

# CONSERVING “OLD VIENNA”. THE HISTORIC CITY BETWEEN THE INTERESTS OF URBAN PLANNING AND HERITAGE CONSERVATION

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## Abstract

Looking back at the history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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; Enns & 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; Enns & 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,

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 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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.

## 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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-19<sup>th</sup> century. Especially in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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)

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 20<sup>th</sup> century, recognition of the value of Baroque and early 19<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> century (K. K. Zentral-Kommission für Kunst- und Historische Denkmale, 1916, p. 77).

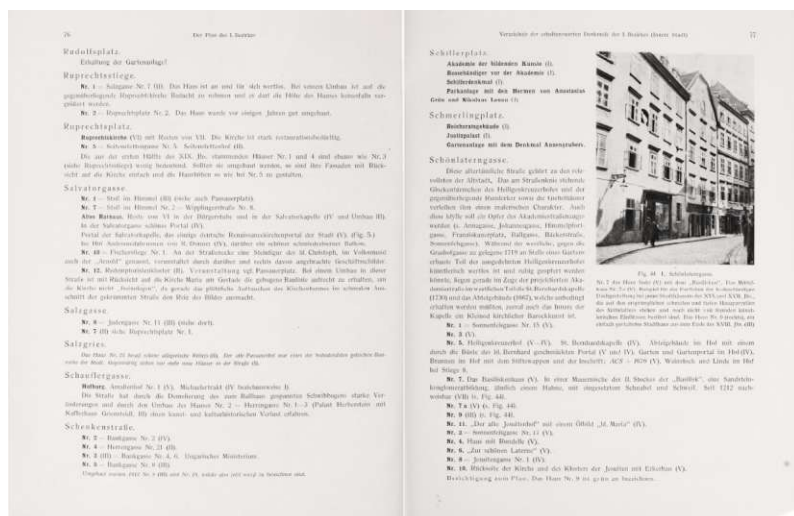


FIGURE 2 Double page from volume 15 of the *Österreichische Kunsttopographie*. (Austrian Art Topography, inventory of Remarkable Buildings in Vienna, Vol. 15, K. K. Zentral-Kommission für Kunst- und Historische Denkmale, 1916, pp. 76–77, CC0)



