shows that an ad hoc public announcement was prepared carefully with written, oral, and visual components (Bielefeld et al., 2014). Firstly, the employees of the building and planning offices were forbidden to provide any information. As one planner reported: "As employees of the subordinate institution of the district planning office, we are not allowed to comment on the gasometers. That is a decision!" (Meissner, interview on August 11, 2022). Second, the planning model that had been used so far was redesigned rapidly to suit the new political argument (Zentralkomitee der SED, 1984). Third, planning experts such as East Berlin's chief architect, Roland Korn, and the general conservator of the *Institut für Denkmalpflege* (Institute for Monument Preservation), Ludwig Deiters, acted as ideological puppets by publicly giving the plans apparent professional legitimacy. Finally, a newspaper article was published explaining the demolition, including arguments about high maintenance costs, the fragility of the structure, soil contamination, and the government's duty to care for society (Rehfeldt, 1984, p. 3).

These political attempts to calm things down by providing a minimum of transparency and artificial arguments did not match the civic demand for a public debate. On the contrary, the public confirmation of the demolition resulted in broad civil unrest. As one local design student reported: "And many people got angry. Now we are being patronised again. […] Now we have to do something" (Meissner, interview on February 1, 2023). Many residents realised they could not influence the demolition decision by articulating their interests formally. Although they possessed valid arguments, some people were also willing to explore new possibilities for action to express their disapproval.

Looking back, one participant reported: "I do not know anymore. I can imagine that I did not write a [petition] but decided to take part in this action. I am making a statement. We are against it, and I am in. And I am taking a stand." (Meissner, interview on February 1, 2023). Others consider that these protests involved only a small group of intellectuals and artists:

> I did not experience any protests. I experienced feelings of shock and outrage. However, this anger was not expressed in equivalent actions. It did not result in any serious or perceptible expression of discontent […] It was more of an expression of anger on the part of the local intellectuals and artists or those who were moved in any way, but not for the average person. […] People certainly talked about it, but the general tone was resignation. (Bielefeld, 2014, p. 110)

Nevertheless, images of the gasometer now emerged as a central element in the expression of dissent and protest. Shortly before the demolition date was formally announced – at short notice – citizens expressed their disapproval using posters, leaflets, banners, flyers, exhibitions, badges, and photomontages (Figure 5).

FIGURE 5   Sample of protest material showing gasometer motifs documented by the Ministry of State Security. The aim was to stimulate local awareness of the heritage value of the structure and criticism of the state decision to demolish it. (From Federal Archive Berlin, MfS, BV Bln, XX, Nr. 3520 and MfS, BV Bln, AKG, Nr. 4601, CC BY-SA)

FIGURE 6   Photographs of spectators observing the demolition of the gasometer in 1984. People gathered on the street and particularly rooftops, which offered a great view of the event. Among those observing the demolition, various individual and collective practices of witnessing, artistic and photographic documentation and observation were recorded. (From Robert Havemann Gesellschaft, Photo Stock, WF216 and WF225, CC BY-SA)

While the number of written statements to the state leadership did not decrease, images of the gasometers – above all, the gas container with the iron rooftop – were explicitly included in the campaigns. Alongside the written statements, the public space in the neighbourhoods near the gasworks became part of a visual protest; the conflict became visible in public. The protestors aimed to reach a critical public, show solidarity, and thus counter the individual sentiment of powerlessness. Even though the amount of material was limited, and the number of activists was relatively small, their disapproval, which was visible in letterboxes, hallways, windscreens, and suburban train entrances, significantly impacted the local public. Many residents doubted that it was possible to influence the political decision. Yet the protest activities represented a more fundamental opposition to the state authority of the SED regime. Both the *Ministerium für Staatssicherheit* (MfS; State Security aka the "Stasi") and the West German media were interested in this public criticism (Halbrock, 2004). The Politburo reacted with repression and increased surveillance to demonstrate its power in public. In doing so, they attempted to regain public control over the public discourse.

On the day of the demolition, 28 July 1984, crowds gathered on the surrounding streets, bridges, and rooftops to witness the explosions. Despite the ban on public gatherings, filming, and photography, many people documented the vanishing of these local landmarks from the urban landscape. In doing so, their experience of loss and the visual documentation of that sentiment created the foundation for the later (visual) appropriation of the gasometers (Figure 6). An employee of the unit in charge of the demolition described the atmosphere on site as follows: "Prenzlauer Allee was blocked off […], but the surrounding streets, the windows of the flats and stairwells, the roofs were full of people […] within 20 seconds it was all over […]" (Wagner, 1988, p. 102).

The loss of the buildings did not eliminate the social dissatisfaction; it rather intensified residents' overall criticism of the state. By facing the demolition

with a hitherto unknown level of critical public discourse, new forms of solidarity were encouraged. One eyewitness and activist emphasised the importance of the demolition protest as an identity-forming moment, which ultimately outdid the actual significance of the gasometers themselves:

> It was great that so many people were there, painting, with cameras, talking to each other, and there were discussions. […] That was the first time I thought: Something is happening, not just us. It had great symbolism: the demolition. (Tacke, 2011, p. 120)

A new scope for action joined the widespread feeling of civic powerlessness in the face of the party's hegemony, and the latter's incapacity to act became more apparent. In the late 1980s, these impulses led to more informal and critical bottom-up engagement (e.g., on issues of monument protection, or the environmental and peace movements). The overall frustration of many citizens with the socialist politics of the GDR found expression, for instance, in the growing number of applications to leave the country (Dietrich, 2019). Thus, the positive perception of the completed *Ernst Thälmann Park* as an inner-city residential area, but above all as a park and recreational area, was accompanied by critical voices after its completion in 1987 (Bielefeld et al., 2014).

The demolition of the gasometers became a symbol of the SED's hegemony, which served to bolster the party's ideological self-representation and its hold on power rather than the *Realsozialismus* it claimed to stand for. The multiple visual experiences people had of the gasometers – from seeing them in the urban skyline, in the various plans members of the public proposed or helped to make for converting and repurposing them, in the discourses over protecting them as public monuments, in failed negotiation attempts, and finally in witnessing of the demolition action itself – created an emotional reference. Hence, these individual and collective experiences were manifested not just in memories but also in the narrative of an arbitrary decision by the state, one that affected the social construction of the gasometers as intangible heritage.

2.4   Appropriating a "lost" monument

Shortly after the GDR's collapse in 1989/90, public debates occurred on how to deal with socialism's own built legacy (Adam, 1992). The sentiment of a missed opportunity to transform and reform socialism and the rapid conclusion of German reunification in 1990 shaped this period of systemic transformation as a collective and individual experience during the 1990s (Brückweh & Zöller, 2019).

As the former capital and centre of power of the SED regime, Berlin in particular faced debates on how to deal with the socialist heritage and authoritarian remains in the cityscape (Engler, 2020; Wigger, 2022). Making space for new narratives by eradicating the public monument culture of the GDR seemed to offer a fast track to overcoming the socialist past. Consequently, one immediate result was the demolition of the Lenin Monument and renaming of the eponymous square in the neighbouring district of Berlin Friedrichshain

in 1991. The Prenzlauer Berg local authority decided in 1993 to take down the Ernst Thälmann monument, too. However, the decision was never realised, despite being listed (along with the whole park and residential area) as a heritage site in 2014, one that illustrates a unique architectural ensemble and identity-building site of GDR socialism (Bielefeld et al., 2014). Thus, the monument remains a visible and material aspect of the urban landscape today.

East Germany's official heritage discourse failed to take into account the appropriation of the gasometers as valuable heritage by the civil population. Similarly, the disappeared urban silhouette of the gasometer was adopted by local actors as a visual motif for their coming to terms with the SED dictatorship and the social history of the GDR. Critical voices who led the civic protest at the demolition and were prominent in the negotiations of the "Peaceful Revolution" of 1989 shaped the transformation of the gasometers into intangible heritage. Former GDR citizens and Prenzlauer Berg locals who were now involved in urban politics, education, or the arts, such as the photographers Harald Hauswald, Volker Döring, and Werner Fischer; the artists and writers Uwe Warnke and Siegmar Körner; the urban activists Matthias Klipp and Bernd Holtfreter; and the graphic artist Katharina Kosak reflected upon the gasometer protests as a crucial event in the process of civic political self-empowerment leading to the "Peaceful Revolution". They and others spoke publicly about the repressive policies of the SED regime and started a process of reflection and political education in the district. In processing the GDR's system of political injustice, the details of the processes and responsibilities that led to the demolition of the gasometers were reconstructed. Even if the documents still do not make it possible to name those in charge conclusively, it has been proven that there was no justification for the decision and that the demolition was illegal (Bielefeld et al., 2014). The ambivalence felt towards the remaining monument to Ernst Thälmann and the lost monument of the gasometers influenced the local public discourse in the early 1990s. Again, a state decision about the urban structure seemed to take precedence over the local civic sentiments about what is relevant to preserve and identify with.

The *Museum Pankow* (Pankow District Museum) mainly concerns local cultural heritage. It was founded in 1992 by consolidating the existing local museum collections of the three districts Prenzlauer Berg, Weißensee, and Pankow, which were merged to form a single municipal district in that year. As a resident and historian of the area, the museum's director, Bernt Roder, has integrated everyday perspectives and experiences into the design of the exhibitions. Interestingly, the museum's official trademark is now the iconic silhouette of the gasometer with its iron roof construction. The museum is located in a civic complex that also comprises a public library, community college, archive, and exhibition space: a lively open space for the neigh-bourhoods of Prenzlauer Berg. The museum's permanent exhibition, "*Gegenentwürfe*" ("Changes of Perspective") opened in 2009, its title calling back to local counter-narratives and dynamics within the civic upheaval in the GDR. Unsurprisingly, one exhibit focuses on the history of *Ernst Thälmann Park* and the process – here critically researched – that led to the demolition of the gasometers. Highlighting "socially explosive power" (Roder & Tacke,

2004), the exhibition draws a strong connection between the visual experience of the demolition and the public civic protest. On flyers and leaflets, banners in front of the museum building, and the museum's website, the gasometer appears repeatedly as a silhouette – a symbol of the local people's self-perception and identity with the local urban space (Figure 7).

This "new" gasometer narrative has been highlighted on specific occasions, such as the 30th anniversary of the demolition in 2014, which coincided with the listing of the *Ernst Thälmann Park* as a heritage ensemble. Local media coverage and various events at the time made citizens even more aware of the gasometers and their destruction. During these events, many references were made to well-known photographs and views of the gasometers. "Anyone with a sense for symbols had to recognise them," wrote the popular Tagesspiegel newspaper on this occasion (Zajonz, 2014, p. 1). The same year, the local art and cultural association (*Brotfabrik*) dedicated an exhibition to the social upheaval caused by the demolition. Its title, *Gasometer sprengt man nicht* ("You do not blow up gasometers") was one of the most identifiable slogans used during the demolition protests in 1984. The exhibition was held in the local cultural centre, *Kulturzentrum Wabe*, which opened on the site of the former gasworks in 1986, close to the former location of the gasometer (Brotfabrik, 2014). Film screenings and a commemorative publication reproduced the narrative visually, examining the entire history of the gasworks and their gasometer (Rothe, 2014). As Tagesspiegel commented at the time: "The absence of imagination on the part of the state authorities is still a reminder of the system's inability to deal with the creativity and goodwill of its own people. The stories of the gasometer are also about misplaced trust […]. Many of those involved are still alive. Emotions are still running high […]" (Zajonz, 2014, p. 1). The icon of the gasometer became part of the oft-cited "myth of Prenzlauer Berg" – a vision of the socio-material structure and dynamics of the district that gave space for a unique mix and niche of subculture and opposition and shaped the GDR cultural scene during the 1980s (Felsmann & Gröschner, 2012).

FIGURE 7   A selection of images depicting the current use of the gasometer silhouette in an abstract form. The building is still clearly recognizable in a variety of ways – on the website, logo and flags in front of the exhibition building of Museum Pankow. (top and centre picture: Museum Pankow, undated, https://www.berlin.de/museum-pankow/, CC BY-SA; bottom picture: photo by Kathrin Meissner, 2019, CC BY-SA)

Although urban renewal, gentrification, and generational shifts have drastically changed Prenzlauer Berg's appearance, the gasometers' cultural heritage is kept alive in the collective memory of this generation of actively engaged eyewitnesses. However, the discourse and the visual focus have both changed with the shift of generations and issues. Recently, a gradual

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re-contextualisation has taken place, driven by younger generations, who have different associations with the place and whose meanings now overlap with those of older residents. The gasometer is now referred to in debates on affordable housing and gentrification. Its value as a symbol of civic empowerment under the GDR's SED regime has been re-contextualised and embedded in the ongoing "Right to the City" discourse by asking the question "Who owns the city?" as a bottom-up social protest (Flierl & Marcuse, 2012).

Since then, the gasometer has become less visible to the public beyond specific events such as special exhibitions or guided tours of the district. Still, the visual impact of the gasometer remains evident. It is remarkable that, although a large amount of image material exists and is accessible via photo agencies and open-access databases, the same motifs and perspectives of the gasometers have tended to be used again and again (Figure 8 & 9). For example, exhibitions such as "*Ost-Berlin*" (2019) and "*Ernst-Thälmann-Park*" (2021/22) used the usual images to reproduce their narratives. And the same motifs are reproduced in the foyer of the planetarium that now stands where the gasometers once were. Another approach has been taken by artistic projects such as the 2019/20 competition to comment on the highly debated Ernst Thälmann monument by the artist and eyewitness Betina Kuntzsch. By arranging red blocks with inscriptions such as "*Gasometer*" in the urban space of the park ensemble, this project recreated the gasholders physically in their urban surroundings. In doing so, the artist created implicit references processing the ongoing trauma of a generation of GDR citizens who experienced the conflicts and transformations of the late 1980s and 1990s (Kuntzsch, 2021).

In these ways, the visual narrative is passed on to an audience with no personal emotional reference to the lost industrial sites, de- and re-contextualising the demolition discourse within the history of GDR and East Berlin, and keeping the materially lost gasometers alive as intangible visual heritage.

↖ FIGURE 8   Various visual appearances of the gasometer silhouette in several exhibitions and an art installation. (from top to bottom: photo of the exhibition "Stadtwende", 2021; art installation „Vom Sockel Her Denken" by Betina Kuntzsch, 2019; photo of the exhibition "Ost-Berlin", 2019; all three Kathrin Meissner, CC BY-SA)

← FIGURE 9   Visual appearance of the gasometer silhouette in an art installation. (Artistic installation by Joachim Völkner in 1984, Gerd Danigel, 2022, CC BY-NC-SA)

3   CONCLUSION

The striking appearance of gasometers in European cityscapes has been a subject of public debate ever since their industrial uses began to decline: The public calls to stop the demolition of the gasometer in Oberhausen from 1988 led to its conversion as part of the International Building Exhibition (*Internationale Bauausstellung*, IBA) in 1993/94. In contrast, many GDR gasometers remained vacant after the closure of the gasworks in the mid and late 1970s; some fell into disrepair, while others were at least overhauled, as in Leipzig in the 2000s. Recent conversion projects in Vienna, London, and Berlin have demonstrated the conflicting interests that currently exist regarding the re- or de-construction of these significant elements of the urban appearance and how they shape the cultural heritage. Ultimately, each case is unique: both each monument consisting of a gasometer in its urban surroundings and the surrounding negotiations and discourse. The variety of national and regional planning regimes, and specific local factors, such as the diverse social agents and societal discourses involved, make every case unique. But each case also demonstrates that heritage values are deeply interwoven in the historical fabric of the site and the city.

In conclusion, this chapter has illustrated how gasometers, as material and intangible buildings, served as surfaces for the projection of narratives of socialist heritage. It also illustrated the variety of approaches that can be taken to interpretational sovereignty in determining what should be preserved from the past for future generations. It showed that heritage is not just a matter of material objects, structures, and traditions but also includes social process that frequently reshape these objects' meaning. The conflicting heritage discourses about the gasometers in Prenzlauer Berg are more than just a specific and unique example. The subject is thus relevant for the broader research discourse on cultural heritage, socialist planning culture, and GDR history for three reasons.

First, the processes that determined the fate of the gasometers occurred at a time when the relevance of heritage preservation had just reached a broader public. Dealing with the decay of historic urban structures and mass housing stock was an issue within the culture of transformative planning. The political narrative of socialist urban renewal of the mid-to-late 1970s became a public matter within the symbolic politics of the Cold War, but, in practical terms, clashed with the structural focus on industrial production in the GDR's construction economy. Here, the authoritarian political process conflicted with the interests and initiatives of the local community in preserving historic structures. In the context of these challenges around urban renewal, the arguments of experts quickly spread to a broader audience. The debates evoked broad public interest and discussions on how to deal with the remains of the gasometers. The gasometer discourse examined here was one of the earliest examples dealing with the demolition and preservation of industrial heritage. It promoted broad public debate and engagement in participatory action, active criticism, constructive conversion plans, and the reuse of designs.

