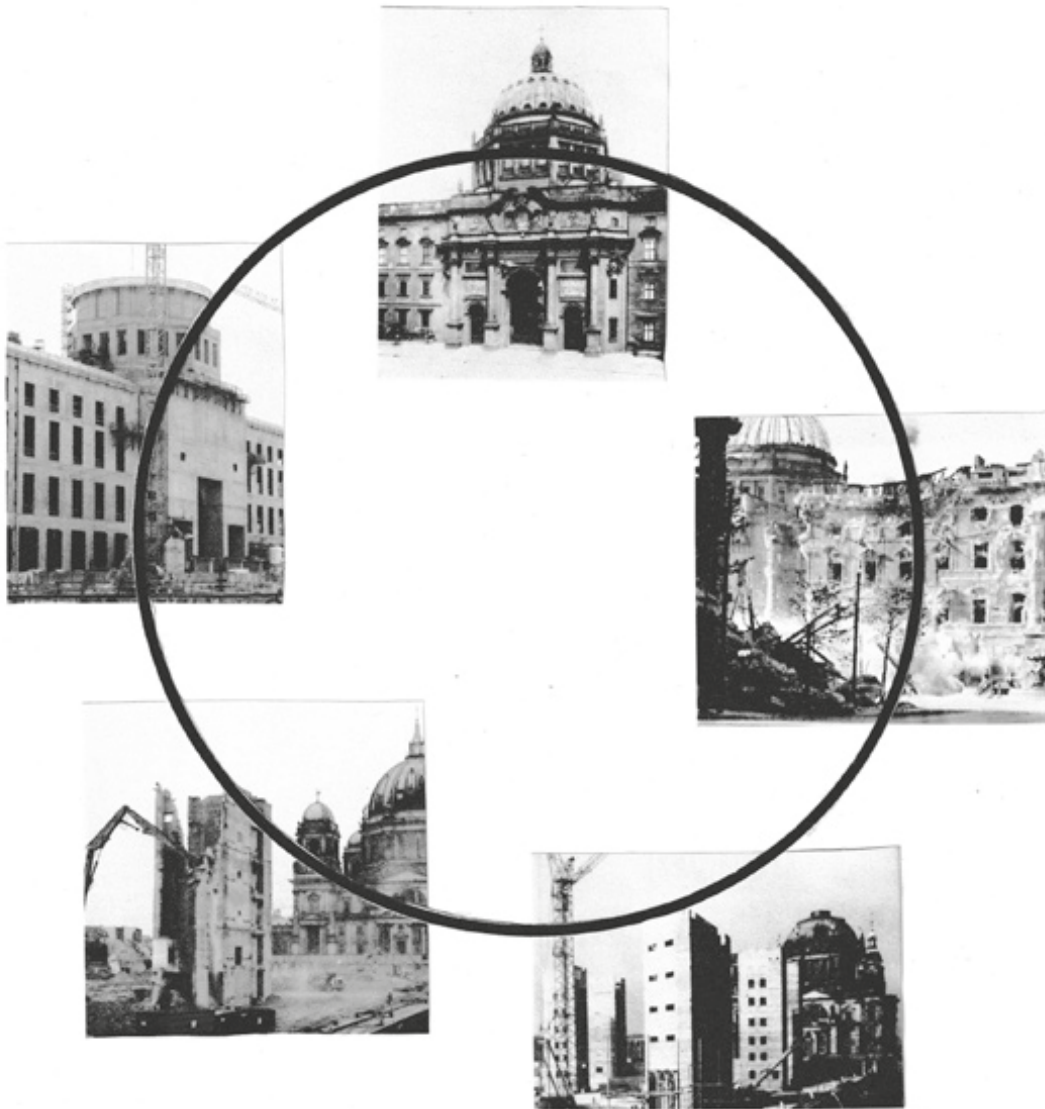


Preservation Issues of Architecture from the Second Half of the Twentieth Century