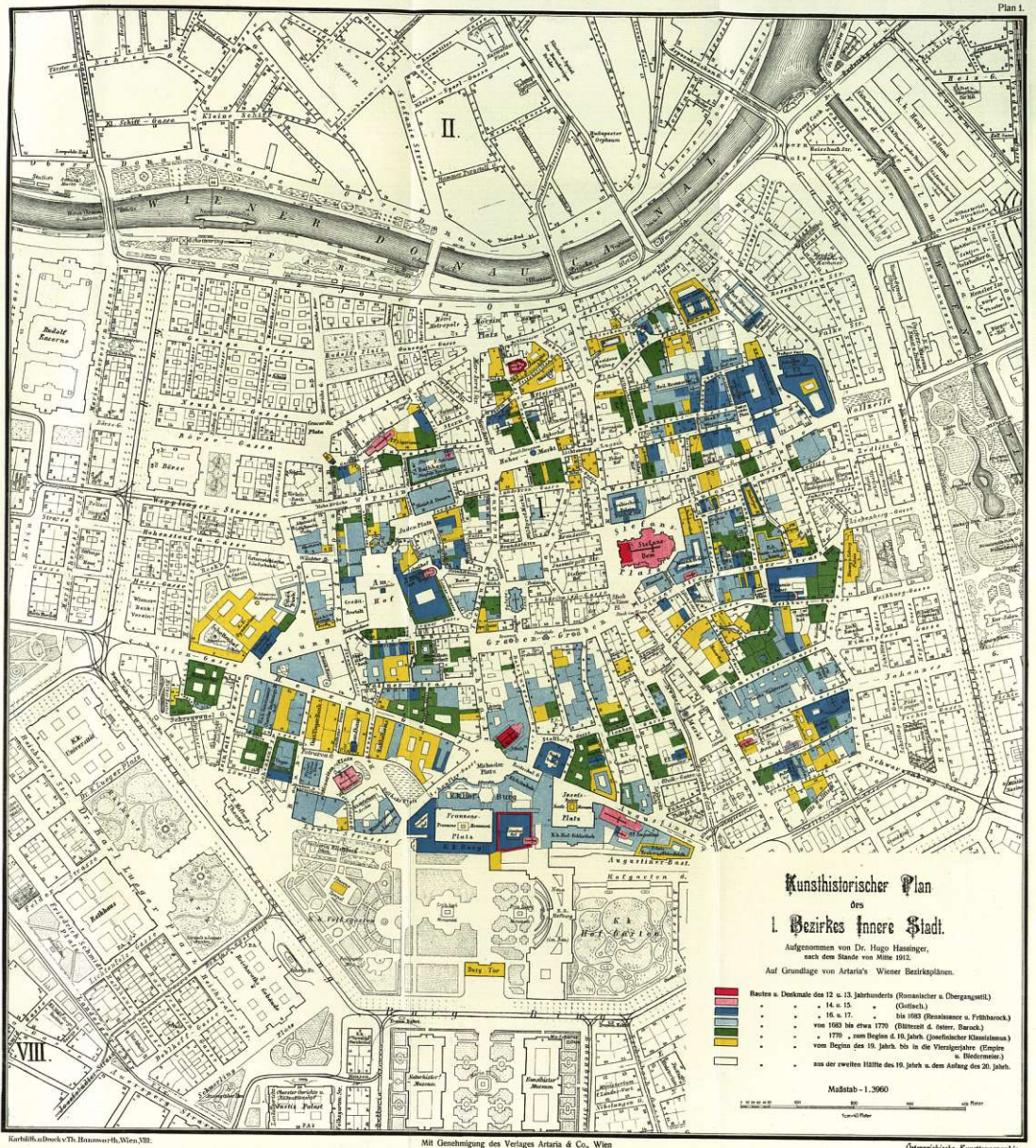


FIGURE 3 Kunsthistorischer Plan des 1. Bezirkes Innere Stadt, by Hugo Hassinger, 1912, showing the ages of building in Vienna's First District (Innere Stadt). (K. K. Zentral-Kommission für Kunst- und Historische Denkmale, 1916, CC0)

The radical remodelling of the city at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> 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”<sup>1</sup>. 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 20<sup>th</sup> century. The BDA also became involved in urban planning issues through increasing inventorying and mapping of built heritage. The Austrian Monument Protection Act (*Denkmalschutzgesetz*, 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.

<sup>1</sup> 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 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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

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

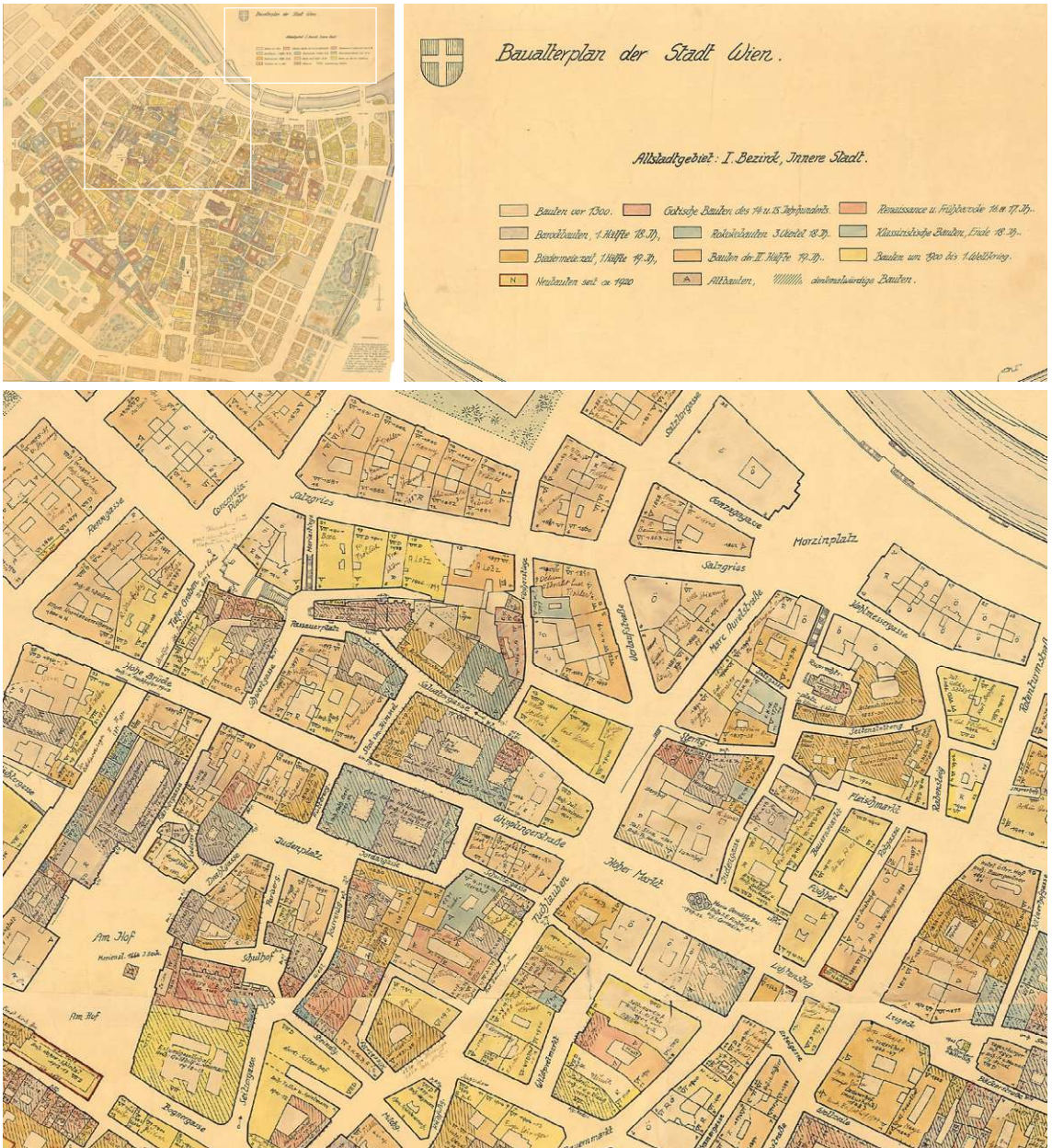


FIGURE 5 Excerpt from the building-age plan of Vienna's inner city and legends by Adalbert Klaar, 1948. (Federal Monuments Office Archive Vienna, Bundesdenkmalamt, plan archive, CC BY-NC-ND)

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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> century.