Second, the conflicting discourse (preservation vs. demolition) resulted in the actual material disappearing of the buildings and, hence, their transformation

into an immaterial monument whose meanings were no longer related to their initial architectural and aesthetic significance as an industrial site. This chapter has demonstrated how the gasometers have been the subject of expert and informed advocacy, which promoted the demolition discourse and triggered broad public protest. After an extensive public debate and efforts to preserve the buildings, their loss, combined with local frustration regarding GDR socialist policies during the 1980s, led to their transformation into intangible cultural heritage. This process of "heritage construction" reflected less the industrial past than the repressive actions and practices of the SED regime. Here, the driving force for this discursive transformation and the production of a new narrative was the local society and their experiences. Initially feeling that their views had been ignored and suppressed in the negotiations, these actors were mostly part of creative groups, state-critical initiatives, and renewal activist organisations during the 1970s and 1980s. They had solid local relations and acted implicitly or explicitly as social advocates, becoming the dominant voices in the discourse of transformation. Because they held relevant local positions both during and after the transition from socialism to the democratic reunited Germany, they could initiate early reflection and processing of the authoritarian SED regime. They have thus shaped the cultural commemoration and heritage narrative to the present day – the monument status of the gasometer played a significant role in this.

Third, the "visual appropriation" of the demolished gasometer functioned as a participatory instrument and strategy throughout the negotiation process concerning the perception of the intangible cultural heritage of the socialist past. The broad reception of visual materials within the conversion discourse and the production of protest materials associated the buildings and practices around them with visionary ideas and gave them emotional resonance. The actors referred to the appearance of the gasometers to underline their argument – whether promoting demolition or preservation – and the sites ultimately became a symbol of civic upheaval against the SED dictatorship. Producing visual artefacts required specific resources such as expertise, materials, and a willingness to take risks in production and public dissemination. Although the active use of visual materials as a central argument in the conflicting discourses was limited to a small group of politicised and oppositional actors with expert knowledge in planning, aesthetics, and art, their work affected a broader public. The repeating silhouette of the one gasometer with its iron rooftop shaped the narrative significantly. Due to the variety of sources analysed from an actor-centred perspective, this chapter has demonstrated that citizens have used several practices, such as taking photographs or making drawings, to document their perception of the gasometer's appearance. As well as active engagement, emotional bonding through debates and protests and ultimately witnessing the demolition also produced vivid but varied memories for many people living nearby, which can be remembered more easily when depicted visually.

The chapter emphasised elements and strategies, such as the impact of visuality alongside language, as aspects of communicative mediation, negotiation, and public legitimation. Hence, it demonstrated how a materially lost building remained visible and how its visual trajectory from industrial to socialist monument affected and finally reproduced local cultural heritage over time.

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BIOGRAPHY

Kathrin Meissner is an urban historian and human geographer. She completed her doctoral thesis at the Technische Universität Berlin in 2024 on social negotiation processes in urban renewal in socialist planning culture by analysing local (non-)public communication practices in East Berlin from 1971 to 1989. Her research focuses on the (re)construction of the narratives and (visual) discourses of Berlin's urban society in the 20th and 21st centuries and the related dynamics of media change and communication processes in the context of planning cultures and urban heritage. Her previous work includes studies on urban development in Portuguese colonies in Africa during the Salazar regime and grassroots initiatives, conflicts and forms of societal engagement in urban discourses in West Berlin and the UK since the late 1960s.

CONTEMPORARY ARTISTIC INTERVENTIONS IN SOFIA's POST-SOCIALIST URBAN SPACE. A CASE STUDY OF THE VISUAL SEMINAR (2002–2005)

Melody Robine

Abstract

This chapter will analyse artistic interventions in Bulgaria revolving around the urban visual interface of Sofia in the post-socialist context. It will do so through a case study of the *Visual Seminar*, a cycle of art- and research-based interventions as well as public programmes spearheaded by the *Institute for Contemporary Art* (ICA-Sofia) between 2003 and 2006. With reference to this example, this chapter considers how artistic interventions can serve as platforms for new forms of engagement with the urban fabric (Boubnova & Kiossev, 2004). It will delve into the potential of such interventions for the re-appropriation of the city by its inhabitants, and their capacity to generate innovative critical discourses on the transformation of urban space.

Serving as both a platform for artistic interventions, an academic research programme, and a public forum, the *Visual Seminar* (2002–2005) aimed to analyse the lasting effects of structural changes caused by post-socialist transition on the urban fabric, as well as their impact on social behaviour in urban spaces. In doing so, these interventions acted simultaneously as documentation of the transitioning urban space and platforms for civic and public action.

This paper will analyse a selection of artistic works produced within the framework of the *Seminar* that are particularly representative of this attempt to revive the debates concerning the contemporary urban developments of the transitioning city, ranging from performative practices, installations in the public space, and video works, to photomontage, and behavioural and sensorial artistic research. This paper argues that the *Visual Seminar* represents a methodological and theoretical milestone in analysing Sofia's transforming urban space in the early 2000s, both regarding its effort to integrate civil society into planning processes and as a compelling example of artistic and scientific collaboration exploring urban evolution and conservation practices.

Keywords
Bulgaria, post-socialist city, contemporary art, art in public space, participatory art

1   INTRODUCTION

The post-1989 changes to Bulgarian society led to significant transformations in the country's urban fabric. The Bulgarian capital was a microcosm of the broader changes occurring throughout the country, encapsulating in an intensified version the different aspects of this transition. New structures sprang up alongside historical buildings, while a growing advertising presence signalled the rise of consumer culture and the sudden deregulation of urbanisation processes. Major political changes notably affect fields closely tied

to governance, such as urban planning (Stewart, 2003; Fourcade, 2006). In Sofia, following the economic crisis of the mid-1990s (Dobrinsky, 2000), urban development surged ahead of the evolving regulatory framework (Hirt, 2005, p. 224). This discrepancy was a consequence of corruption, inadequate municipal resources, and ambiguous laws regarding land restitution and private developments (Genov, 2006, p. 364). Simultaneously, the political and economic crisis of the 1990s caused a decline in the recognition of the role of experts (architects and planners) in urban-planning processes (Holleran, 2014, p. 24). This occurred in many post-socialist environments that experienced significant deregulation and privatisation, and the situation was further aggravated by an increasing aversion to government intervention (Manchev, 2005) including urban planning and regulation (Stanilov, 2007). Moreover, fifteen years after the change of political systems, the possibility for citizens to participate directly in the decision-making processes of urban planning had not improved significantly since 1989, and urban developments remained paternalist, non-consultative processes (Almer & Koontz, 2004; Hirt, 2005).

This evolving context necessitated the development of new methods for analysing the urban environment and the shifting relationships between inhabitants and their material surroundings. One example that renewed interest in these issues in Sofia was the *Visual Seminar* (2002–2005). Conceived and implemented by the Institute of Contemporary Art – Sofia and the Centre for Advanced Study Sofia, within the framework of the *Relations* project initiated by the Federal Cultural Foundation of Germany, the Seminar aimed to explore the transformation of the Bulgarian capital's urban space through a specifically visual lens. It adopted a multidisciplinary approach to understanding Sofia's transformation from a former socialist capital to a new political setting shaped by the fall of communism. Focusing on the notion of urban environment, the Seminar examined both the visual and material transformations of the city, including changes in its urban fabric, architectural landscape, and, more broadly, the visual culture of Bulgarian society, as well as the relationship of urban dwellers to these changes. It relied on an analysis of the city's *visual interface*, conceptualized as the perceptible layer through which the physical structure of the urban environment engages with social practices, cultural and economical dynamics, and individual perceptions. As such, it mediates the interplay between the built environment and its inhabitants, shaping their perceptions, behaviours, and lived experiences within the urban milieu. The Seminar's focus therefore extended beyond the evolution of the urban fabric to encompass the material, legislative, social, and visual components that defined the city's situation at the time and influenced its potential future developments. Based on observation of the continuities in urban-planning processes between communist and post-communist Sofia (Hirt, 2005, p. 220), the general approach of the *Visual Seminar* relied on the possibilities offered by artistic methodologies to interpret Sofia's transforming urban environment. Indeed, in their first publication, the Seminar's members stressed that

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As main transgressors of dominant rules and limits in the contemporary visual sphere, artists should question this situation by challenging the automated visual habits of the "average citizen". All this is especially true of the East European societies in transition because the public life and tastes in these countries also bear the marks of the communist visual environment – the burden of the totalitarian visual legacy is present in the urban surroundings, architecture, monuments and in the everyday material culture.[1] (Boubnova, 2003).

The Seminar therefore relied on artistic practices to generate both public knowledge and interest in processes of urban transformation and acted as a facilitator for deeper public engagement in planning and conservation methodologies.

The *Visual Seminar* pursued this goal by means of several related modules. It was mainly structured around a public forum (Forum for Visual Culture), which organised public debates with academics, architects, politicians, and artists, and provided a platform for discussions on various aspects of Bulgarian visual culture in transformation. A residency programme was also set up, each year welcoming a variety of artists or researchers – both Bulgarian and international – to undertake a residency and publicly present their project. It finally included a publishing programme, which aimed to diffuse the theoretical and visual productions of the Seminar.

Drawing on two selected artistic projects and an analysis of public discussions held within the Seminar framework – chosen for their particular relevance for the analysis of Sofia's urban transformations beyond its shifting visual culture – this chapter argues that the Seminar represented a methodological and theoretical milestone in examining Sofia's transforming visual and urban space in the early 2000s. It was both a significant attempt to question the urban-planning decision-making processes and a particularly interesting example of artistic and academic collaboration in examining urban evolutions, beyond the classical tools of social science typically employed by urbanists and architects to understand the city.

After a short literature review and presentation of the methodology used, this chapter first discusses the Seminar's particular approach to analysing the visual language of transition in Sofia's architectural and material environment, as well as its capacity to generate innovative critical discourses on the transitioning urban fabric and planning processes. It then analyses the possibilities offered by the project and its methodologies to generate a new relationship between urban dwellers and the city's evolving urban fabric and broaden civic participation in urban-planning processes in Sofia.

1.1   Theoretical context

A large number of papers have focused on the sensory perception of urban spaces – defined as the interpretation and experience of urban environments

1   Unless otherwise stated, this and all subsequent translations from non-English-language sources are by the author.

by individuals and communities (Ito et al., 2024, p. 2) for the past fifty years (Lynch, 1964; Barthes, 1967, p. 1285; Tuan, 1977) and more specifically the importance of people's visual perceptions of the built environment for both scholars and practitioners (Lynch, 1964, p. 8, 114; Nasar, 1990; Nasar & Hong, 1999; Ito et al., 2024).

The argument for citizen participation in urban planning and conservation strategies is well established, both as a means to align these processes with the public interest and as a foundation for stronger democratic practices (Hibbard & Lurie, 2000; Wheeler, 2000; Randolph, 2004) including specifically in post-communist Bulgaria (Hirt, 2005).

Several papers focused on the capacities of artistic practices – particularly participatory practices – in terms of the reappropriation of urban spaces, and their ability to foster sociopolitical changes (Lacy 1995, Frieling et al., 2008; Bianchini et al., 2016; Đukanović & Živković, 2008; Galliera, 2013, Horvath & Carpenter, 2020). Expanding on this, researchers have also highlighted the pedagogical value of artistic interventions in challenging urban norms and fostering critical engagement with dominant spatial trajectories (Pinder 2008, Beyes 2010). However, critical perspectives have also cautioned against the potential instrumentalisation of artistic interventions in urban spaces, particularly within neoliberal redevelopment agendas (Deutsche, 1996) and have questioned the overly optimistic framing of the roles of public art, arguing for a more nuanced understanding of its socio-spatial and political contexts. (Zebracki, 2010).

Yet little attention has been paid to the possibilities offered by artistic practices in post-socialist urban contexts, particularly in the Balkans. The specific challenges of cities like Sofia, which have been shaped by rapid transition, deregulation, and lingering authoritarian legacies, remain under-explored. This chapter addresses this gap by examining a selection of artistic interventions realised in the framework of *Visual Seminar* (2003–2006), to better understand how such artistic projects can deepen citizen involvement in urban planning and conservation processes, through innovative mixed methodologies and direct interventions in public space.

1.2   Methodology

This chapter relies on interviews conducted by the author with the founding members of the *Visual Seminar* and analyses urban-planning documents, press as well as academic articles, and archival materials of the Visual Seminar between 2003 and 2006.

The interviews were conducted as semi-structured interviews with two of the founding members of the Visual Seminar (Luchezar Boyadjiev and Alexander Kiossev). The questions addressed the Seminar's proceedings and its estimated impact on both public opinion and planning procedures. The research also relied on relevant literature. Lastly, it drew upon on the publications produced by the Seminar through the three years of its existence, as well as its archival materials, which consist mainly of photographic documentation and transcriptions of public debates.

2 THE CITY AND THE VISUAL SEMINAR: A CHANGING LOOK AT THE CITY

2.1 An insight into Sofia's municipal planning: The 2003 Urban Master Plan of Sofia Municipality

The Seminar's focus on the ability of existing mechanisms to regulate the evolution of the city's built environment stemmed from several factors. In 2004, Sofia's legal and political framework was still largely undeveloped, leaving significant room for unscrupulous entrepreneurs to exploit. As Vladimir Kissyov, Chairman of the Municipal Council of Sofia, stated in a public discussion organised by the *Seminar* on 20 May 2004, at Sofia Art Gallery, the norms governing market behaviour – specifically regarding the destruction and construction of the urban fabric – were "obviously far from sufficient". In 2004, 15 years after the transition, Sofia still lacked a general urban plan, even though a national competition for the development of a new Master Plan had already been launched as early as 1990 (Master Plan of Sofia Municipality, 2006). The first Master Plan of Sofia Municipality was submitted to the municipal administration in 2003, but it was only approved in 2006 and enforced in 2007. The 2009 amendment to the 2007 Master Plan, which briefly outlines the context in which it was created, discreetly notes that "in the period from 2001 till 2006, a number of violations of the regulatory framework were observed". It describes the planning practices up to that point as "vicious planning practice ['piecemeal']" and mentions the "deteriorated characteristics of the urban environment" (Master Plan of Sofia Municipality, 2006, p. 24), clarifying that the issue was not the 2003 Master Plan itself but rather the failure to implement its prescribed measures.

Although the law mandated public hearings for citizen input on the adoption of the 2003 General Plan of Sofia (*Zakon za Ustrojstvoto na Teritorijata*, 2004), citizen participation was minimal. Official records show that 17 public hearings were held, yet Hirt (2005) finds that "planner-citizen communication was a one-way street". This situation reflects both a lack of engagement from civil society and the lack of a "pro-public-input philosophy" (Hirt, 2005, p. 233). It can additionally be noted that the final document summarising external input simply did not include a section on how this citizen participation impacted the plan (Stolichna Obshtina, 2003; Hirt, 2005, p. 234).

2.2 Beyond "Mafia Baroque": Debating Sofia's urban identity

In this context, the public discussion titled "Images of the City, images of Capital", held at the Sofia City Gallery on May 20, 2004 explicitly addressed the consequences of privatisation and deregulation processes on the city's appearance in the early 2000s, while highlighting the lack of public participation in these urban transformations. It sparked many questions about social responsibility in relation to the evolution of the city's material environment. Held in the presence of the chairman of the Chamber of Architects of Bulgaria and

the chairman of the City Council, the conversation objective was to analyse the latest urban developments in the city, trying to determine what – if any – was the contemporary image of Sofia as a capital, and what processes were influencing this. Once again, the unique approach of the *Visual Seminar* shifted the discussion away from traditional political debates or expert roundtables. At the start of the discussion, the art historian Diana Popova (b. 1958) showed close-up photographs of all the city's most recently opened casinos, seeking deliberately to provoke strong reactions from the audience. In this way, Popova's – and, through her voice, the *Visual Seminar*'s – main focus was to confront politicians', academics', technical experts' and business representatives' views to generate a public debate on the processes of planning, privatisation, and construction in the city. But beyond aesthetic evolution, shifts in cultural tastes can

FIGURE 1   Casino Luxor, Sofia. (2003, ICA-Sofia Archives, CC BY-NC)

be indicators of deeper economic and political changes (Boym, 2001). The *kitsch*, attention-grabbing, and eclectic style shown by Popova can be seen as the reflection of the taste of the new post-transition economic elite and a symbol of economic transformation.

Hirt identifies these developments as stemming from "capitalism's everlasting need to self-advertise, but also by the freeing of a long-suppressed desire of owners and builders to do as they wish without restrictions" (Hirt, 2005, p. 803). Commonly referred to as *Mutri* – from the Bulgarian word for "mobster" or "mafia" – or *Mafia Baroque*, they are characterized by an eclectic mix of architectural styles and ornaments (Figure 1, Figure 2), often drawing heavily on re-imagined neo-classicist visual references (Holleran, 2014). The term "Mutri" is derived from the Bulgarian word for "mobster" or "mafia", and reflects the socio-economic reality of post-socialist Bulgaria. The emergence of this style coincided with the rapid privatisation and economic turmoil of the 1990s, as mentioned above, during which organised crime groups began to exert significant influence over various sectors of the economy, and of which the casinos that flourished in the city in the early 2000s – together with hotels and private villas – are one of the most striking examples. As stated by Holleran (2014, 2022), the style is not merely an aesthetic choice but is deeply intertwined with issues of corruption, class differences, and the influence of illegal capital in urban development. The term – not used by Popova – and the display of these images at the Seminar therefore encapsulates a broader

FIGURE 2   Caesars Casino, Sofia. (2003, ICA-Sofia Archives, CC BY-NC)

critique of the socio-political landscape in Bulgaria, and a representation of the consequences of the lack of regulation, of oversight in construction, and of public involvement for the urban environment (Petrunov, 2006; Hristova, 2007; Angelov, 2019).