Igor Machata

doi 10.31577/archandurb.2024.58.1-2.3



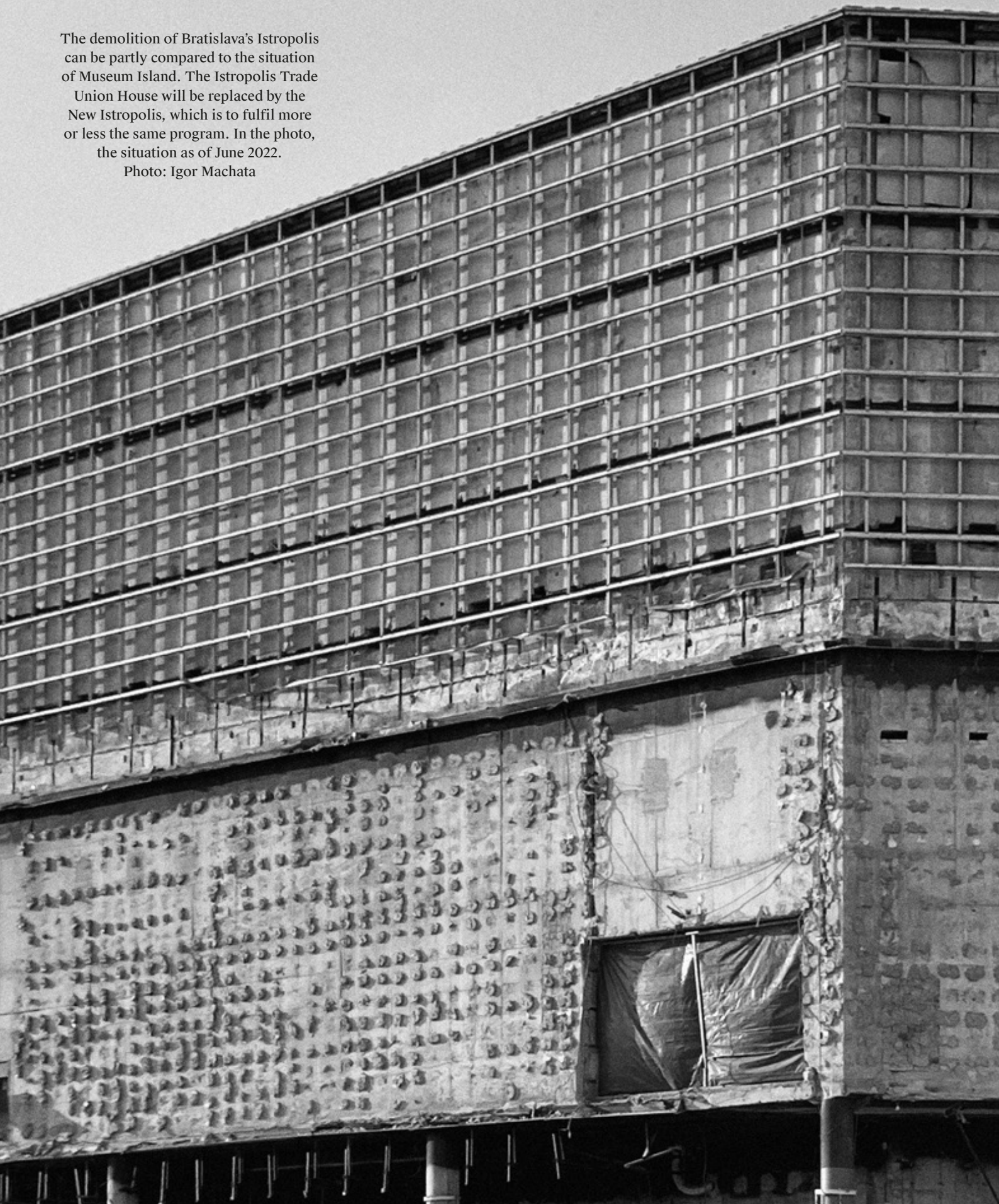
Late Modernist architectural works are confronted with an ambivalent situation between heritage acknowledgement and physical destruction. The text aims to explain the growing interest in their protection as a natural evolution of monument preservation, yet simultaneously questions the effectiveness of current procedures regarding the specifics of the given architecture. The Mäusebunker case study illustrates an approach of institutionalized preservation in terms of an architectural strategy of adaptive reuse, focusing more on the preservation of principle than of the image. It presents a method of working with post-war architecture that focuses on its active engagement with contemporary life within the values of sustainability.