At the same time, however, the BDA also showed interest in *outstanding* buildings from the 19<sup>th</sup> 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 [19<sup>th</sup>] 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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



## INNERE STADT-DERZEITIGE REGULIERUNG UND DENKMALSCHUTZ

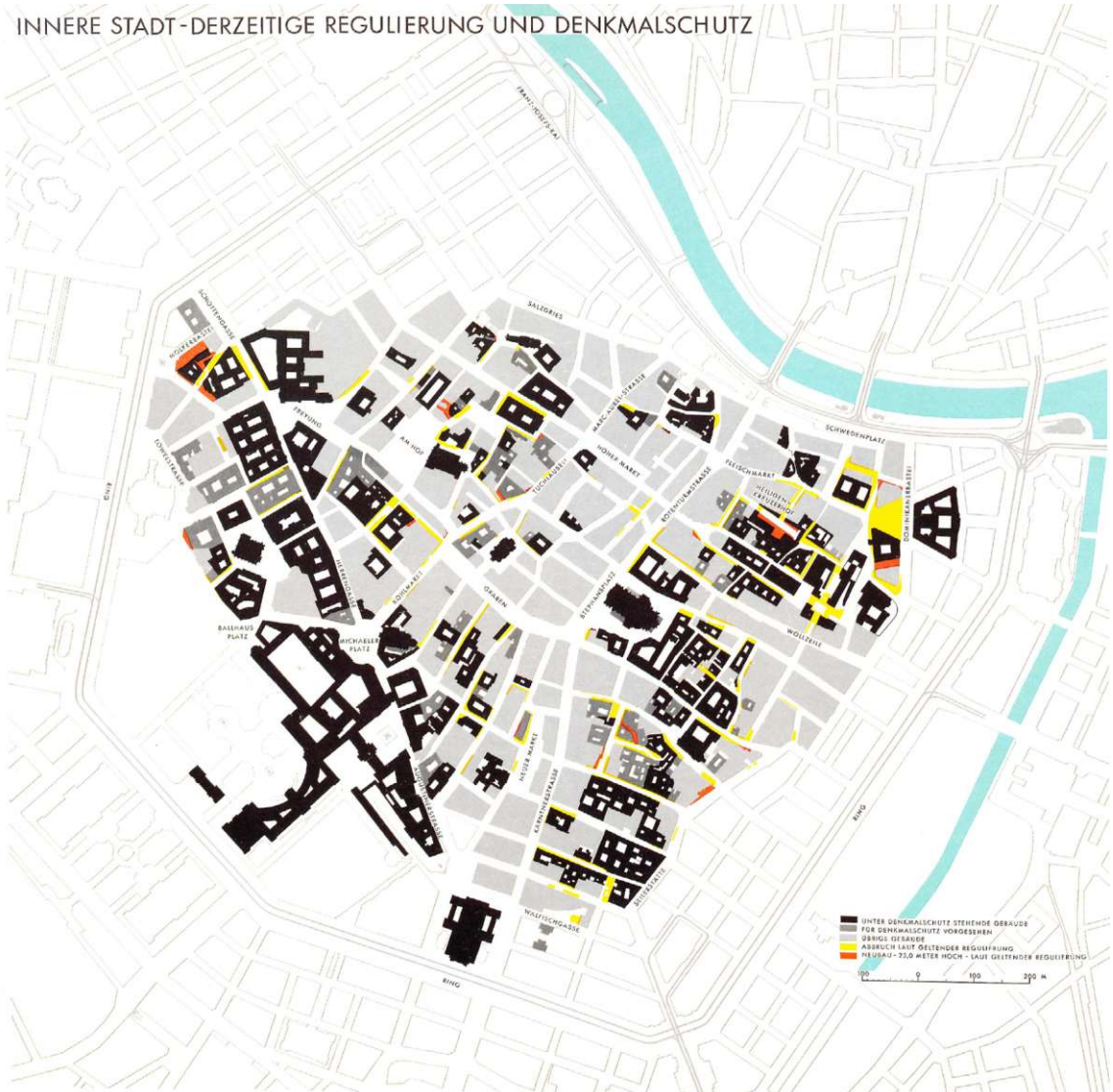


FIGURE 6 Heavily criticised proposed regulation in the Vienna Development plan (yellow) and affected listed buildings (black). (Plan by © unknown creator, from "Vienna Development Plan", by Roland Rainer, 1962, p. 122)

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)

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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