With this project functionally combining elements of both artistic cooperation and activism, the goal of the works presented as well as the subsequent public discussion was therefore not to generate a final decision and a stable compromise, but rather to spark debates, to comment on what remained unseen or uncriticised, to free the voices of many who remained far from the negotiations over the evolution of urban public space, and to confront Sofia municipality about the (non-)existence of legislation to protect the historic layout of the city and regulate new construction. In contrast to the lack of public involvement in planning processes, the debates welcomed controversial ideas, contradictory views, and even ironic positions. For example, the Seminar organised an online public vote to designate the most inadequate business environment, a title that was awarded to the Sofia Grand Hotel, built on the site of the former city library. This action was not intended as an immediate call for public action directed at the municipality but aimed, through artistic and satirical means, to provoke ongoing public questioning of the legitimacy and appropriateness of these transformations of the city (Kiossev, 2009).

3 FOSTERING VISUAL LITERACY: ENGAGING URBAN DWELLERS THROUGH VISUAL EDUCATION AND PARTICIPATION

A second issue targeted by the Seminar was the visual and historical illiteracy of the citizens, which, combined with bureaucratic complexity and deregulation, hindered the formation of an informed civic sphere capable of directly influencing the decision-making process. This situation rendered the city a visually illegible space, reducing the potential for political engagement with the city's evolution to mere observation of a (commercial) spectacle (Debord, 1971). Visual literacy, in this context, refers to the ability of citizens to critically interpret, navigate, and engage with their visual urban environment amidst rapid neo-capitalist transformations.

To address this, a significant segment of the *Visual Seminar* explored ways to renew the relationship between urban dwellers and their transforming urban environment. Two main streams of projects could be identified: those that aimed at enhancing understanding of the city and providing historical and urban context to the general public, and participatory works designed to interact directly with passersby to gather opinions and thoughts on recent developments in the urban landscape.

FIGURE 3   Kazalarska, Svetla, Route 76 (detail). (2005, ICA-Sofia Archives, CC BY-NC)

3.1 Artistic projects as windows onto history: Involving citizens in Sofia's urban story

Analysing the absence, at that time, of a museum tracing the history of Sofia, Svetla Kazalarska's project *Route 76* (Figure 3, Figure 4), organised as part of the 4th Resident fellow programme (2005) and titled *The City as Museum*, reflects on the role of city museums and their responsibility towards visitors.

In Kazalarska's view, the central role of such a museum should be to educate the public's vision and redirect their gaze toward their urban environment and its transformations (Kazalarska, 2005). Drawing on the experience of a few exhibitions directly targeting Sofia as a city (such as the "Sofia – Hundred Faces" exhibition in the Sofia City Art Gallery in 2004), "Sofia – A European City" exhibition in the National Art Gallery, and the "Old Sofia" photo exhibition in the building of the Central Baths in 2003), several similar projects in various national contexts, and referencing André Malraux's concept of a *Musée imaginaire* ("Imaginary museum" or "Museum without walls"), the project was conceived as opening "windows to the history of the

FIGURE 4   Kazalarska, Svetla, Route 76 (detail). (2005, ICA-Sofia Archives, CC BY-NC)

city" (Kazalarska, 2005, p. 67) and designed specifically to generate direct interaction with citizens rather than temporary visitors. To directly reach her audience, she decided to place a series of posters filled with historical and urban text and images along the daily paths of residents, following an already existing public route: the route of the number 76 bus. Public transport routes were ordinary objects, devoid of academic interest in Sofia in the early 2000s. However, they also serve as significant elements shaping the way many commuters navigate the city on a daily basis, and therefore influence people's perception of the urban environment. The number 76 bus was chosen for its specific route – which crosses the city from one side to the other, through many significant districts and locations – its symbolic importance, and its long existence and high usage. Through this simple action, commuters were transformed into an audience, and the bus route became a mobile museum. The old, overused windows of the bus turned the city into an object of research, or at least inquiry, for the daily users of the number 76 bus. By doing this, the artist underscored the role of visual education in sparking interest in the city's architectural heritage.

Kazalarska derived the themes and content of the panels not only from the city's most notable sites, chosen for their historic or economic significance or their role as tourist attractions, but also from sites of – past or present – everyday importance, selected for their potential to spark debates on the evolution of the urban fabric and former heritage conservation policies. Far from being promotional posters for twenty-first-century Sofia or nostalgic images of a long-lost city, the posters highlighted contentious aspects of Sofia's recent heritage. For instance, along the bus route, the posters referenced the recent (2005) destruction of the Proshek Brewery – once the largest beer producer in the country and a symbol of modernising Sofia (Nachev, 2016) – to make way for a shopping mall, as well as the construction of the prefabricated (*Panelki*) residential district Mladost 4, which began in 1974. The stories thus spanned different epochs and political contexts. By juxtaposing historical commentary (often newspaper articles from the time of the events) with the contemporary situation, Kazalarska invited passersby to take a step back and critically engage with their city and residential district. In doing so, she aimed to foster interest in the city, enhance the inhabitants' knowledge of their daily surroundings, and raise public awareness of the importance of Sofia's architectural heritage. By assuming roles that could or should have been taken over by official institutions, the artist also questioned the positions of artists and researchers in the efforts to preserve Sofia's townscape. In this context, the project's implementation and the necessary negotiations with local authorities (such as representatives of the municipality and the Sofia Public Transport Company) to obtain permission were already steps toward renewing the interest of the local authorities in dialogue on these issues (Spassov, 2005). However, the reactions of observers in public spaces are naturally unpredictable: in Sofia's urban environment, where heavily sexualised and aggressive signs and billboards compete for the attention of passersby, the ability of such initiatives to successfully attract attention, particularly outside the main stations, remained limited (Spassov, 2005).

3.2   Making place: The legitimacy and involvement of the general public

Finally, one last type of work can be seen as particularly representative of the *Visual Seminar*'s intent to renew the relationship between citizens and the city's urban heritage, specifically by engaging directly with the general public – passersby and city dwellers – and involving them in the transformation of the urban fabric. Notable examples include the joint project by artist Luchezar Boyadjiev and sociologist Milla Mineva for the first edition of the Seminar in 2003, entitled *Hotline for Visual Irregularities.* This project featured a mobile panel (Figure 5) displaying a telephone number and email address through which the public could share their opinions on visual or aesthetic *irritants* encountered in the city's public space and respond to a range of topics presented to them. The aim of this project was not merely to identify key issues but more generally to draw the public's attention to their visual environment and its transformation:

> The function of the hotline was to draw attention to the very act of looking, seen as a way of looking at the city, and seeing the things that are really a major concern for your life, your tastes and your status, in terms of how you are represented in this city. (Boyadjiev & Dimova, 2004)

The responses received were subsequently used as the basis for the public discussion held at the Sofia City Gallery in July 2003 in the presence of invited speakers such as Dimitar Stoychev, an advertising manager, and Lilo Popov,
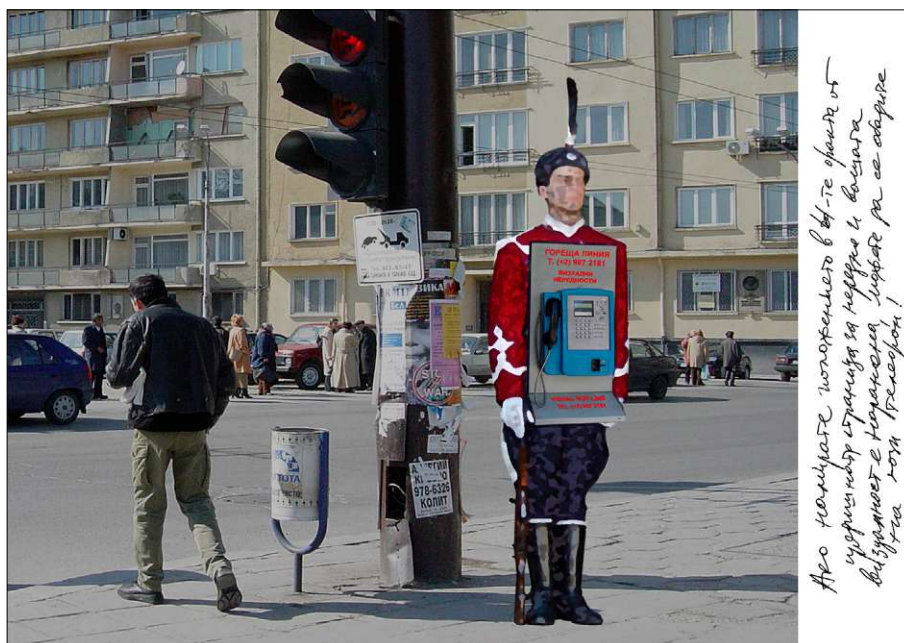

FIGURE 5   Boyadjiev, Luchezar, Hotline for Visual Irregularities. 2003. (Courtesy of the Artist, CC BY-NC)

an architectural theorist, along with representatives from prominent national media. The discussion, titled "Sofia as a Sight", introduced the Visual Seminar's perspectives to the audience and addressed issues related to the responsibilities of those shaping the urban visual environment, the city's historical memory, the evolving definition of its public space, and the rights associated with it. The discussion was anchored by a selection of cityscape photographs and digital montages created by Luchezar Boyadjiev (Figure 6), which was subsequently sent to media contacts to trigger a debate about the visual interface of the city and how it reflects the state of society as a whole. During the heated debate, some of the audience members insisted that the Visual Seminar should petition local authorities against these identified "visual irregularities" (Kiossev, 2009, p.13). While a project of this kind can only have a limited direct impact, this response highlighted the importance of the issues addressed by Boyadjiev and Mineva, underscoring their potential success in raising awareness among city residents and encouraging them to intervene in urban developments via artistic means.
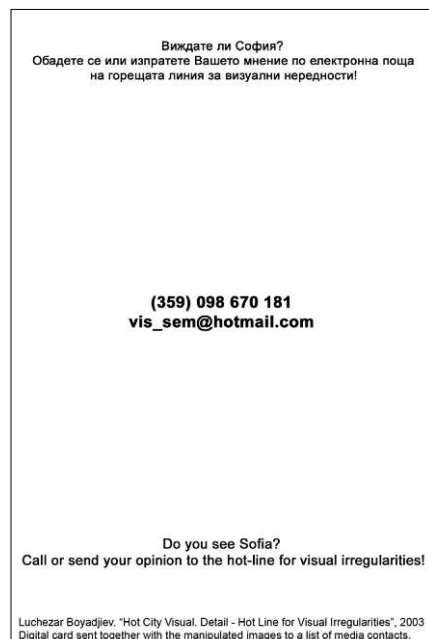

Виждате ли София?
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Do you see Sofia?
Call or send your opinion to the hot-line for visual irregularities!

Luchezar Boyadjiev. "Hot City Visual. Detail - Hot Line for Visual Irregularities", 2003
Digital card sent together with the manipulated images to a list of media contacts.

FIGURE 6   Boyadjiev, Luchezar, 2003, *Hotline for Visual Irregularities.* (Detail: digital card send together with manipulated images to a list of media contacts, 2003. Courtesy of the Artist, CC BY-NC)

4   CONCLUSION

By analysing the city as a language, the *Visual Seminar* adopted a nuanced critical perspective on Sofia's visual environment, viewing it as a living embodiment of a neo-capitalist urban space. The Seminar emphasised the importance of artistic practices as a crucial means of activating the resources of civil society, echoing arguments for citizen participation as a foundation for democratic urban planning and conservation practices (Hirt, 2005; Wheeler, 2000).

The Seminar's emphasis on fostering visual literacy and public participation resonates with theories highlighting the pedagogical potential of artistic interventions to challenge dominant spatial and political trajectories (Pinder, 2008; Beyes, 2010). Although it is difficult to trace the direct impact of the Seminar on urban planning and conservation processes, as well as on the evolution of consultative procedures in urban planning processes (such as those involved in the adoption of the Sofia Master Plan on 2006), it certainly yielded indirect benefits, including increased visibility of these topics – through substantial press and media coverage of some of their interventions in the public space – and activity among citizens willing to engage in the process. The *Visual Seminar* project demonstrated the potential of combining artistic and research methodologies to actively foster public engagement with urban

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transformation processes. By promoting visual literacy and public participation – often in unconventional ways – the Seminar set a precedent for future initiatives aimed at bridging the gap between artistic expression and urban planning. It also raised important questions about the role of artists in urban policy and decisions concerning the city's future. Emphasising their creators' position as artists and visual experts, most of the works created within the project were based on immediate, sensorial, intimate, or personal experiences, offering a different perspective on the city than those of researchers (urbanists, cultural studies experts, historians) and practitioners (city officials, entrepreneurs). While these works conveyed active stances and visions regarding Sofia's past and future material changes, they did so on two levels: blending tangible proposals with irony and critique. By holding these debates in public space, the artists and researchers involved advocated for politicised artistic practices, considering conflict and its visibility as a condition of democratic processes regarding the transformation of urban spaces, rather than a threat (Deutsche, 2006, p. xv).

By assuming functions that had been neglected by the political and administrative spheres, the Seminar also reflected on the new roles of decision-makers in the city's evolution and its built heritage, particularly regarding the status of artists in Bulgarian society in transition. In this way, while its participants refused the label of activists, the actions of the *Visual Seminar* served to (re)open the debate around the diverse and sometimes conflicting visual interfaces, uses of public spaces, and broader transformations of the Bulgarian capital.

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BIOGRAPHY

Melody Robine is a PhD candidate in art history at EHESS and Sorbonne Université under the title "Reclaiming the city. Contemporary art and urban spaces in transitioning Yugoslavia (1982–2009)". She holds a Master's degree in political science from Sciences Po Paris and a Master's degree in contemporary art history from the Sorbonne Université, completing her dissertation on the reappropriation of urban space by contemporary artists in Bulgaria. She has worked at various French cultural institutions (Ministry of Culture; French Academy in Rome) and art galleries. She has had research residencies at the University of Trieste (IT), Koper (SLO), and the French School in Athens (EFA, GRE), and participated in international conferences in Tirana (National Academy of Science), Athens (University of Ioannina – Theocharakis Foundation for the arts) and Vienna (TU Wien).

BRESCIA'S OLD CARMINE DISTRICT: THE IMPACT OF PLANNING AND CONSERVATION DECISIONS ON THE AREA'S BUILT AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT IN THE 1970s AND 1980s

Carlotta Coccoli

Abstract

This chapter presents the preliminary results of a study of the interventions promoted by the Municipality of Brescia for the recovery of the Carmine district. This district, the old part of the historical centre, has traditionally experienced the most severe problems of physical and social dereliction, forcing economically disadvantaged social groups to reside in unhealthy conditions.

Using the urban planning instrument of the "recovery plan", since the mid-1970s the City Council has directly promoted and carried out a massive public intervention, combining the objective of preserving the district's heritage with that of improving the quality of life in the district. The interventions included the renovation of old, unhealthy dwellings on the verge of collapse, while the restoration of other buildings, including monuments, led to the creation of new services (offices and town halls, community and school centres, spaces for cultural associations, furnished green spaces, etc.).

Over time, the public initiatives for the area's rehabilitation generated a chain reaction, resulting in the emergence of several private projects that accelerated the recovery process. The decision of the University of Brescia to renovate a series of imposing monumental buildings and monastic complexes to house the university's law and economics centres and the rectorate gave Carmine's redevelopment process a decisive boost in the 1980s, while other buildings in the district were converted into student accommodation. Since the early 2000s, the Municipality of Brescia has promoted another redevelopment plan, the "Carmine Project", which has completed the transformation of the once notorious district, not only physically and functionally, but also socially, turning it into the most culturally vibrant and multi-ethnic area of the city.

Approximately fifty years after the initial radical interventions in the district, this essay aims to reflect upon the motivations, strategies, and outcomes of this physical and social regeneration project, focusing on the initial phase of the 1970s and 1980s. The study begins with the observation that research conducted thus far on the Carmine district has predominantly focused on more contemporary projects and issues, such as the substantial influx of non-EU migrants that impacted the area from the 1990s onwards. Indeed, aside from a few brief accounts published in the 1980s by the very technicians and experts involved in the project (Lombardi, 1982; Ponzoni, Testi, 1985; Lombardi, 1989), a more comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the intervention and its outcomes is currently lacking.

Keywords

Brescia, Carmine District, urban redevelopment, building restoration, social housing

1   INTRODUCTION

This essay presents the preliminary findings of an ongoing research project that is exploring the urban regeneration schemes promoted by the public administration in the historic and popular Carmine district of Brescia, northern Italy. The research project is focused on the impact of urban planning and architectural interventions, with particular attention paid to the pivotal period of the 1970s and 1980s, which is considered to be crucial in the district's long-term regeneration process.

Over the past five decades, the area has undergone a significant trans-formation from a state of decline into a vibrant cultural hub. However, this transformation is not without its challenges. In recent years, the district has been experiencing a resurgence of chronic issues pertaining to low levels of security and petty crime, which have historically been associated with the area.

By consulting both published and unpublished materials, this study aims to gain a deeper understanding of the tools and methods employed in those pioneering physical and social regeneration projects in the district, with a view to evaluating their actual outcomes and long-term efficacy. Furthermore, the study aims to expand the existing bibliography on the subject, which is largely limited to works published in the 1980s, by providing insights into the events from both an urban and an architectural perspective.

The Carmine district makes up about a quarter of Brescia's historic centre, located in the north-western part of the northern Italian city. It repre-sents the northern expansion of the Roman city, dating back to the early Middle Ages, which developed along the western slopes of the Cidneo hill. This compact medieval quarter has an urban fabric that developed around the current Via San Faustino and is characterised by the presence of imposing churches and convents, some noble residences, as well as more modest terraced dwellings typical of the working class (Lombardi, 1989, pp. 21–28). Possessing a rich history and unique social fabric, the district has served as a destination for migrants since the eighteenth century, solidifying its status as Brescia's working-class heart. However, perceived as declining, the district necessitated interventions focused on control and rehabilitation (Granata, Granata & Grandi, 2010, pp. 404–405).