The situation of the Museum Island in Berlin represents the established cycle of politically and economically motivated demolition and new construction. The baroque royal palace was demolished to make way for the soviet Palace of the Republic, which was demolished to be replaced by the present Humboldt Forum, a critical reconstruction of the historical palace.

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The demolition of Bratislava's Istropolis can be partly compared to the situation of Museum Island. The Istropolis Trade Union House will be replaced by the New Istropolis, which is to fulfil more or less the same program. In the photo, the situation as of June 2022.

Photo: Igor Machata



Introduction

The architectural heritage of the second half of the 20th century is increasingly becoming a subject for heritage preservation. Consequently, it is important to ask what the primary challenges are in preserving architecture from this period. Taking these challenges as the central focus of this text, it is structured into four main sections. First, the text explores the contemporary context and meaning of architecture from this period, which underscores the urgency of its protection. A second aspect is the need to invent new and unconventional preservation practices as an inherent part of the field of heritage preservation at a time when the scope of protection is broadening. In the third part, the text explores the complexities and general challenges and significance of preserving post-war modernist architecture and finally, it delves into how these challenges can be addressed through innovative preservation methodologies. At this point, the text presents a case study of the Mäusebunker in Berlin, which illustrates an example of such an innovative approach positioned between preservation and the creation of new architecture.

The Current Position of Post-War Modernist Architecture

Late modernist buildings are now approaching the end of their life cycles. Updating them to meet the needs of the present and ensure their resilience for the future is undeniably a difficult task. These objects and sites often remain on the margins of recognised cultural heritage, overlooked for their lack of historical value and dismissed because of their ideological context. In most cases, sufficient interest is absent for exploring the possibilities of their adaptation, preferring instead their demolition and replacement by new development. The ascription of political and ideological contamination¹ is accompanied by economic motivations and alleged aesthetic undesirability. In the latter case, the rejection of a certain aesthetic form can be seen as parallel to the iconoclasm of aesthetic dogmatism², a force in European culture from before the 15th century. "...The opposition of both the public and experts to the protection of such works is essentially based on an emotional reflection of historical events and leads to iconoclastic tendencies, to the demolition of such heritage and to the attempt of its erasure from history..."³ These iconoclastic tendencies, as architectural historian and theorist Peter Szalay calls them, are a cyclical phenomenon. Each epoch has privileged and dismissed a chosen school of art: the Renaissance dogmatically rejected the "barbaric" Gothic, Classicism rejected the theatricality of the Baroque.

After the regime change and the opening of the market in the former socialist states, buildings from this period began to suffer from a lack of maintenance due to the transition from state to private ownership or the loss of the intended function. Alternatively, they became the target of (in)direct liquidation, as was the case of the amphitheatre on Búdková Street (Štefan Svetko, Boris Džadoň, completed 1984), which burnt down shortly after it transferred to private ownership in 2008.⁴ Buildings left

to decay are repeatedly questioned and judged, to the point they become obsolete. According to architectural historian and theorist Natalia Kvítková, this phenomenon of obsolescence is a deliberate human act that rejects objects representing the past in the context of political change.⁵ From this perspective, these iconoclastic tendencies could be explained as a therapeutic process of coming to terms with the past or celebrating the defeat of a repressive regime. A similar tendency can be also observed in the wave of vandalism and monument destruction during of the French Revolution⁶, or more recently after 1989 with the destruction of public artworks depicting symbols of the former regime. This therapeutic dimension of rejecting the legacy of socialism is understandable. However, it is questionable to what extent such an argument is still relevant more than thirty years after the change of regimes.