2   HYGIENIC AND BUILDING CONDITIONS IN THE CARMINE: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The Carmine district has long had a reputation for dereliction and poor health conditions, both physically and socially. However, the situation deteriorated between the late 19th and mid-20th century. During this period, there was considerable debate about urban modernisation projects. The demolition of buildings, including the city walls, was considered an effective solution, as evidenced by the provisions of the 1887 Urban Recovery Plan and the Brescia Master Plan of 1929, which identified Carmine as an area in need of radical renovation (Robecchi, 1980, pp. 36–40). The 1929 plan, drawn up by the
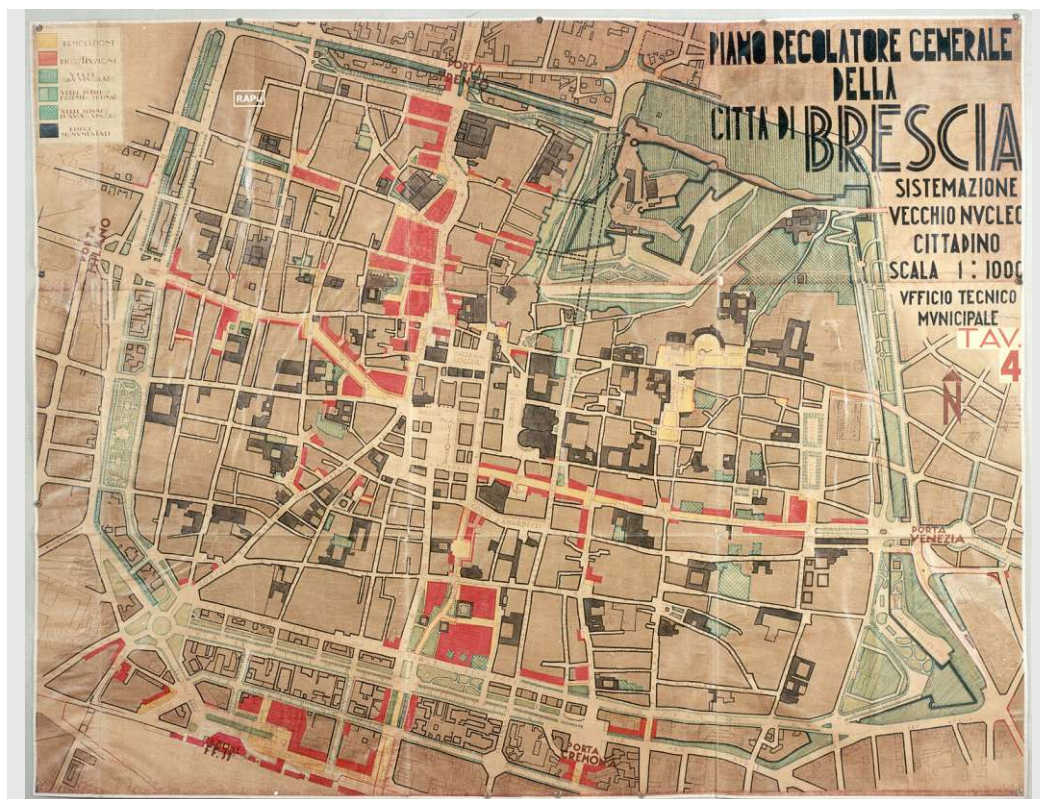
FIGURE 1   General Master Plan of Brescia, Redevelopment of the Old City Centre (Piano Regolatore Generale di Brescia, Sistemazione vecchio nucleo cittadino) by Ufficio Tecnico Comunale, scale 1:1000, 1957. (From Archivio di Stato Brescia, Archivio RAPu, 9BSC3, CC BY-NC-SA)

architect Marcello Piacentini, echoed the strategy employed in the adjacent Pescherie district. There, the demolition of existing structures facilitated the construction of Piazza della Vittoria, a sprawling new central plaza envisaged as the linchpin of Piacentini's urban renewal programme (Coccoli, 2019). Subsequent urban development proposals continued to advocate a similar approach for the Carmine district, albeit ultimately unrealized (*Il popolo di Brescia*, 1941, December 21)

The general urban plan of 1954 placed a premium on the conservation of the city's historic and aesthetic assets. It stipulated that any demolitions should be confined to instances where they were deemed necessary for traffic or sanitation reasons (Municipality of Brescia, City Council, 1954). Nevertheless, the plan put forth radical proposals for the redevelopment of the Carmine district (Figure 1).

A socio-medical study conducted in the early 1960s by the municipal Office of Hygiene and Health provided further evidence to support the perception of the decline of the Carmine. The study revealed that over one-fifth of the impoverished population of Brescia resided within the district (Tarantini, 1963, p. 8). A noteworthy aspect of the investigation was the assessment of the hygiene and overall quality of residential buildings in the

FIGURE 2　　　　The quadrilateral bounded by Via Borgondio (A), Via Fenarolo (B), Via Paitone (C), and Rua Sovera (D) in Brescia. (Carlotta Coccoli, aerial view retrieved from Google Maps, August 16, 2024; https://maps.app.goo.gl/FLi7B3qQbTdxgW77A, CC BY-SA)

district, with a particular focus on the four streets that were in the worst condition. Via (or Vicolo) Borgondio, Via Fenarolo, Via Paitone, and Rua Sovera were collectively identified as constituting the "notoriously unhygienic core of the Carmine district"[1] (Tarantini, 1963, p. 10) (Figure 2). Indeed, the same blocks had been identified by the Brescia Municipality as requiring demolition and reconstruction as early as 1932.

The 1960 evaluation employed a nine-point scale (ranging from "good" to "very bad") to assess various parameters, including the age of the building, the standard of maintenance, the condition of the attic, the heating system, the water supply, and the presence of latrines and sewage systems. The results of the survey, conducted on a total of 48 buildings, were unambiguous: all exhibited deplorable hygienic conditions. The ancient buildings were in a state of disrepair, with terracotta floors in poor condition, wooden staircases showing wear and looseness, dark hallways, and living quarters of a limited height that were deficient in ventilation and sunlight. This was due to a combination of factors, including the height of the buildings and the narrowness of the streets. In essence, the study concluded that the most effective approach to addressing the situation would be "to demolish and rebuild rationally" (Tarantini, 1963, p. 18).

This socio-medical research was carried out at the same time as the drafting stage of the new Brescia Master Plan, which was entrusted to the renowned town planner Prof. Mario Morini, assisted by a committee of local experts, and approved in 1961 (Robecchi, 2006, pp. 273–277). In accordance with Italian legislation (Law 17 August 1942, No. 1150 on town planning, *Legge Urbanistica*), the responsibility for defining the specific details of intervention techniques was delegated to *Piani Particolareggiati* (Detailed Plans), an implementation tool intended to address the complexity of Carmine's redevelopment.

1　　　　Unless otherwise stated, this and all subsequent translations from non-English-language sources are by the author.

Among the numerous detailed plans for the historic centre, the plan for the Carmine district was prioritized and was the only one to reach the executive phase. Consistent with urban planning principles prevalent in Brescia during preceding decades, the plan involved the comprehensive demolition of entire city blocks, to be replaced by new functional buildings, widened streets, and a substantial new green square. The target area for these radical interventions was once again the quadrilateral bounded by Vie Borgondio, Fenarolo, and Paitone, and Rua Sovera (Figure 3). The mayor of Brescia himself declared the intervention to be "a comprehensive demolition and rebuilding of the entire area, with the exception of the preservation of monumental parts" (Robecchi, 2006, p. 284).

However, growing public awareness, coupled with the mobilisation of local and national experts who highlighted the backwardness of Brescia's urban planning, and the opposition of the Superintendence for Monuments, which advocated for more up-to-date approaches to the conservation and redevelopment of the Carmine area, resulted in the de facto rejection of the detailed plan by the Ministry in 1967 (Robecchi, 2006, pp. 286–287). The field
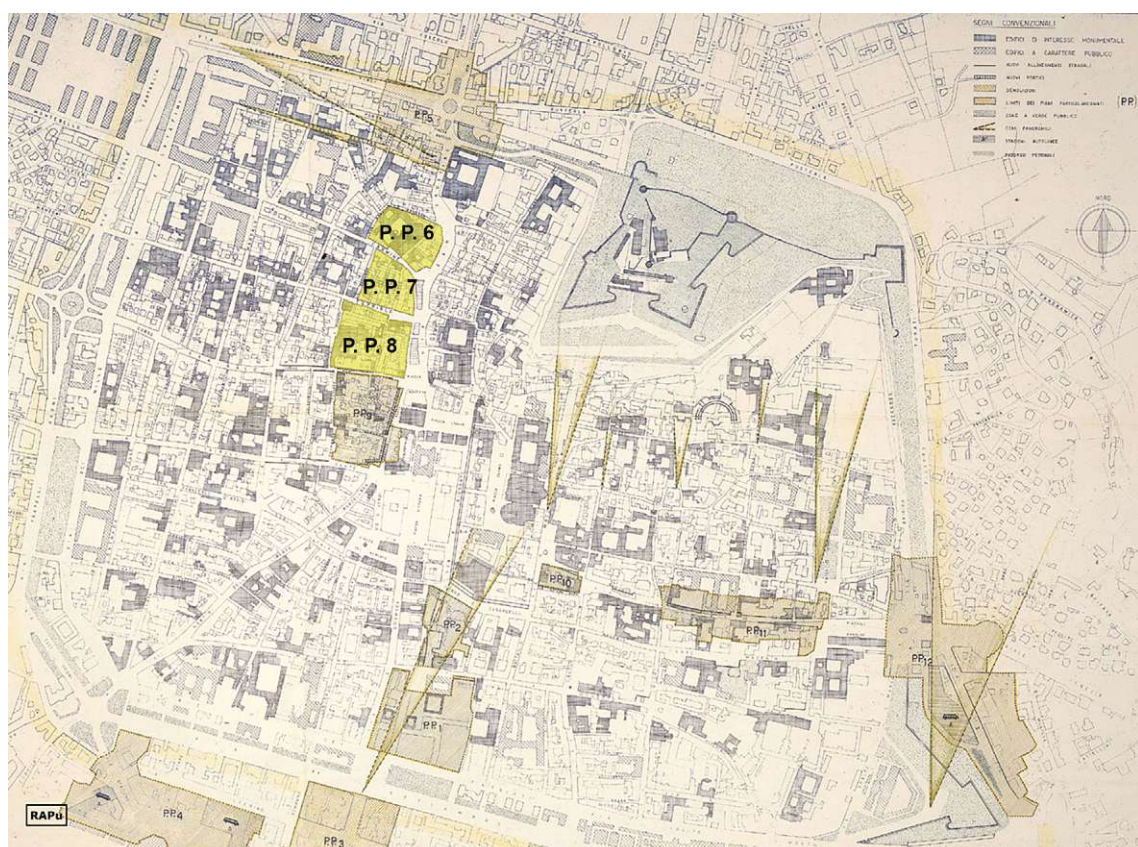
FIGURE 3   General Plan of Brescia, Old City Centre (Piano Regolatore Generale di Brescia, Nucleo Antico) by Mario Morini, 1961. The areas indicated on the left, identified by the codes P.P. (Piano Particolareggiato, detailed plan) 6, 7, and 8, pertain to the Carmine district while P.P. 7 pertains, in particular, to Vie Borgondio, Fenarolo, and Paitone and Rua Sovera, scale 1:2000. (From Archivio di Stato Brescia, Archivio RAPu, 10BSC7, CC BY-NC-SA)

of urban development was evolving away from the indiscriminate demolition of historic centres towards a new sensitivity, as evidenced by documents such as the 1960 Charter of Gubbio for the Safeguarding and Rehabilitation of Historic City Centres (Dainotto, 2003) and the 1964 Venice Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS, 1964). Consequently, the planned intervention in the Carmine district was not implemented for over a decade.

3   THE HISTORIC CENTRE PLAN (1973–77)

The tendency towards extensive urban expansion beyond the city walls, a prominent feature of Brescia's post-war urban planning, underwent a significant transformation in the early 1970s (Lombardi, 1989, p. 47). The focus of the city's new urban plan, formulated by means of two amendments to the Master Plan in 1973 and 1977 (Pola, 2016, p. 21), shifted towards the objective of enhancing the existing urban fabric and promoting a higher quality of life within the city centre. This approach drew inspiration from cutting-edge critical reviews of land management methods promoted at the European level. Historic city centres, such as those of Leeds, Oldenburg, Vienna, Newcastle, and Amsterdam, emphasized the importance of integrating conservation in the existing built environment. This involved the restoration of buildings, with direct public intervention for those in the most dilapidated state, and the enhancement of public services (Benevolo & Bettinelli, 1981, p. 291).

    This reorientation towards the historic centre gave rise to the necessity to develop a sophisticated intervention strategy. However, in many Italian cities during this period, the detailed plans that were put in place proved to be unwieldy and challenging to implement. Moreover, while urban studies of Italian historical centres in the early 1970s frequently employed the "urban block" as the primary unit of analysis, conceptualised as an *insula* defined by street boundaries and serving as the basic unit for collecting quantitative and qualitative data (Lombardi, 1989, p. 50), Brescia adopted a more granular approach, informed by the pioneering work of Saverio Muratori, Gianfranco Caniggia, and Leonardo Benevolo. Their studies had laid the methodological foundations for a systematic scientific approach to the investigation of the historical built environment (D'Amato Gurrieri & Strappa, 2003). Consequently, the "building unit" was adopted by the Brescia project as the fundamental unit of analysis, drawing inspiration from the urban plans of Bologna (1969), Ferrara (1975), and Como (1970–75) (Benevolo & Bettinelli, 1981, pp. 303–316).

    Since the 1970s, this approach has resulted in the progressive establishment of a dedicated working group within the Urban Planning Department, whose remit was the historic urban core. In the course of preparing the Plan for the Historic Centre (the 1973 variant of the Master Plan), this team was charged with the task of cataloguing all buildings within the historic centre and classifying them according to their respective building types.

    The "building unit", while potentially taking each property separately, was in fact sized to function as a "minimum intervention unit", addressing the shared needs of the residents within its structure (Lombardi, 1989, p. 50).

Furthermore, by aligning with a specific building typology, it facilitated the identification of broader issues applicable to other areas with similar historical housing stock. Consequently, regulations were enacted that established standards for each building type. As will be discussed in greater detail in the following section, this shift from the urban block to the typological unit facilitated informed design decisions regarding intended uses. In predominantly residential areas such as Carmine, regulations were introduced to preserve this character by maintaining the existing functions. These regulations prohibited the merging of adjacent building units of different types. Nevertheless, the construction of small commercial premises, residential dwellings, or service areas on the ground floor was permitted, as long as they remained within the designated unit's boundaries. In the case of large, unused historical buildings of an appropriate size and character, the priority was the installation of public services. This resulted in the establishment of new facilities for the University of Brescia within restored noble palaces and former monasteries in Carmine. In the majority of cases, these had already been taken into public ownership following the Napoleonic suppressions of the early nineteenth century (Lombardi, 1989, pp. 65–66; Granata, Granata & Grandi, 2010, pp. 413–414).

4 THE RECOVERY PLAN OF VICOLO BORGONDIO (1980)

A shift in policy regarding Brescia's historic centre emerged in 1978 with the establishment of "recovery zones" within its most deteriorated areas. This development coincided with the enactment of National Law No. 457 *"Norme per l'edilizia residenziale"* (Standards for Residential Construction) of 1978, which allocated public funds for the revitalization of existing dilapidated neighbourhoods (Caruso, 2017, p. 33). In response to this new legislative framework, the Municipality of Brescia launched a comprehensive public intervention programme. Rather than engaging in the complex and expensive expropriation processes outlined in the legislation, the municipality opted to acquire vacant building units for rehabilitation on the open market using state funds. In the period between 1977 and 1980, approximately 100 vacant dwellings were acquired within the historic centre, providing the impetus for the implementation of recovery plans (Lombardi, 1982, p. 86). The Councillor for Special Territorial Interventions in 1980 described the initiative as follows:

> A substantial municipal programme for social and economic housing in the historic centre is currently underway. This intervention is based on a rigorous operational mechanism that involves the refurbishment of vacant dwellings and the permanent relocation into these of families who will thus vacate other dwellings, which will then be refurbished in turn. In essence, the aim is to maintain and expand a flywheel that enables the implementation of a large-scale refurbishment operation, an operation that cannot be achieved through one-off interventions but only through the effective continuity of a process of successive initiatives over time (Papetti & Savoldi, 1980, p. 89).

The primary objective of the programme was to preserve housing within the district, safeguarding existing residential units. The goal of social equity was attained by prioritizing the needs of vulnerable social groups, thereby expediting their return to their original homes. The strategy aimed to prevent social displacement and ensure access to affordable rental housing. Indeed, a fundamental tenet of municipal planning policy was the maintenance of a balanced social composition within the historic centre (Pola, 2016, p. 27).

In addition, the programme was devised with the objective of preserving the area's historic character, which is defined by a compact urban fabric typical of the medieval era. This is characterised by predominantly narrow, elongated plots upon which traditional terraced housing was constructed. Despite the deterioration that has occurred over time, the buildings have retained distinctive features that contribute to a unique urban landscape. These include stone doorways and windowsills, iron railings, wooden roof gutters, and fragments of wall decoration (Figure 4 & 5).