The obsolescence of buildings is caused by the neglect of their maintenance. In turn, non-maintenance becomes a tool of these buildings' private owners to reduce their value and promote their negative image. As the condition of such buildings deteriorates, degradation of the surrounding public space occurs, furthering their negative public perception. Private developers use this process for their own benefit, i.e. demolishing existing buildings and replacing them with new ones, and in doing so creating the ideal conditions for extracting maximum profit. The historical and ideological context of post-war modernist architecture then often becomes an misapplied argument introducing a "desirable" emotive aspect into the process of the political and public debate.

However, systematic erasure of virtually any historic layer from the urban fabric has negative impacts on the users of the city. Paradoxically, in the case of a layer left by a historically and socially problematic period, these impacts are even more serious and have wider social and cultural implications. As Kvítková writes, one of the main negative aspects of erasing architecture from this period is the risk of losing reflection. These objects function as important mediators of the past, which lies precisely in recalling their ideological context. Their presence allows us to reflect and be critical of the past regime. By erasing them, we risk losing this ability and potentially increase the risk of repeating historical mistakes.⁷ The erasure of these buildings also has implications for the human memory, as the creation of memories is tied to the physical places created by architecture. One could say that their removal from the position of political decisions is to some extent a manipulation of collective memory through offering a possibility to control the narrative. The financial gain from new construction allows economic forces to control the interpretation of the past. Among other effects, erasing them also causes the loss of public-oriented programmes and amenities from cities, replacing them with, for instance, unaffordable forms of housing, which affects the diversity of the city and the population.

However, interest in these buildings is currently growing. Mainly, it is through the focus of the younger generation, without direct experience with the given regime. The buildings of post-war modernism have a strong representation on the territory of Slovakia and many of them are architectural works of international significance in their category. Moreover, they increasingly attract the interest of the professional community from the generation growing up after 1989, which places emphasis on their popularisation and communication of their qualities. As a result, these works are increasingly becoming attractive destinations for an ever-wider audience. Nevertheless, most of them remain in a state of neglect or under immediate threat of destruction. As critics, historians and architectural theorists Monika Mitášová and Marián Zervan interestingly describe them: "...These buildings embody to a large extent what is called the Bilbao effect, i.e. the fact that they can be attractors for modern nomads and make money...What makes iconic ruins⁸ blatantly different from iconic buildings is that they cease to make money and therefore represent more of a negative Bilbao effect..."⁹

Arguably, our chronological distance from the ideological burden of these buildings has also reached a point where society is ready to accept their potential for containing heritage values. As a result, these buildings are now gradually receiving monument protection, such as the SNP Bridge (Jozef Lacko, Ladislav Kušnir Ladislav, Ivan Slameň, completed 1973), or the Slovak Radio building (Štefan Svetko, Štefan Ďurkovič, Barnabáš Kissling, completed 1984), declared a National Cultural Monument at the end of 2017.¹⁰ Other examples, such as the House of Arts of the Slovak Philharmonic in Piešťany (Ferdinand Milučký, real. 1980), or the New Market Hall on Trnavské mýto in Bratislava (Ivan Matušik, completed 1989), have received this protection only recently, e.g., the latter being declared a monument in November 2022¹¹, perhaps as a reaction to the fate of the nearby Istropolis, the demolition of which began in mid-January 2022. It seems that we are in a time when monument preservation is (again) expanding its scope and is beginning to protect the architectural heritage of the second half of the 20th century even in the Slovak context. The inclusion of a new group of objects from a certain historical period with their specific characteristics requires a reassessment of established strategies, methods and practices, or the formulation of new ones. If we accept the fact that late-modern buildings are becoming protected cultural heritage, or see the need to protect them, it is necessary to examine their specificities and to think about ways of their preservation, equally in the context of historically established practices of preservation and restoration of monuments and its evolution as a discipline.

Expanding the Scope of Preservation:

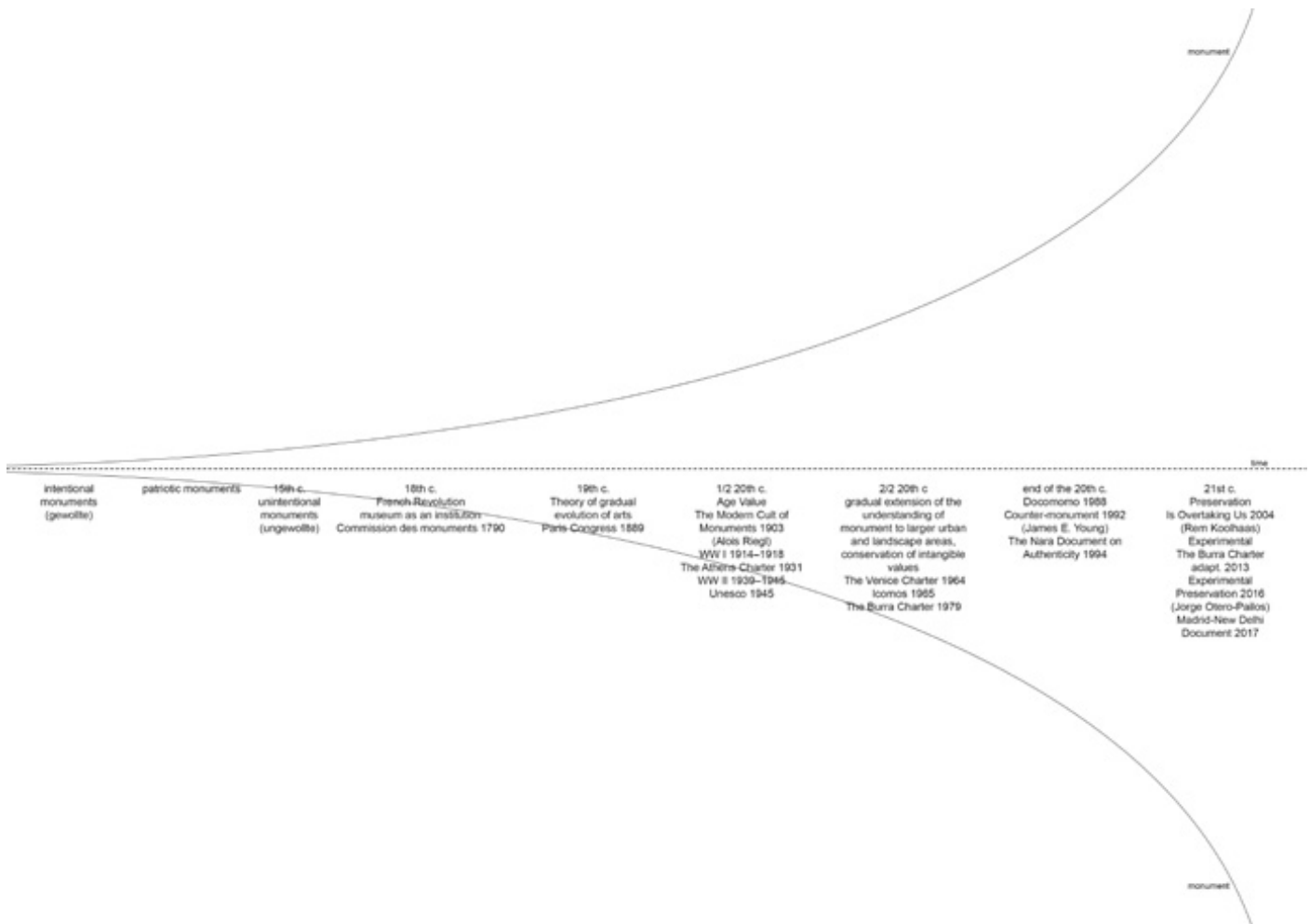
Understanding the Meaning of a Monument

Development and expansion of the field of practice is itself a natural process for the discipline of heritage preservation. Since we currently working to define a new