The recovery plan constituted the primary instrument for implementing interventions in designated areas, with Vicolo Borgondio and Contrada del Carmine identified as the initial focal points. The selection of these specific blocks for intervention was based on a comprehensive assessment undertaken by the municipality's newly formed Ufficio Centro Storico (Historic Centre Office), an expert unit comprising three operational units: urban planning, architectural design, and administration and organisation (Lombardi, 1982, p. 86). The office, headed by Professor Giorgio Lombardi, was formally inaugurated in 1980 as part of the recently established Assessorato agli Interventi speciali sul territorio (Department for Special Territorial Interventions). It represented the culmination of collective efforts initiated in the 1970s to study the historic centre (Pola, 2016, p. 21). The assessment had two principal components. Firstly, a combination of heritage assessment and market analysis provided key insights. The results of the market research indicated a willingness on the part of property owners to sell dilapidated properties at competitive prices. Secondly, a structural analysis of the blocks and individual buildings was conducted in order to assess their condition and potential (Lombardi, 1989, pp. 62–63).

The assessment facilitated the refinement of a micro-urban planning tool designed to define the objectives of a *restauro d'insieme* (overall restoration), with the objective of the residential and cultural regeneration of the historic fabric and the improvement of civic services. The plan comprised two types of restoration interventions: those targeting residences and those focusing on the neighbourhood or the city scale. The former, while respecting the specific existing typological characteristics, aimed to improve their organisation and functioning. In instances where buildings with the necessary characteristics to accommodate public services at the city scale were unavailable, it was possible to "consider modifications to the historic fabric in favour of a greater balance between residential and service uses" (Municipality of Brescia, 1986, July).

The case of Vicolo Borgondio provides an illustrative example of how intervention criteria were adapted to align with the specific characteristics of a particular building typology. It is important to note that terraced housing constitutes a significant proportion of the housing stock in the Carmine area. The original concept behind this typology was of a two-storey, single-family

FIGURE 4 Via Ventura Fenarolo, transformation through redevelopment. (Historical view, from Museo Nazionale della Fotografia Brescia, Archivio Borrani, id. 17, Fausto Borrani, 1970s–1980s, CC BY-NC-ND)

FIGURE 5 Via Ventura Fenarolo, transformation through redevelopment. (Current view. Photo: Carlotta Coccoli, 2024, CC BY-SA)

FIGURE 6 Via Federico Borgondio in 1975. This image serves as a testament to the state of the Carmine district before its urban renewal, providing an insight into the everyday lives of its inhabitants. (Photo: Pietro Manenti, 1975, Museo Nazionale della Fotografia Brescia, Archivio Manenti, CC BY-NC-ND)

dwelling for the artisan class, which typically accommodated commercial activities on the ground floor and residential functions above (Lombardi, 1989, p. 25). Over time, this building type exhibited remarkable adaptability, evolving into multi-storey rental units of up to six floors. Nevertheless, this transformation had been accompanied by a damaging loss of internal open spaces, which resulted in a decline in the overall quality of these terraced dwellings (Figure 6).

The uncontrolled expansion of urban areas, the increase in building heights, the growth in population densities, and the rapid social changes that have occurred in Carmine, especially since the late nineteenth century, have collectively resulted in the progressive deterioration of terraced housing districts in terms of both social and physical conditions. As previously outlined, the urban planning strategies implemented in Brescia from the late nineteenth century to the 1960s were consistently directed towards the eradication of areas such as Carmine. This approach was based on the assumption that terraced houses were associated with decline and substandard living conditions. By contrast, the analyses that informed the Recovery Plan developed by the Ufficio Centro Storico indicated the potential for building rehabilitation, provided that the restoration of courtyards and the provision of essential social services within the densely populated neighbourhood were undertaken (Lombardi, 1989, p. 94).

FIGURE 7   Recovery Plan for Vicolo Borgondio (Piano di Recupero di Vicolo Borgondio). Detail showing planimetric and façade restrictions. (Municipality of Brescia, Historic Centre Office, 1980. From *Brescia moderna* by Benevolo & Bettinelli, 1981, p. 417, CC BY-NC-ND)

The intervention criteria for these terraced buildings were devised according to a conservative approach, with the objective of restoring individual dwelling units. This primarily entailed the maintenance of two-room flats and essential services, without the forced merger of separate building units. This strategy was designed to meet the prevailing demand for housing among small families, single occupants, the elderly, and students. The only exception to this was the doubling up of apartments to create duplexes on the top floor, which was permitted for larger families. Furthermore, the regulations prohibited alterations that would have affected the building's overall form, such as modifications to floor levels or the repositioning of windows with the intention of achieving facade uniformity (Lombardi, 1989, p. 95) (Figure 7).

These initiatives have not only resulted in the restoration of the district's traditional buildings, but have also facilitated the rediscovery of architecturally significant elements, including stone staircases, capitals, and other stone details; traditional terracotta tile floors; wooden ceilings; and painted plasterwork. Moreover, the regeneration of public spaces attracted artisans and artists, who were drawn to the neighbourhood to pursue their creative endeavours.

The initial ten-year public intervention programme (1978–1988), which was undertaken in Vicolo Borgondio and the surrounding areas, was successful in achieving its objective of renovating approximately 800 houses (Pola, 2016, p. 21). This was accomplished without compromising the architectural and urban character of the district or displacing residents. This programme represents an exemplary case among Italian cities of a similar size.

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Nevertheless, the initial plans did not automatically result in sufficient private investment to fully revitalise Carmine. The introduction of direct incentives, including financial contributions for the restoration of historic buildings, proved to be a crucial element in subsequent years, attracting private investment and facilitating the continuation of the district's regeneration.

A case in point is the restoration of Palazzo Calini, one of Brescia's most significant early Renaissance buildings (Lechi, 1974, p. 181), which is situated in the infamous Vicolo Borgondio and acquired by the Municipality of Brescia in 1980. It can be considered the most significant residential restoration project promoted by the Municipality of Brescia in the 1980s (Brescia Municipality, n.d.). Prior to the intervention in 1981, the building had deteriorated to such an extent, as a result of its subdivision into smaller dwellings, that its architectural significance was effectively obscured. Following the demolition of the partitions and the removal of the damaged plaster, the original halls, decorated with rich wooden ceilings and walls frescoed by Floriano Ferramola (1478–1528), were revealed on the principal floor (*piano nobile*). To conserve the courtyard and the spacious halls around it, the City Council resolved to refrain from using this area exclusively for residential purposes. Consequently, the most prestigious sections of the *piano nobile* were allocated for administrative and social services, while the ground floor was designated for public offices, artisan activities, and only the upper floors and the building's annexes were assigned to residential use (Brescia Municipality, n.d.). In this instance, a complex series of structural consolidation interventions was undertaken with the objective of achieving a philologically conservative restoration that respected the original construction system, the various structural typologies, and ensured the recovery of the original materials. Of particular note was the liberation and restoration of the portico columns on the ground floor, which had previously been walled up due to subsidence (Ponzoni & Testi, 1985, pp. 385–386) (Figure 8).

FIGURE 8   Palazzo Calini in Via Borgondio before and after ground floor portico restoration. (From Brescia Municipality, undated, CC BY-NC-ND)

5 THE EVOLUTION OF THE CARMINE DISTRICT SINCE THE 1990s

From the mid-1990s onwards, the Carmine neighbourhood underwent a significant demographic transformation, evolving into a multi-ethnic area with a substantial population of newly arrived foreign immigrants. This demographic shift was driven by the availability of low-cost privately owned housing, which had become vacant due to its deteriorating condition. The neighbourhood has undergone a process of reappropriation by its new inhabitants, characterised by the emergence of low-investment foreign commercial activities. Such enterprises included international telephony services, retail (clothing), and grocery stores. The proliferation of these activities was facilitated by the physical structure of the medieval buildings, which offered ground floors characterised by small shops along the streets, and a lack of alternative commercial opportunities within the neighbourhood (Granata, Lainati & Novak, 2007, pp. 124–125).

In the early 2000s, following a nationwide debate focused on issues of security and the immigration/dereliction dichotomy and growing public demand for interventions aimed at re-establishing public order and safety in neighbourhoods with a strong ethnic character (Bino, 2000; Croset, 2000), a new *Progetto Carmine* (Carmine Project) was launched, marking the beginning of a second phase of public redevelopment in the neighbourhood (Richiedei & Frascarolo, 2018, pp. 104–105).

The Carmine Project was conceived in 2001 as a pioneering initiative focused on restoration, security, and social cohesion. It was developed based on an analysis of the neighbourhood's primary challenges, which included the persistence of dereliction in some buildings, the poor quality of public spaces, the underutilisation of existing public services, the transformation of traditional economic activities, and the gradual deterioration in the quality of housing (Ufficio Progetto Carmine, 2005). The project was financed by the municipal administration with the involvement of ALER (the regional public housing authority for Lombardy), property owners, parishes, cultural associations, and the University of Brescia. The university was a crucial component of the neighbourhood's redevelopment strategy, given its capacity to stimulate significant footfall in the area and generate demand for new commercial services and housing (Ottaviano, 2005, p. 315). The key objectives were to recover derelict private buildings and stimulate local economic activity through financial incentives, to regenerate public spaces and introduce new public services, and to enhance law enforcement in the area. However, in contrast to the municipal initiatives that were undertaken during the 1970s and 1980s, this new municipal recovery plan placed a significant emphasis on the physical restoration of buildings, particularly those that were privately owned. The funding channels that were employed were primarily focused on the renovation of common spaces and all elements – including entrances, facades, and fixtures – believed capable of restoring the perceived decorum of the public space (Figure 9). This unbalanced approach to tackling the physical decline of the area failed to recognise or address the underlying social problems prevalent in the Carmine district. In some cases, the project even exacerbated these social problems. In particular, the plan lacked a strategy to mitigate the
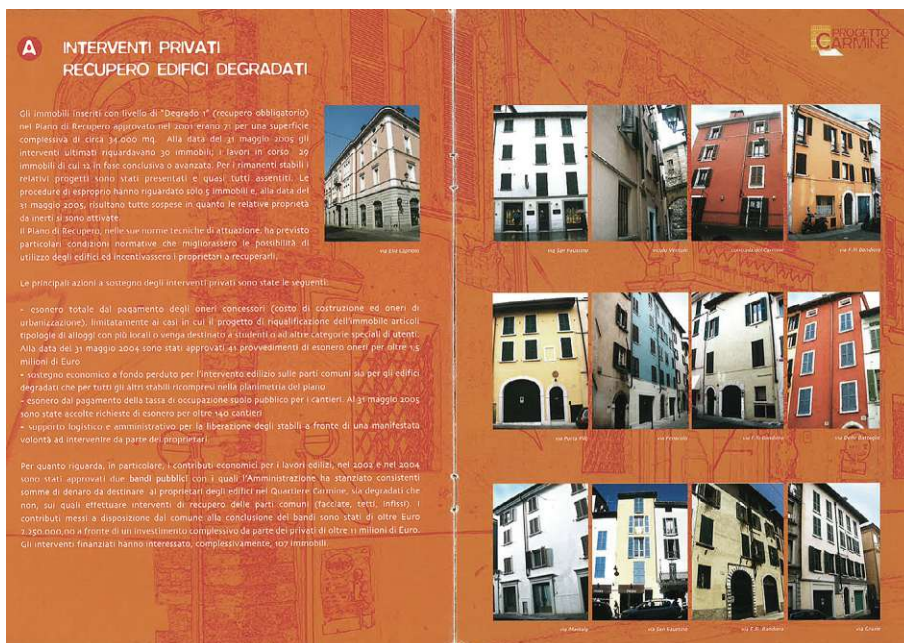
FIGURE 9   An excerpt from an leaflet produced by the Carmine Project Office. The leaflet illustrates the outcomes achieved between 2001 and 2005 in the restoration of run-down privately owned structures as part of the Carmine Project. (Graphic: Ufficio Progetto Carmine, 2005, CC BY-SA)

housing crisis created by the redevelopment, resulting in the displacement of low-income residents who could not afford the increased costs of the revitalised area (Granata, Lainati & Novak, 2007, p. 128). The influx of new middle-class residents resulted in a significant alteration of the social fabric of the area, which subsequently underwent transformation into a dynamic multicultural and yet socially upmarket neighbourhood. Characterised by artisanal workshops, alternative cultural spaces, and traditional bars and trattorias, the area acquired the sobriquet of "Brescian Montmartre", a somewhat hyperbolic designation (Ufficio Progetto Carmine, 2005).

The current state of the Carmine district is shaped by a complex interplay of factors. While the area has become a thriving hub for nightlife, with a multitude of bars and clubs, this has come at a significant cost to the local community of residents. The art galleries and craft shops that experienced a renaissance in the early 2000s have been relocated, and the neighbourhood shops have gradually been forced to close. This latest transformation has given rise to a resurgence in social challenges reminiscent of the area's past, including public altercations, vandalism, and noise disturbances, and most recently, extortion charges imposed on local businesses, perpetrated by out-of-town groups competing for drug dealing areas (Campesi, 2024; Barboglio, 2024).

In light of these developments, the local administration initiated a pilot project in 2023 with the objective of preventing and combating anti-social behaviour commonly associated with urban nightlife. The so-called *Piano*

di gestione della notte (Night-time Management Plan) seeks to address the issue of "*mala-movida*" (nightlife problems) through the implementation of a stewarding service in collaboration with local nightlife venue operators. The objective of this initiative is to provide a coordinated territorial presence in collaboration with law enforcement agencies, with a primary focus on ensuring that residents can get their rest at night without compromising the area's success as an entertainment district (Municipality of Brescia, 2023, July 19). As the Mayor of Brescia stated at the inauguration of the pilot project: "The objective is to achieve a balance that enables the neighbourhood to retain its distinctive character while simultaneously safeguarding its residents, fostering the growth of local businesses, and taking action against those who engage in antisocial and disrespectful behaviour." The city of Brescia, according to the councillor responsible for Social Safety, is establishing itself as a model for the rest of Italy in the management of nightlife (Orlando, 2023, November 3).

In a recent interview, a local resident observed that Carmine has effectively become primarily a location suited to nocturnal entertainment. During the daytime, with the exception of a few historic drinking establishments, the area is essentially uninhabited. "It has undergone a process of gentrification that has resulted in the loss of local amenities, as a consequence of the intensified exploitation of the night-time economy" (Radio Onda d'Urto, 2024).

The recent incorporation (July 2024) of the "urban DASPO" (a measure named after the original DASPO, the "*Divieto di Accedere alle manifestazioni SPOrtive*" or "Ban on Access to Sporting Events") into the revised Urban Police Regulations (an administrative measure that restricts access to specified areas of the municipality for a designated period) has augmented the Brescia municipal administration's arsenal for managing disruptive conduct in the city's most challenging localities, including the Carmine district (Goffi, 2024). The DASPO has been the subject of considerable criticism on the part of some politicians, citizens and associations engaged in social activities within the areas where it will be applied. It represents the latest in a series of instruments adopted by the public administration in an attempt to address the challenges of this ancient medieval quarter, which, in a cyclical pattern of rise and decline, is particularly affected by the complex issues facing contemporary cities and societies.

6   CONCLUSION

The preliminary findings of this concise retrospective analysis of public administration initiatives over the past century aimed at the redevelopment of the Carmine district indicate that, although further research is required through consultation of unpublished archival documentation, it is already possible to assert that the most complete and enduring results were achieved between the 1970s and the 1980s. In the context of a dynamic and engaged Italian debate on the reuse and redevelopment of historic centres (Belgiojoso et al., 1981), the municipal administration of Brescia exhibited remarkable political foresight by enlisting the services of some of the era's most prominent experts in urban planning, economics, and legislation as consultants (Municipality

of Brescia, 1986). This enabled the municipal authorities to implement and manage a comprehensive programme to address the urban and social decay of the Carmine district directly in an integrated and coordinated manner. Guided by experts, municipal specialists developed a high level of practical knowledge, enabling them to oversee the entire redevelopment process through the establishment of a dedicated Historic Centre Office, which was responsible for implementing and managing each phase of the programme.

By adopting a forward-thinking approach and structuring the recovery process as a *cantiere continuo* (continuous worksite), the standard building rehabilitation period was reduced to eighteen months. This was achieved through the implementation of a methodology that optimised efficiency and streamlined the rehabilitation workflow. Properties procured from the private market at competitive prices were integrated into this cyclical system. The municipal administration's capacity to secure necessary funds by strategically exploiting regulatory provisions facilitated this approach. The eighteen-month timeframe served as a benchmark for all project stages, encompassing resident relocation, site surveys, design development, administrative approvals, and construction works tenders (Lombardi, 1989, pp. 86–87). This approach facilitated the Historic Centre Office's ability to also oversee the complex relationship with tenants of buildings undergoing renovation. This entailed joint assessment of relocation to optimal alternative accommodation, either in properties that had already undergone restoration or were undergoing restoration, taking into account the characteristics and needs of each household. The analysis, design, and tendering phases for the property that was still occupied by the inhabitants were initiated concurrently with this residential needs-assessment process.

The Municipality of Brescia employed a strategy that could be described as "holistic" in nature, backed up by a considerable organisational effort, to implement a large-scale restoration project in the Carmine district between the 1970s and the 1980s. As Lombardi observed (1989, pp. 86–87), this approach allowed the municipality to keep its financial commitments within acceptable parameters, thereby optimising both economic and social returns on investment.

As previously outlined, this strategy served as a catalyst for subsequent revitalisation initiatives within the neighbourhood, encompassing both those directly instigated by the public administration, such as the establishment of university campuses, and those fostering private sector involvement. More recent programmes, such as the "Carmine Project" of the 2000s, while not entirely unsuccessful, lacked the same breadth and ambition from the outset and were marred by a failure to adopt a multi-faceted approach, that is, they were unable to address both building problems and social dereliction, often resulting in superficial or short-term solutions.

In conclusion, we argue that the recovery plans implemented by the Municipality of Brescia in the Carmine district during the 1970s and 1980s represent a significant and noteworthy example of urban regeneration in Italy during that period. Consequently, they merit further detailed examination and comparison with analogous cases in Italy and abroad.

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BIOGRAPHY

Carlotta Coccoli, PhD, is an Associate Professor of Architectural Conservation at the University of Brescia, Italy. Her research interests lie in the protection of architectural heritage, with a particular focus on urban contexts and periods of armed conflict. Her book, *Monumenti violati. Danni bellici e riparazioni in Italia nel 1943–1945: il ruolo degli Alleati* (2017), provides a comprehensive analysis of the Allied role in the protection and repair of Italy's monuments during and after the war.

Furthermore, she engages with the subject of urban history, focusing specifically on the urban reconstruction plans of Italian historic cities in the aftermath of the First and Second World Wars.

THE DE-COMMODIFICATION AND RE-COMMODIFICATION OF VIENNA'S *GRÜNDERZEIT* HISTORIC HOUSING STOCK

Sandra Guinand, Viktória Éva Lélek, Robert Musil

Abstract

Drawing on Braudel's idea of different layers of time (Braudel, 1958) and applying approaches from urban and economic geography, this chapter discusses the long-term real-estate dynamics of Vienna's *Gründerzeit* housing stock. It looks at the structural factors underlying real-estate prices and urban development over the long term: from the start of the *Gründerzeit* period (also referred to in architectural terms as the Founder's Period – 1848 to 1918) until the present day. From this perspective, it discusses the shift between three periods of commodification and their impact on the transformation and preservation of these buildings: phases of commodification, de-commodification, and re-commodification.

The *Gründerzeit* was characterised by rapid industrialisation and urbanisation during which housing was mainly provided by private actors. Due to the demographic growth of the city, a huge demand for housing drove up prices, which was highly lucrative for landlords, but created miserable housing conditions for a considerable part of the Viennese population (Period 1: 1848 until 1918). This housing commodification gave rise to two ideal-typical urban forms: the generous and aesthetic bourgeois apartment housing located in the city centre and the far smaller working-class tenement in more densely populated areas with fewer facilities. During and after World War I, rental price regulations and tenure protection caused rental prices to decline, leading to a de-commodification of this market segment for many decades (Period 2: 1919 until 2000). With the fall of the Iron Curtain, Vienna slowly turned from a "dead-end city" into a central European metropolis, once again experiencing demographic growth. Especially from the late 2000s (Period 3), the combination of strong demographic growth and increasing interest in housing as a safe investment meant Vienna's *Gründerzeit* stock again became a commodity for developers. This interest has put pressure on the housing stock, sometimes leading to its demolition.

This chapter examines transformation and preservation practices in the light of the long-term demographic, regulatory, and economic framework that influenced the situation of Vienna's *Gründerzeit* housing stock and considers how these practices reveal the various attributes, values, and expressions associated with these buildings. While preservation and heritage processes have been comprehensively studied in reference to public entities or local community initiatives, little has been said on the role of the real-estate market and commodification dynamics and their impact on preservation and heritage processes. This chapter seeks to shed light on this issue. The method applied relies on analysis of secondary sources, thematic and critical discourse analysis of planning and legal documents, as well as preliminary field observations undertaken in Vienna during the months of February, April, and May 2024.

1   INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade, real-estate prices in Vienna have been growing rapidly. Although the market is now slowing, due to a rise in interest rates followed by a decrease in demand, the acceleration of real-estate prices in the last decade has had a significant impact on the Viennese urban landscape. This is especially true when looking at the historical *Gründerzeit*[1] housing stock. This housing stock was constructed during the industrialisation period that took place during the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, starting in 1848 with the abolition of manorialism. During this period of rapid urbanisation, housing was mainly provided by private actors. Due to the demographic growth of the city, the huge demand on housing led to increasing prices, which caused high profits for landlords, but led to miserable housing conditions for much of the Viennese population. This housing boom gave rise, generally speaking, to two ideal-typical urban forms: generous and highly decorated bourgeois apartment housing located in the city centre, and far smaller, less well equipped, working-class tenements in densely populated areas of the outer districts (Bobek & Lichtenberger, 1966). This housing stock then experienced a long period of decline and degradation during and after World War I, due to rental price regulations and tenure protection (1922). This caused a de-commodification of this market segment for many decades, which was correspondingly the subject of few efforts at protection and preservation on the part of the city authorities. Eventually the city authorities intervened, launching soft urban renewal programs in the 1970s, which aimed at maintaining these buildings in consideration of their historical value with its current tenants. In the last two decades, the geopolitical repositioning of Vienna as a gateway to Eastern Europe, in combination with renewed population growth, has significantly raised the interest of private developers in this historic housing stock. In other cities, for instance in the UK, this rise of new actors often associated with financialisation processes has been accompanied by homogenisation, as properties have been turned into comparable, standardised commodities, especially in the housing sector (Fernandez & Aalbers, 2016; Aalbers, 2019). In Vienna, this private developer-led phenomenon has given rise to the re-commodification of the *Gründerzeit* housing stock, a process that has gone hand-in-hand with major transformations. Some *Gründerzeit* buildings have been demolished because of their "inferior" aesthetic qualities or shabby overall conditions (the result of decades of neglect) (Musil et al., 2021), and city authorities have done until recently little to stop this. It is however a historic fabric that has, to a large extent, shaped the social and urban landscape, as well as the identity of the Austrian capital city.

Drawing on Braudel's idea of different layers of time and analysis of the *longue durée* (Braudel, 1958), this chapter discusses long-term shifts over three periods in the history of these buildings and their transformations: commodification (1848 to 1918), de-commodification (1919–2000), and re-commodification (2000–2019). This approach is used to examine the trans-

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1   *Gründerzeit* refers to the industrialization period that took place in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, starting in 1848 and giving rise to a wealthy middle class and associated architectural buildings. During the *Gründerzeit* (literally "Founders' Period", referring to the founding of many large corporations during industrialisation), tenement houses were also referred to as *Zinshäuser*.

formation and preservation practices that influenced the history of Vienna's *Gründerzeit* housing stock. We use the terms "commodification" to refer to a process that turns the *Gründerzeit* historic housing stock into a commodity (Musil et al., 2022), i.e. an object whose exchange or storage value takes precedent over use value or social value. As stated by Bernt (2022, p. 3): "When housing is commodified, it can be treated as an investment and can be purchased, sold, mortgaged, securitised and traded in the markets." De-commodification, on the other hand happens: "when the provision of housing is rendered as a right and/or when a person can maintain accommodation without reliance on the market, or when the conditions in the markets make it impossible to trade housing or invest in it" (Bernt, 2022, p. 3).

The chapter is structured as follows: First, it provides an overview of the debate on commodification and historic housing stock. It then outlines our conceptual approach, underscoring the relevance of long-term analysis before providing an overview of the significant phases that influenced the transformation of Vienna's *Gründerzeit* historic housing stock. It concludes by discussing the implication of these transformations on the preservation, attribution of qualities and values, and the significance of this heritage for the cityscape and identity of the city. Vienna is an interesting case to look at regarding the impact of commodification cycles on preservation practices and heritage processes, as many areas of the city still possess a homogenous historical housing stock and cityscape, the *Gründerzeit*, which can be observed over a long time period. The method applied relies on analysis of secondary sources, thematic and critical discourse analysis of planning and legal documents, as well as preliminary field observations in Vienna undertaken during the months of February, April, and May 2024.

2 COMMODIFICATION AND PRESERVATION OF HISTORIC HOUSING

In the field of heritage studies, issues around commodification and heritage are nothing new (Schmitt, 2022). The process of commodification is often associated with objects of social and cultural value being turned into commodities to stimulate economic development (Licciardi & Amirtahmasebi, 2012; Ashworth, 2014), to "put a city on the map" (Guinand, 2015), or to create and frame a (new) cultural image for the city centre (Guinand & Rogerson, 2023). Once turned into heritage, historic buildings or historic building stock of a specific period then become a product the city uses to attract new investment and investors. In this case, the urban landscape is commodified and enables the construction of a competitive identity. The growing visibility given to these buildings can increase their exchange value in relation to the real estate market. This can be seen in the centres of major metropolis and in many restored and protected sites such as Porto (Guinand, 2015), Paris (Gravari-Barbas, 2017) or *Vieux-Québec* (Old Quebec) (Berthold, 2015) where commodification is often a sign of gentrification (Musil et al., 2022).

As Gravari-Barbas et al. (2024) have shown, interest in old stones and their restoration is part of a process that goes beyond specialised workshops and

old stone experts. The authors note that the rehabilitation of historic buildings can play a significant economic role. This analysis builds on the statement made by Erwin (Erwin, 1980 quoted in Gravari & Jacquot, 2024, p. 249) in the 1980s, when he used the term "real estate revolution" to describe urban renewal processes taking place in the U.S. and initiated by large property owners, which eventually led to speculative bubbles. Forty years later, under very different economic conditions, the "real estate revolution" in Western urban contexts has been successful in leveraging the historical and aesthetic value of the inherited built environment (Lai & Lorne, 2019) for the realisation of economic added value. Moreover, the proximity of a protected or refurbished structure can also add value in the form of character or identity to a residential development. This does not mean that historic buildings are systematically preserved by developers or property owners, not even in highly regulated contexts such as the UNESCO world heritage site in central Vienna. These actors rather treat the historical and aesthetic dimensions as added-value for their portfolios (Guinand, 2015). A single historic façade can justify a real estate or redevelopment project, even if this leads to *façadisme* (Richards, 2003). As Kyriasi (2019, p. 190) shows, regulations and documents provide indications of what should be protected, yet they leave room for interpretation and the choice of criteria to apply. This is true, for example, in the case of the UNESCO world heritage site of "the historic core of Porto", where in some parts, only the façades of historic buildings have remained after their refurbishment (Guinand, 2015).

The intervention of the real-estate sector in the heritage economy and its processes and production cannot be studied without considering works on the commodification of culture and the symbolic economy (Zukin, 1995; Lash & Urry, 1994; Lipovetsky & Serroy, 2013), as well as the role and function accorded to authenticity by these actors (Gilmore & Pine, 2007). The motive behind refurbishing a historic building is the hope of selling an "authentic" object from the past (Gravari-Barbas, 2005). These theoretical considerations teach us something about the political and economic restructuring of the built environment. Another important point to emphasise is the link between production and consumption (of the built environment), something stressed by Zukin and Smith Maguire (2004), who show how consumer desires for goods are socially constructed by cultural changes driven by industry and strategic marketing practices (supply), on the one hand, and by demographic changes (increase in wealth) and changing modes of expression and new social practices (demand), on the other. This points not only how cultural tastes but also cultural and social values are constructed and can lead to actions and interests for historical buildings (or not) and their refurbishment and preservation (or not): A process that Zukin explained well in many of her pieces examining Manhattan's urban transformations (1982; 1995).

Changes in tastes that suddenly draw attention to a particular building, raising its value can also be examined from the perspective of Boltanski and Esquerre's enrichment theory (2014; 2017). These authors show how the changes that occur in late capitalism, as a world dominated by the industrial economy, centred on innovation and the rapid renewal of objects, is replaced by an era of enrichment, in which goods already produced have an "enriched",

prolonged existence and take on new value thanks to new addition of "heritage" features, in this case through historic features or aesthetic elements. In the context of *Gründerzeit* historic housing, this chapter is especially interested in looking at buildings that have first lost their economic (exchange) value before being "enriched" by means of refurbishment. Boltanski and Equerre use the notion of "trial" to situate this transformation of value (2017). The "trial" is characterised by a specific moment during which the (market and exchange) value of the object is called into question. In the case of our *Gründerzeit* transformation analysis, this is a critical moment – a favourable space of time within which certain decisions are made. For example, a change in spatial planning, public policy, vacancy of a historic building, and so on. This critical moment is the result of socio-economic conditions, political context, and actors' decisions.

3   APPROACH: ANALYSING URBAN TRANSFORMATION IN THE *LONGUE DURÉE*

In an article published in 1958, historian Fernand Braudel introduced the concept of the *longue durée* when trying to forge links between disciplines in the social sciences and to stress the contribution of history to the field. According to Braudel, longue durée analysis is useful as an ontological tool that looks at and dialogues with the past and helps us to better understand the future. He states that the dialectic of duration, which he calls "the social continuities, the multiple and contradictory temporalities of human lives", is "not only the substance of the past but the stuff of present-day social life."[2] (Braudel, 1958, p. 726).

For Braudel, conducting a longue durée analysis is very useful in helping to understand the role of institutions, civilisation, etc. His reflection on time and the longue durée stems from his work on the Mediterranean civilisation (1949). In his analysis, he also acknowledged the presence of multiple temporalities that constitutes time (Braudel, 1958, p. 727): the *longue durée* relates to geographical temporality. He then identifies the social temporality that oscillates with the secular movements of the economy, modes of production, and economic exchanges that largely dictate the daily life of societies, and thirdly, the time of the individual, which he relates to the time of our daily lives. This nuance is important and since then other authors have, with Braudel, shown that time is not only to be understood from a subjective point of view, but must be considered as a historically and socially constructed phenomenon (Chiffoleau et al., 2017; Hartog, 2003). This necessarily implies the recognition of a multitude of times and perspectives, as human societies each develop their own relationship with time, based on their own referents and norms.

In accordance with this perspective, *longue durée* or long-term perspective analysis is all the more important, as, beyond demographic and economic

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2   Translation by Immanuel Wallerstein, Review (Fernand Braudel Center), Vol. 32, No. 2, Commemorating the Longue Durée (2009), pp. 171–203; the original wording is: "La dialectique de la durée, cette durée sociale, ces temps multiples et contradictoires de la vie des hommes, qui ne sont pas seulement la substance du passé, mais aussi l'étoffe de la vie sociale actuelle".

curves, economic and social conditions we should also pay attention to actors and their temporalities. As Braudel (1958, p. 730) says, for instance, "Science, technology, political institutions, mental constructs, civilizations (to use this convenient word), all similarly have their life and growth rhythms. The new cyclical history will only reach maturity when it has assembled the entire orchestra"[3].

Long term perspective analysis thus helps to explicate movements and cycles, facilitating the comparison of results and data and generating a more detailed understanding of what took place and what is at stake. In a book dealing with the transformation of waterfront urban development projects, Guinand (2022), one of the co-authors of this chapter, showed the pertinence of applying long-term critical analysis to urban transformation. This approach allows us, on the one hand, to look at the various layers of socio-economic and technical interaction that have shaped the urban fabric – in our case, the *Gründerzeit* housing stock. On the other hand, it also helps us understand the socio-economic role of the housing stock in the urban setting. This long-term analysis highlights major development trends. For instance, an examination of planning and urban regulation policies over a long time period highlights the critical dimensions of city development. It sheds light on what has changed and what has not. It provides information about the main objectives pursued so far and what the challenges of the future might be. The evolution of references and concepts used by the urban actors can be traced and revealed. A long-term analysis highlights the references and values that are cast aside and those that are brought to the fore. It gives a clear idea of the power relations at stake (ideologies, domination, etc.), and how these are rooted in the production of space and the urban landscape (Harvey, 1979; Olwig & Mitchell, 2009). It also sheds light on the socio-political economy of place: how socio-economic relations shape the political present (Micieli-Voutsinas, 2014) and envisage legacy for the future.