category of monuments from a given historical period, it is perhaps useful to look at heritage preservation in the context of its historical development. The subject of preservation has gradually expanded from individual objects, such as monuments or historic buildings and urban districts (Athens Charter, 1931), through large non-architectural areas of historical or other cultural significance (Venice Charter, 1959), to the protection of so-called intangible qualities (Burra Charter, 1979) and the emphasis on the importance of local communities and diversity (Nara Document on Authenticity, 1994). The 2013 adaptation of the Burra Charter no longer speaks of objects and buildings, but of places of cultural significance: a meaning not limited to its aesthetic and historical values but equally including social and spiritual dimensions.¹² Similarly, this expansion and development is encouraging in terms of defining more progressive ways of dealing with architectural heritage, since it suggests that not only the historic and artistic values are considered, but the social meaning and use of buildings are coming to the forefront.

Art theory has also responded to the broadening understanding of the concept of monument. James E. Young observes, based on an examination of the production of monuments today, a transition from traditional fixed forms to variable ones, from which he establishes the concept of "counter-monument".¹³ In essence, the counter-monument as a contemporary monument-form formalises its quality of impermanence and celebrates the changes of its form across time and space. It seeks to stimulate memory by pointing explicitly to its changing appearance. Understanding of historical meanings shifts from the permanent and given to the mutable and processual. Representing this heterogenization and individualisation of society and its impact on the expanded meaning of heritage is the concept of Experimental Preservation introduced by architect and professor Jorge Otero-Pailos. Through this term, he explains a practice that critically reassesses conventional preservation.¹⁴ In this formulation, the conventional understanding of preservation is explained as a "respect" for the past seen as superior to the needs of the present. Actors of experimental forms of preservation, by contrast, deliberately choose objects that are excluded from official preservation, or even have completely fallen out of the interest of contemporary society. Here we mean buildings, products, ideas, historical or even purely contemporary, which have the potential to become monuments in the future.

Currently, we already practically cannot exclude any product of culture from the possibility of becoming a monument.¹⁵ This moment of expanding the understanding of the concept of monument and the scope of preservation theoretically culminates in what the architect Rem Koolhaas defined in his 2004 lecture at Columbia University in New York as the moment when "preservation is overtaking us". His central argument – that preservation is a creation of modernity – is expressed in relation to



Over time, the understanding of monuments and cultural heritage has expanded to include more and more objects, from ancient monuments to individual structures to large built and natural areas, even the protection of so-called intangible features. From a practical point of view, there are now no criteria that would rule out in advance any cultural product from becoming protected heritage.

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the acceleration of technological progress and the expansion of the scope of preservation. As he further explains, the time between when an object is built and when it is declared a monument is getting shorter and shorter. At the beginning of the 20th century, the interval was 200 years. In the 1960s, it was only 20 years.¹⁶ By the start of the 1970s, we can observe a significant general increase in interest in caring for and working with already existing buildings, resulting in the formalization of adaptive reuse as a discipline with philosophical and theoretical foundations.¹⁷ This stance can possibly be regarded as a critique of the universalism of the modernist movement and its post-war program of city revitalisation.