A long-term perspective analysis of Vienna's historic *Gründerzeit* housing stock (GHS) as an aspect of urban development is an interesting undertaking. It involves looking at traces of historical efforts aiming at preservation (or not), refurbishment, transformation, and demolition. These traces offer a reading of the past but are also elements of identity-building and assessment, a foundation on which the city has built and asserted itself. Vienna's GHS thus appears to cut across functions of both time and space: From a long-term perspective, it enables an analysis of the relation with time, and from the perspective of urbanisation, it provides information about the relation with space, the built fabric and the type of values that are maintained. In this context, the GHS has played a major role in shaping the social urban fabric of Vienna (Figure 1). As a consequence, the transformation of historic buildings holds cultural, social, and economic (e.g. business structure, tourism) dimensions that reach beyond the individual building and impact the entire urban milieu. This is especially true for housing. In Vienna, the GHS comprises

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3   Unless otherwise stated, this and all subsequent translations from non-English-language sources are by the authors; the original wording is: "Les sciences, les techniques, les institutions politiques, les outillages mentaux, les civilisations (pour employer ce mot commode) ont également leur rythme de vie et de croissance, et la nouvelle histoire conjoncturelle sera seulement au point lorsqu'elle aura complété son orchestration."

about 200,000 of its 900,000 existing apartments (Musil et al., 2022). Further, this market segment, especially in the outer districts, provides affordable housing and "arrival spaces" to temporarily settle (El-Kayed et al., 2020) for low-income migrants and households (Kohlbacher & Reeger, 2006). Consequently, the transformation and reduction of this stock mostly via its exit from the rental market and becoming a commodity to be sold (30,000 apartments between 2007 and 2019) (Musil et al., 2022) has had enormous social implications, especially for low-income households.
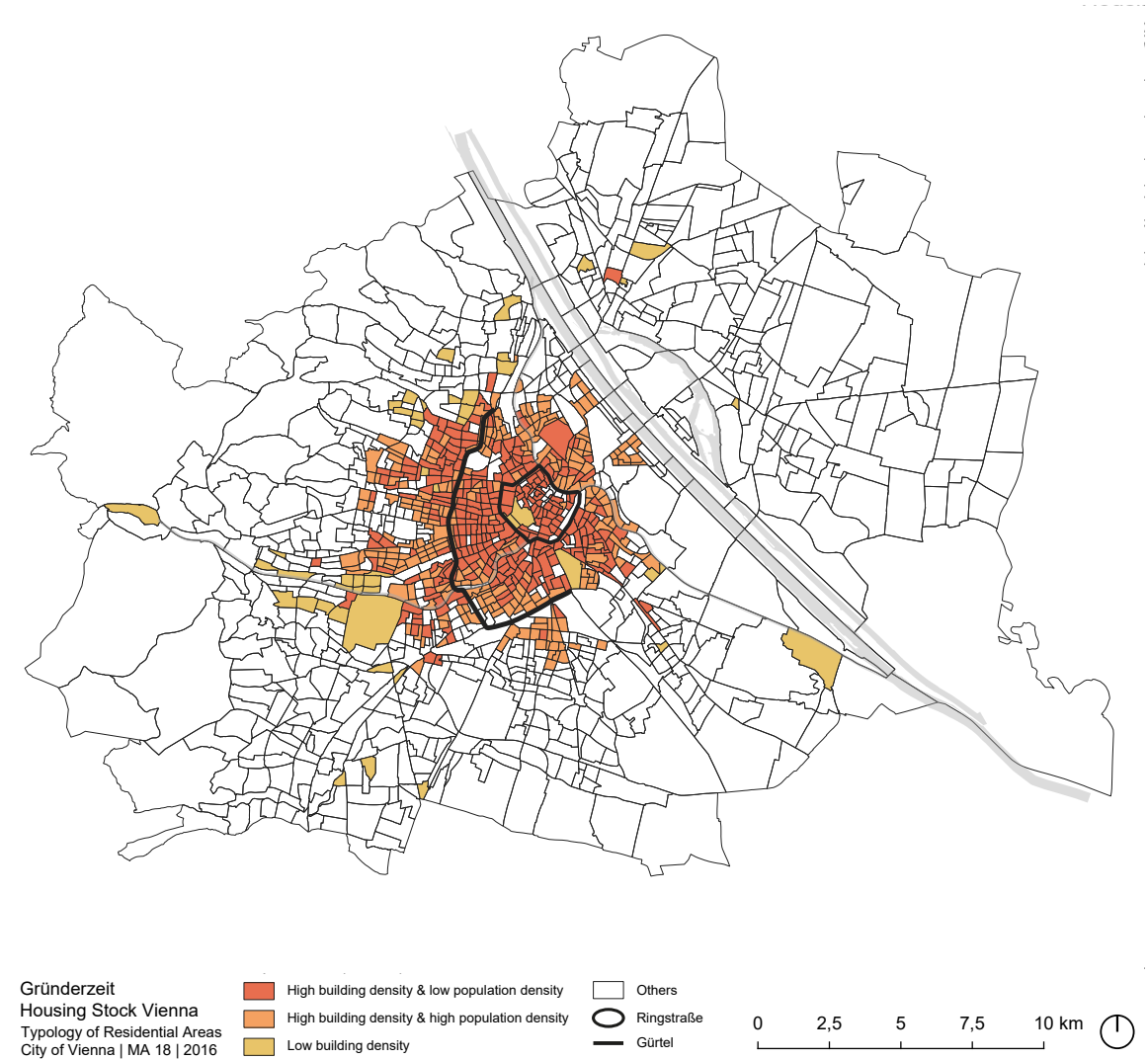

FIGURE 1   Gründerzeit Typology and Density in Vienna. This map shows the typology of the Gründerzeit housing in terms of building and population density and the importance of the Gründerzeit buildings for the city of Vienna, especially for more central areas. (Infographic: V. Lélek, TransHerit, CC BY-NC-ND based on data from Musil et al., 2021 and 2016, City of Vienna, MA18)

4 VIENNA'S *GRÜNDERZEIT* HOUSING STOCK IN THE *LONGUE DURÉE*

4.1 Building the *Gründerzeit* city

The construction of the "Gründerzeit city" (Musil et al., 2022) coincided with the intense urbanisation caused by industrialisation and rapid population growth. Vienna's population went from approximatively 400,000 inhabitants in the first census under Maria-Theresa in 1754, to 600,000 in 1846, to reach its peak of 2,100,000 inhabitants in 1910 (City of Vienna, 2024a). This period (1848 to 1918) witnessed large-scale infrastructure development and urban expansion beyond the *glacis* (an area of open land surrounding the city walls) and the construction of the emblematic *Ring*.[4] The development of new housing capacity, which involved the incorporation of areas formerly outside the city, was facilitated by the suppression of the manorial system. This changed the general status of land (Musil et al., 2021), which became a good to be exchanged on the market. New industrial entrepreneurs acquired power in the form of capital, and housing became a speculative object. However, this wave of new construction was regulated by the construction zones plan of 1893, which differentiated between industrial, green, and residential areas; defined building height and number of floors (five floors inside the *Gürtel*,[5] four floors outside); and regulated block construction in residential areas of the inner city, small residential settlements and industrial areas in the outskirts (Hagen, 2015; Suitner, 2020). This gave the *Gründerzeit* city its characteristic urban fabric and identity.

Many banks and corporations engaged in trade, industry, and commerce were founded during the *Gründerzeit*, making Vienna the financial and administrative centre of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. The aristocracy and wealthy bourgeoisie bought or rented tenements in more prestigious locations, such as the *Ringstrasse,* while working-class housing was built around and outside the *Gürtel*. The buildings were built in the leading style of the era, following a historicist approach, and the façade and ornamentation were often symbolically representative of financial power and political status. This build-to-rent model allowed landlords to support themselves without additional earnings besides the rents. In 1869, 44.9 percent of Viennese owned their dwelling, while 55.1 percent rented (including 18.9 percent who merely rented a bed for part of a day, *Bettgeher*) (Bobek & Lichtenberger, 1966, p. 30). To support private construction, tenement housing construction was highly subsidised in form of tax benefits and tax-free years[6] (Bobek & Lichtenberger, 1966, p. 47). This boom period was interrupted only temporarily by the stock market crash of 1873, after which new tax incentives were granted to restart the engine of economic growth (Pirhofer & Stimmer, 2007). This period of large-scale residential development was dominated by speculation

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4   The *Ring* refers to the first large boulevard dividing the city between (mostly) the historic core (1st district) and the rest (see Figure 1).

5   The *Gürtel* refers to the second large "ring" boulevard dividing the city (see Figure 1).

6   The number of tax-free years depended on the location and the length of the construction period.

and individual profit-seeking (Pirhofer & Stimmer, 2007). It gave rise to monumental buildings representative of the power of the new bourgeoisie (Figure 2) in the form of distinctive dense housing blocks featuring extensive ornamentation, as well as lower quality housing in smaller units (Figure 3) for the workers feeding the engine of industrialisation and urban growth.

FIGURE 2   Am Hof 11 with carriages in front. This site was originally a tavern called "Zur goldenen Kugel" (The Golden Ball), which was run by Michael Motz, who purchased it in 1683. The Neo-Baroque replacement building from 1883 preserved the golden ball above its gate and retained the name "Zur goldenen Kugel" (City of Vienna, 2024d). (Photo: Michael Frankenstein & Comp., ca. 1885, Wien Museum Online Collection 78079/534/3, CC0)

FIGURE 3   The corner at Johnstraße 21–23 and Goldschlagstraße 106–108 in 1900–1905. (Photo: Sperlings Postkartenverlag M. M. S, Wien Museum Online Collection 234706, CC0)

4.2 City neglect

The interruption of the First World War, the defeat and the fall of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy in 1918 put a drastic halt to this impressive capitalistic machinery and Vienna was plagued by misery, hunger, and a major housing shortage. Shantytowns proliferated in the suburban districts. After winning the municipal election in 1919, the Social Democratic Workers' Party introduced a rack of policies that created what is commonly referred to as "Red Vienna". These aimed at relieving the terrible socio-economic conditions of the population. Among these policies, a tenant-protection law was introduced by means of the Rent Act (*Mietengesetz*) of 1922. The housing and settlement funds (*Bundes-, Wohn- und Siedlungsfonds* 1921) introduced a new municipal housing programme (Suttner, 2017, p. 23). Interestingly, the layout of the new dwellings was based on urban forms typical of the *Gründerzeit*. However, instead of offering the historicist façades and generous inner spaces typical of the upper middle class *Gründerzeit* buildings, planners and architects looked for efficiency in the use of space and reduced unit and room sizes to provide dwellings for the working-class (Suttner, 2017). While large efforts were undertaken to construct municipal housing (1919–1934), little attention or capital was devoted to the maintenance and refurbishment of the *Gründerzeit* housing stock, especially in working-class neighbourhoods (Knauer, 2022, p. 44).

During the Austrofascist (1934–1938) and National Socialist periods (1938–1945), the *Gründerzeit* housing stock experienced another episode of neglect and transformation. While eliminating many social policies of their predecessors, the fascist and National Socialist regimes also focused on modern infrastructure, including road and rail networks, and the construction of new buildings. To provide space for these new developments, they undertook strategic demolition of historical buildings (Suttner, 2017). Minimal maintenance was conducted on existing historic residential buildings under the *Hausreparaturfonds* (House Repair Fund). However, transformation followed a modernist approach, favouring the division of large dwellings into smaller ones (Suttner, 2017) and facilitating façade restoration, leading in many cases to the removal of decorative elements (deornamentation or *Entstuckung*) (Knauer, 2022). The transformation that occurred during this period can be seen, for instance, on decorative elements on the roof, façade, and around the windows of the *Gründerzeit* building Am Hof 11 (Figure 2 & 4).

After World War II, Vienna's Social Democratic (*SPÖ*) government worked to re-build the city in line with the ideas of urban and architectural modernism and modernisation. Some historical areas were demolished in the name of modernity. Meanwhile, transport, mobility, and other major infrastructures projects were completed, such as the AKH (General hospital) in 1964 and the Vienna International Centre in 1972 (Pirhofer & Stimmer, 2007). While the housing built by the city authorities of Red Vienna offered comfortable living conditions, such as access to water, heating, and electricity in the units, much of the *Gründerzeit* working class housing that was in private hands lacked these conditions. According to the city of Vienna (Hauskunft, 2024), one third of the dwellings in the city were in the lowest categories C

and D in terms of the modern facilities they provided.[7] Yet Knauer has shown that the period of post-war reconstruction nonetheless gave rise at the same time to discussion and reflection in the Federal Monument Authority on the preservation of an Old Vienna beyond individual buildings: "ensembles and entire city districts deemed worthy of protection were recorded in lists of the Federal Monuments Authority to prevent excessive changes or even the destruction of the city's characteristic townscape as a whole" (2023, p. 202). She adds that the buildings and urban landscape of the second half of the 19th century were already understood as a legacy worth preserving by the Federal Monuments Authority (Knauer, 2023, p. 202).

FIGURE 4   City centre, Am Hof, Färbergasse, 1940. (Photo: Bruno Reiffenstein, WStLA, Photograph from the department of urban planning, FB2: 4500/1400, MA 8 – City of Vienna and Provincial Archives, CC BY-NC-ND)

The Federal Urban Renewal Act (*Stadterneuerungsgesetz*) of 1974 which established the Local Area Management Offices (*Gebietsbetreuung*) put a halt to demolition by shifting the focus in favour of less aggressive interventions on the historic fabric, promoting measures that retain the existing substance: This was the birth of Vienna's soft urban renewal policies (Suitner, 2020). These policies were closely accompanied by the 1972 amendment of Vienna's building code, which identified and defined groups of buildings characteristic of the cityscape as *Schutzzonen* (protection zones) to preserve them from demolition and alteration. The main focus of these zones, which remain in place today, is on the external appearance of the buildings as a homogenous and balanced ensemble. According to the City, protection zones are designated primarily based on characteristic architectural, spatial, and structural qualities of buildings, as well as other specific elements of design and character, determined on the basis of criteria such as worthiness of preservation, originality, authenticity, effect on the townscape, and mentions of individual buildings in works of literature (City of Vienna, 2024b). Demolition licences would only be granted for buildings in protection zones if there is no public interest in their preservation from an urban design perspective or if the poor condition of the building justifies demolition on economic grounds. These protection zones have since been extended and reworked. However, most of the structures and areas built

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7   A category C apartment had at least one internal water point and an inside toilet, while category D dwellings had neither a toilet nor a water point inside the apartment.

FIGURE 5   Goldschlagstraße with Reithofferplatz, with house number 7 on the right, prior to 1905. (Wien Museum Online Sammlung 58891/1234, CC0)

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FIGURE 6   Goldschlagstraße and Reithofferplatz, looking towards Neubaugürtel. (Photo: V. Lélek, TransHerit, CC BY-SA)

during the *Gründerzeit* that have been protected lie within the *Gürtel*. Consequently, these actions have mainly served to preserve the prestigious *Gründerzeit* of the former bourgeoisie and aristocracy, while giving less recognition to its more ordinary form, which is no less representative of this key historical transformation of the city. These protection zones also facilitated the demolition of historic housing in areas located outside the *Gürtel*.[8] This is true, for example, of the building located at *Reithofferplatz 7*, a section of which made way for a new building in the late 1990s (Figure 5 & 6).

Following the soft urban renewal approach of 1974, the second comprehensive urban development plan, *STEP 1984*, prioritised urban renewal over urban expansion. The first comprehensive development plan for the city of Vienna had been completed in 1976 (Pirhofer & Stimmer, 2007). The emphasis on soft urban renewal policies was a consequence of the growing criticism of the mono-functional suburban housing estates. The negative consequences of these included the flight of economic activity away from the city centre and structural deficiencies in the most densely built-up part of Vienna (Pirhofer & Stimmer, 2007). Prioritised areas of the *Gründerzeit* city that contained a high proportion of the substandard dwellings were identified for rehabilitation. The twin goals were to improve the material living conditions of the population and to raise the attractivity of Vienna for investment and as a tourism destination (Pirhofer & Stimmer, 2007, p. 73). The preservation of the large-scale historical urban area became an important element to be used in disseminating a positive image of the city. Indeed, Vienna's location in the 1970s and 1980s, squashed up against the Iron Curtain, was not an attractive or a comfortable one.

During this period, the real estate market was highly regulated by the public authorities, who used it as a tool to mitigate social and economic segregation. This strategy led to the skimming of speculative profits from land and property (Lichtenberger et. al, 1990) and a highly segmented housing market: By 1990, social rental housing covered over 40.9 percent of the housing sector, while a tightly regulated private rental market made up 32.7 percent (historic and new built housing stock) (Kadi, 2015, p. 2). This also led to low levels of investment in maintenance of the historic housing stock by landlords, who saw no incentives to do so and could not foresee any return on their investment in the form of rents. In 1985, the *Wiener Wohnbauförderungs- und Wohnhaussanierungsgesetz* (Act for the Promotion of Housing Construction and Renovation) was adopted and the *Wiener Bodenbereitstellungs- und Stadterneuerungsfonds* (Vienna Land Supply and Urban Renewal Fund) was created. The former changed the legal framework to make it easier for private owners to refurbish entire residential buildings, while the latter helped coordinate the procurement of land and promote refurbishment (Pirhofer & Stimmer, 2007, p. 88).

8   See the for instance the interesting website wienschauen by Georg Scherer (https://www.wien-schauen.at/10-favoriten/) which has been listing urban transformations in Vienna from 2018 until now for each district.

4.3   Re-commodification

With the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 and the accession of Austria to the European Union in 1995, the geopolitical position of Vienna shifted. It became a gateway between West and East, attracting capital and people. This new growth period also affected the *Gründerzeit* housing stock. Since the 1980s, urban (re)development had been characterised by the implementation of soft urban renewal policies favouring a bottom-up approach and minimising displacement and gentrification (Franz, 2014). In contrast to these publicly funded projects, new urban development projects from the 1990s onwards have been planned through public-private partnerships (Hatz, 2008; Guinand, 2020). City authorities have been eager to take advantage of Vienna's new geopolitical location to reposition the city on the international map. As well as pursuing large development projects such as Donau City, the authorities also played the cultural card by applying to the Organisation of the United Nations for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO) to inscribe the city centre as a World Heritage site,[9] with the status being granted in 2001. Moreover, in an attempt to homogenise the cityscape, numerous buildings and façades were restored according to the historicist architectural style typical of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, which had declined in the 1930s and after the Second World War (Figure 7).

The geopolitical shift and the new orientation in public policies pursued by the city authorities favouring private capital investment have raised the attractiveness of the Austrian capital. After years of public efforts to refurbish the historic housing stock accompanied by a significant slowdown in new public social and subsidised housing constructions, the availability of affordable dwellings has been significantly reduced. This has put pressure on the private rental market, a phenomenon unseen since the post-WWI period or even the Industrial Revolution. These socio-economic developments have impacted the *Gründerzeit* housing stock in two ways: The low-quality units usually located along or outside the *Gürtel* have become the home of many lower income migrants who cannot access the social housing market (Franz & Gruber, 2018), while the higher-priced segment of the *Gründerzeit* buildings have started to attract the interest of private developers (Musil et al., 2021) as real estate prices have significantly increased, the average price index moving from 83.83 in 1999 to 271 in 2022 (2015 being the base year with an index of 100) (OENB, 2023).