Architect and academic Thordis Arrhenius attributes the phenomenon of broadening the scope of preservation to the democratization of society, and the potential of monuments within the culture of tourism and consumerism.¹⁸ Professor Rostislav Švácha describes this moment from the perspective of the discipline of monument preservation as a shift of emphasis from the monument's historical value to its artistic value. In his article about the preservation of monuments of post-war architecture in the Czech Republic, he mentions the work of art historians Václav Richter and Zdeněk Kudělka, who as early as 1970 stressed the importance of the artistic value of an architectural work, as opposed to the privileged position of a given building's historical value as evidence of the past. This shift makes it possible to blur the distinction between historical and modern architecture, and the limit of the temporal scope of the monument stock can thus theoretically be shifted up to the present.¹⁹

Specifics, Strategies and Methods of Heritage Preservation of Post-War Modernist Architecture

The architecture of the second half of the twentieth century can generally be defined as post-war modernism.²⁰ The name itself implies specific characteristics of the architecture of this period, namely those descending from modernism, such as the dominant position of the functional program of the building, which determines the spatial configurations and forms. Further, they include the geometric reduction of these forms and, of course, the reduction of traditional decoration, where the artistic element of architecture becomes the material and composition of the building elements themselves, and the sculptural nature of volumes.²¹ More specifically, the architecture of socialist modernism in the former Eastern Bloc countries dates from 1955, with the shift away from socialist realism after Stalin's death, to the early 1990s.²² Buildings from this period were often largely experimental, designed with new materials, technologies, architectural forms and spatial solutions. Construction activities in this period were conditioned by post-war modernisation of cities and raising of living standards. Indeed, architecture and construction on both sides of the Iron Curtain was characterised by a faith in technological progress and the development of standardised

construction, which was mainly implemented in the solution of the housing topic. "...Rapid economic, social and technological development brought fast urbanization and urban growth, the inception of mass communication and transport, which led to the emergence of unprecedented types and forms of buildings..."²³

For many, the construction of prefabricated housing estates constitutes the main image of the architecture of this period. However, architectural and building production in the former Eastern Bloc also included significant numbers of public buildings, as an ambition to build and consolidate national culture. The works of post-war modernism often represent newly formulated typologies and prototypes of specialized objects. As Marián Zervan and Monika Mitášová describe them: "...already at the time of their creation, they were outside of the contemporary standardisation and prefabrication. Typologically, these were usually cultural, sports and administrative buildings, buildings for tourism and recreation, or buildings of extraordinary political significance such as embassies, as well as buildings for education and, rarely, residential buildings or complexes..."²⁴ Furthermore, for example, there were buildings related to infrastructure: transport, technical, or telecommunication, such as transmission towers, radio and television buildings. "...The fact that their conception deviated from the standardised assignments and prefabrication made them exceptional in terms of authorship and form, and they were built in a different economic and contracting conditions than ordinary buildings..."²⁵ In the Slovak context, most of these buildings were designed in the 1960s, a time of political liberation. However, they were realised only during the political crackdown of the 1970s, meaning that almost invariably, they were not realised in their entirety or in accordance with the original architectural design.²⁶

The specific context and characteristics of these buildings make them problematic in regards of their preservation and care. As relatively young buildings, they often remain on the periphery of institutionalised preservation, which generally still prefers historical value and categorises post-war modernist buildings merely as "architecturally valuable modern buildings"²⁷. Naturally, a sufficient investment of time is required to research these objects to understand them in depth to formulate appropriate strategies, methods and practices for their preservation and restoration. In the meantime, their future lies in the hands of an engaged public or enlightened investors, where the opportunity arises to formulate non-standard forms of strategies. Henrieta Moravčíková, in her article "Monuments of Modern Architecture and Alternative Strategies for Their Preservation", describes the formulation of such strategies for the preservation of modern architectural heritage as "...standing somewhere between activism, squatting and curating..."²⁸ She defines strategies such as "renovation as an open project", conditioned by the active creative collaboration of the architect, the conservationist and the owner/investor, and open towards

changes caused by the input of other actors, such as additional financial investors or building contractors. This strategy and its outcome are thus directly dependent on the individual characteristics of the actors and their willingness to cooperate.