Private investment in the *Gründerzeit* housing has materialised in two main forms: (1) The demolition of historic buildings, leaving room for the construction of new residential buildings that can offer more floor space thanks to lower ceiling heights and higher building heights; and (2) the conversion of historic buildings from undivided properties into apartment blocks, often coinciding with the transformation of the attic into high priced penthouses. As one author of this chapter has noted elsewhere, "both forms of transformation imply the departure of former tenants" (Musil et al. 2021, p. 980) (Figure 3 & 8). The results of a study conducted from 2007 to 2019 (2021, p. 990) revealed that the transformation of Vienna's *Gründerzeit* housing stock affected

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9   See https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1033/

FIGURE 7   Vienna – the house at 11 Am Hof. (Photo: Andrzej Otrębski, 2018, CC BY-SA)

FIGURE 8   The corner at Johnstraße 21–23, and Goldschlagstraße 106–108. (Photo: V. Lélek, TransHerit, CC BY-SA)

2,117 buildings and about 30,300 apartments. As observed (2021, p. 990), this may appear low in relation to the total size of the market, but due to the concentration of the affected housing stock (Figure 1), the implications for the affected neighbourhoods are not without socio-economic consequences. Moreover, these transformations have significantly altered the Viennese landscape, with some of these buildings even being located in protected zones. As the City of Vienna website notes (2024c), essential basic information on these protection zones – comprehensive ownership data, building data (architect, age, building type, number of storeys, photos), descriptions, and assessments – was not even maintained before the mid-1990s. This has since been remedied and the protection zone model is to better assess the material structure of these historic buildings as valuable for the cityscape. Besides the designation of protection zones, a *Gründerzeit* Masterplan (City of Vienna MA21, 2018) has now also been established. This document assesses the potential for transformation of these buildings. However, while this plan describes their different values (p. 31–32) it says little about their management and protection, or the importance of the intangible dimension of these buildings. Finally, an amendment of the Viennese building code was implemented in July 2018. This makes it harder to demolish any building erected before 1945, as a permit is now required for buildings located in a protection zone. For all other buildings a confirmation by the municipal authorities is necessary, that there is no public interest in preserving the building in consideration of its impact on the local cityscape. Moreover, since the building code amendment of 2023, owners are obliged to keep a building register and record the condition of the property. However, besides these plans and regulations, little has been done to preserve this historic housing stock in either its tangible dimension, and even less to maintain its intangible value. As a result, Viennese civil society is still engaged in a contested debate on the importance of *Gründerzeit* housing as part of the Viennese identity (Wojciech, 2023; Zoidl & Redl, 2021).

5   DISCUSSION – CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed the pertinence of looking at a specific topic, Vienna's historic *Gründerzeit* housing stock, over the long term. This *longue durée* analysis has enabled us to distinguish three different and decisive periods of commodification, de-commodification, and re-commodification that have formed and structured the *Gründerzeit* city. Each of these periods can be characterised in terms of specific socio-economic events, public policies and planning actions. And each of them has – through defined rationales (or logics), motives, and aesthetic and economic values – influenced actions relating to the transformation and preservation of these buildings.

Two points can be underlined from this long-term analysis. First, as mentioned in the introduction, reading how the urban landscape has been shaped offers a glimpse into the political economy of a city. In the case of the Viennese *Gründerzeit*, what we see is that the processes of commodification, de- and re-commodification have established a hierarchy among *Gründerzeit*

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buildings, where buildings considered of greater value (according to aesthetics, architectural characteristics, etc.) are being preserved or refurbished, while others are considered less valuable even though they may have significant cultural and social value. As Olwig (2001, p. 349) argues, it is only those people who can afford to, desire to, and who possess the right cultural capital, who can adopt "the antiquarian approach". This gulf between power and powerlessness, centre and periphery, and sometimes wealth and poverty, seems, in the case of the *Gründerzeit* housing stock, to be increased by the process of commodification (and those who pursue it), which in turn influences preservation and heritage practices and processes. This observation thus raises issues around preservation processes and official criteria that exclude ordinary elements of the urban landscape, a phenomenon that becomes more prevalent in times of capital accumulation. This also calls into question the "enriched" building that suddenly possesses heritage value, is preserved and refurbished: How could this heritage process work without producing notions of difference? (Smith, 2015). Second, this notion of differences sheds light on "ordinary" buildings, such as the working class *Gründerzeit* historic housing, that are neither recognised by private actors and public authorities, nor listed on official heritage registers. These buildings are, however, considered significant or culturally meaningful by individuals, communities, and collectives in terms of how they constitute themselves and operate in the present (Harrison, 2010). They are also part of the social history of the city. This stresses the importance of the intangible dimension associated with these historic buildings. Indeed, ordinary *Gründerzeit* dwellings tell a story. They offer a specific socio-cultural reading of a site, which in turn affects the understanding and the ordinary life that contributes to the neighbourhood's identity as well as people's identification with the place (Stephens & Tiwari, 2014; Papadam, 2017). Yet neither commodification processes and practices nor preservation policies take into account such intangible dimensions, nor do they consider the relations and connections that contribute to the sense of place (Tuan, 1977; Anzani, 2020). As a consequence, the fate, development, and preservation of the *Gründerzeit* historic housing stock is still very much influenced by the commodification regime – and is likely to remain so in the absence of effective preservation regulations.

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BIOGRAPHY

Sandra Guinand is an urban planner and geographer. She holds a doctorate in geosciences and the environment from the University of Lausanne and in geography from the University of Paris 1-Sorbonne. She is currently researcher at the Institute for Urban and Regional Research, Austrian Academy of Sciences and associate researcher at EIREST Paris 1-Sorbonne University. She was a Swiss National Science Foundation visiting scholar (2014–2016) at the Center for place, culture and politics at the Graduate Center, City University of New York and Johns Hopkins University as well as at the Department of geography and regional research, University of Vienna (2017–2019).

Her research interests are urban regeneration projects and socio-economical transformations of urban landscapes with a specific focus on heritage processes, public-private partnerships, tourism and visual methods. Her last book (2022) *Festival marketplaces, entre postérités et discontinuités. Après la regeneration* at Infolio Editions deals with the legacy of festival marketplace projects as precursors to urban regeneration programs.

Viktória Éva Lélek holds a degree in architecture from TU Wien. During her master studies, Lélek specialised in urban planning and urban history research. In her master's thesis "Urban Parterre Budapest" Lélek conducted a comparative analysis of the historical housing stock of Vienna and Budapest. The results were presented at the AISU Bologna, as well as at EAUH Antwerp conferences. She has earned her degree in 2019, passing with distinction. Lélek worked several years in the architecture and planning industry on designing new residential buildings, as well as on housing renovation projects. In 2024, Lélek started working as a PhD student at the Institute for Urban and Regional Research (ISR).

Robert Musil is geographer in the field of urban studies and economic geography. He studied geography and history at the University of Vienna and finished his PhD at the University Innsbruck in 2005. He holds a habilitation in human geography, approved in 2015 at the University of Vienna. Since 2001, he has been a researcher at the Institute for Urban and Regional Research (ISR); between 2007 and 2009 he was post-doc assistant at the University of Salzburg, and between 2014 and 2016 he was visiting professor for economic geography at the University of Vienna. He has led the research group "Innovation and Urban Economy" since 2016 and has been acting director of the Institute for Urban and Regional Research, Austrian Academy of Sciences, since 2018.

His research interests lie at the juncture of economic and urban geography, including the areas of housing-market research, spatial innovation, and comparative urban research. His current methodology includes small-scale analyses at the level of individual buildings and building complexes.

TRANSFORMING CITIES: THE INTERSECTION OF PLANNING AND HERITAGE CONSERVATION OVER TIME

Heike Oevermann

The book examines planning and politics in historic city centres and the long-term consequences for heritage and public discourses of cultural, social, and functional transformations. Divided into two parts, the different points of departure of the individual chapters become apparent; at the same time, most of the contributions imply relations between history and consequences in time and open up contemporary perspectives on the past. Following that line, this conclusion section offers some thoughts that build on the argumentation of the authors and highlight the intimate relationship between history and heritage.

The intersection of planning and heritage conservation is a phenomenon of the 20th century, during which planning as a discipline became established and institutionalised in Europe and the modern approach to heritage preservation became defined through conservationists such as Georg Dehio and Alois Riegl, and early thinkers namely John Ruskin. Both disciplines continue to shape the transformation of cities today – a process that is highly political through influencing forms of assessing and conserving built urban environments and decisions on development. Negotiation and struggles concerning the understanding of our built environment and action-taking are always a public affair.

Initiatives that foster regulations and frameworks, such as the Vienna *Schutzzone* as Birgit Knauer highlights, were decisive moments in which care and maintenance changed the social-political reality and implemented a new understanding dealing with historic urban areas. The *Schutzzone* remains an important instrument of planning, heritage conservation, and urban politics in Vienna. This shows that, on the one hand, heritage is not a given thing but rather an issue of reception and negotiation resulting in (temporally) shared understandings that are effective in the transformation of cities. On the other hand, this transformation of cities was also shaped through and built on urban heritage. These forms, processes, and influences between development and protection become obvious in the many interesting case studies, predominantly throughout Central and Eastern Europe, that are introduced in this book.

Who were and are the actors involved in the changes and continuities that conceptualise urban heritage? For sure, most of us recognise the manifold

forms of civil initiatives in Europe's cities, intended to care for and maintain urban heritage, especially since the 1960s. John Pendlebury argues that Thomas Sharp is one example of a planner who did not understand himself as a preservationist, but whose planning approaches were historically informed and historically sensitive although modern in outlook and purpose; and that Sharp was influential, despite not being at the forefront of heritage conservation. Many more persons, initiatives, and institutions, in history to be rediscovered, also shaped urban heritage through their thoughts and actions – despite lacking formal designation as 'experts'. Furthermore, the book points out the important impact of discourses in this interplay between development and protection. In the chapter by Gábor Oláh, the case study of Budapest shows that architectural journals were one medium of authorised professional discourse that impacted the reality of transforming cities. Another example that manifests this interplay is introduced by Marko Špikić. New visions of the future, introduced by communist elites after 1945 in countries such as present-day Croatia, defined a specific post-war arena of discourses that contrasted and enriched the established valuing of heritage mainly introduced by the Habsburg and German conservationists Riegl, Dvořák, Dehio, and Cornelius Gurlitt. Furthermore, a response was required to the social purposes of this time. Today, we know that (communist) utopian ideals can give rise to totalitarian regimes; however, the protection of post-war architecture in East and West is an important field of action today, as many sites and buildings are still neglected and not even considered worthy of analysis, despite documenting important social-political ideas and being expressed through high-level architectural design.

Another issue of major interest in this book is the reference points of a shared history in East and West Europe, as mentioned in several chapters. This history concerns the destruction of WWII, new construction in the 1950s and 1960s, followed by the discovery of built ensembles, historic cities, and urban built environments as heritage; an understanding that went beyond protecting single listed buildings only. These tendencies took place in many European states, irrespective of divergent political and societal agendas. This book invites the reader to discover more of this European shared heritage and – at the same time – presents specific cases, such as the reconstruction of Warsaw and Gdańsk in Poland (chapter by Mikołaj Getka-Kenig). Today, we experience a certain understanding of urban heritage that is rooted in the past, but at the same time simplifies urban spaces through strengthening so-called identities. Laura Demeter analyses the disappearance of a multifaceted past and layers of time in Brașov (Kronstadt), a former trading hub of the Habsburg Empire, through modernisation that followed the territorial and administrative reform of Romania in 1921. Understanding the concept of being multicultural as as a mixture of ethnicities, religions, and languages in contrasts to the given importance of building one nation. Similar processes are noted in many countries in Europe, including in Germany following its 1871 unification as a nation-state.

The chapters of the book show that the 20th century was crucial for new understandings in planning and heritage conservation, but also serve to remind us of the misuse of heritage by the German National Socialist regime.

The question of how heritage includes or excludes social groups – through homogenisation, nationalisation, and through defining what constitutes the "right" heritage – is back on the political agenda in Europe today. Assessing and selecting heritage objects includes not only artistically, architecturally, or historically informed analysis, but also political interests or, as we see in the next paragraph, economic ones. Urban heritage sites and architecture are highly symbolic places and objects that count in the negotiations about what a place is and whose future it will serve. Hereby, urban narratives come into play that envision the future through (re-)defining the urban past. Not surprisingly, mainly positive narratives or "hero histories" are told, and simplifications used as arguments, whereas unwanted memories and difficult heritage are swept under the carpet. Instead, we need a profound and differentiated understanding of our conflicted past in order to face and fight the political turmoil of a reemergent far-right in the 21st century.

Planning and preservation include many and highly diverse forms of intervention. Conservation strategies evolved in reaction to the damage inflicted upon sites by upheaval and demolition, as occurred in both East and West Berlin, including the gasometers discussed in the chapter by Kathrin Meissner. The experience of loss may contribute to highlighting and securing the remaining and chosen heritage within a city; however, decision-making about industrial heritage is the focus of less discussion than other ongoing phenomena. Historic cities, in particular, can be described as conserved, but also as commodified for tourism industries and served by generic infrastructure. Many Western and Eastern European cities and towns face neglected built environments in their adjacencies and, further out, recent shopping malls and highways that destroy historic landscapes and spatial relations. In the 1990s, the architect Rem Koolhaas already spoke of lip service being paid to (historic) quarters while new tourist hotels flourish in direct proportion to the erasure of the past.

In contrast, Melody Robine highlights small cultural and artistic interventions and argues that these interventions raise awareness and shape public discourses, thereby impacting decision making in cities. An openness to diverse objects of heritage and various forms of conservation helps bottom-up initiatives and strategies to oppose or enrich authorised heritage discourses. Legitimation of who is making decisions – in assessing, protecting, and trans-formation – influences procedures and institutionalisation in democracies, and must be repeatedly discussed and adapted over time. Carlotta Coccoli argues that formal instruments, such as recovery plans, and private engagement in the 1970s and 1980s, contributed to a holistic understanding and action-taking in Brescia and also supported continuities in transformation. In contrast to formal instruments, informal transformation and interventions shaped and continue to shape cities in their tangible and intangible dimensions, as Friedrich Hauer and Andre Krammer introduce. The legacy of these informalities is often unseen and lacks agency, although they contribute to important political statements. The informal settlements of Vienna can be understood as reference points for the still vivid and bottom-up-oriented discourses and practices. The authors open a mindset to value unauthorised heritage sites and introduce them into the social-political field of planning and heritage conservation.

However, sub- or countercultural atmospheres and activities might also be commodified for the purposes of advertising and branding urban products and cities. The rediscovery of 'Red Vienna' is one example that needs to be maintained by ongoing action for affordable housing in this capital city. Sandra Guinand, Robert Musil, and Viktória Éva Lélek introduce another example, namely the *Gründerzeit* houses in Vienna, to conclude that their commodification, protection, and use have differentiated this particular urban landscape into enriched houses and neglected ones.

The book shows that negotiation and conflict resolution in planning and heritage needs a territorial perspective of urban heritage that does not end with the single building, although the smaller scale is crucial for real estate markets, ownership, and regulatory protection. Furthermore, social, environmental, and democratic principles must be integrated into the transformation of cities, because heritage consciously and unconsciously influences processes of gentrification that primarily serve the interests (and profits) of a privileged few. However, revitalisation can also serve the interests of the many, for example by providing opportunities to enhance public spaces or communal living. The conclusion is not whether we need to integrate the social interests and participation of the many, but how we can organise these processes. This question is even more urgent, given the growing awareness around issues of heritage conservation in the context of mitigating and adapting to climate change. There is a new chance also for marginalised heritage sites to be recognised as assets for low-threshold care, and for developments that meet local needs.

This book presents various planning approaches, understandings of heritage, and forms of action for conservation. Tangible and intangible dimensions of heritage intermingle as well as the social, political, and architectural spheres. Civil society, professional heritage communities, and administrations have actively participated in the transformations of cities. Thus, we, as professionals in that field, can no longer follow the established template of either bottom-up or top-down processes with the simple dichotomy of authorised administration versus civil society, or the discussion about either tangible or intangible dimensions, but must instead consider a multifaceted heritage and multiplicity of agents following specific interests when transforming cities.

BIOGRAPHY

Heike Oevermann is Professor of Heritage Conservation at TU Wien and a Guest Professor at the Oslo School of Architecture and Design. Before moving to Vienna, she was interim Professor of Heritage Conservation and Sciences at the Otto-Friedrich Universität in Bamberg and senior scientist at the Georg Simmel Centre of Metropolitan Studies at the Humboldt Universität zu Berlin. She has published across a number of different fields, including industrial heritage, urban heritage, conservation and conversion.
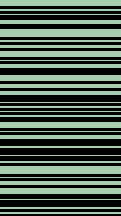
This volume introduces research that highlights connections between historical planning strategies and heritage conservation during transformation processes of European cities in the 20th century. Case studies from various countries, including Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, and the United Kingdom, focus particularly on the period following the Second World War.

One of the aims of this volume is to address planning theories and practices of built cultural heritage conservation in the "capitalist Western" European context as well as parallel developments and urban transformation processes initiated or undertaken by communist and socialist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe. A specific emphasis has been placed on the developments in former communist countries by highlighting continuities and discontinuities from the interwar period to the Second World War or in the context of the regime changes in 1989.

The authors cover a wide range of topics at the intersection of planning history, urban history, historical geography, and heritage conservation. This volume doesn't make any claim to be exhaustive; rather, it seeks to pave the way for future studies that examine the transformation processes of cities through an interdisciplinary and transnational lens.

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