Another strategy is the one she defines as “anarchist development”, using bottom-up incentives, i.e. citizen initiatives and activism, to save a given object. One example of this approach could be the “Model Project Haus der Statistik” in the location of Berlin’s Alexanderplatz. The Haus der Statistik (real. circa 1970) is a complex of buildings of the State Central Statistical Office of the former German Democratic Republic, left unused and threatened with demolition after German reunification. Not of any exceptional architectural, artistic or technical qualities this building holds its potential in its size as a 50,000 square metre usable area unused for more than a decade.²⁹ The rescue of this complex of buildings and the initiative for its reuse was triggered by a protest action by engaged artists in 2015, raising public awareness of the debate about the future of this complex. Thanks to this activism, there are today concrete plans in place for its reuse in collaboration with an alliance of different actors – the Berlin Senate, social and cultural institutions, art collectives and architects. This model project points to the third, and perhaps the most important, type of strategy that Moravčíková formulates, one that “...is based on communicating the values of architectural heritage to its users through interactive communication tools...”³⁰. In other words, spreading awareness and educating the public about the possibilities and qualities of the buildings in question.

The examples formulated by Moravčíková illustrate various project strategies, or rather initiation strategies of projects for the restoration, preservation, or reuse of (post-war) modernist architecture, which manage to liberate themselves of institutionalized strategies and practices. Equally, there seems to be a lack of appropriate methods and procedures for the physical and material preservation care of these buildings. In terms of heritage-care methods for historic buildings, there are in conceptual terms two main prevailing directions. One of them is the aim of achieving unity of style; thus the one preferring scientific reconstruction and restoration, restoring the building to a chosen period. The second direction could be described as conservation³¹ where the evolutionary and historical character of the object is valued and presented, with a recognition of the so-called age-value [Alterswert]³². Mostly, of course, we encounter a synthesis of these approaches, combination of restoration and conservation, since these approaches are usually tailored to the conditions and complexities of specific case studies of historical structures.

However, in the preservation of 20th century buildings, the above-mentioned directions of conventional monument preservation are failing. These buildings are too young to contain the traces of their development as

historical value. Within the tendency to achieve unity of style, the only way of accomplishing this is to preserve the original appearance, to return to its “original” state at the time of construction and to conserve it. And considering the specifics of late modernist buildings, this approach arguably only highlights their main shortcomings today: mostly, their programmatic irrelevance, the complicated change of function within the requirements of heritage preservation, and the related factors of poor occupancy conditions and difficult maintenance. Such an outcome does not have a positive impact on the overall image of the building and the communication of its values to the public, which may call into question the process of monument declaration itself. In selected cases, conservation might allow for contemporary additions by contrasting and contextual means. By adding a new part to a historic cultural monument, we assume that this will ensure a link between contemporary life and cultural heritage. However, it may happen that the contrast causes the opposite effect, and conceptually the cultural heritage becomes separated from contemporary life. This approach implies that the monument represents the past and not the present. However, there is always a contemporary facet to any cultural heritage, in its ability to take on new meanings in the face of changing social realities.³³

The greatest constraints of the preservation of the late 20th century buildings are those characteristics that ensue from their structural, technical and architectural design.³⁴ These aspects constitute their greatest qualities and “values” – yet at the same time, their greatest weaknesses. After decades of use, it has become clear that their experimental nature makes them less resilient than traditionally constructed buildings. On the other hand, compared to their more traditional counterparts, they might be more easily adaptable. As Tomasz Ziemiakiewicz writes in relation to the issue of preserving post-war modernist architecture in Poland: “...experts point out that current evaluation systems do not correspond to the specific nature of modernist architecture, which often differs significantly from traditional buildings...”³⁵ Conservation practices tied to the use of traditional materials and the traditional method of construction, in the sense of preserving, conserving, or restoring authentic materials, are not an ideal solution in this case. Many of the materials used in the construction of post-war modernist structures are no longer in production and therefore no conservation techniques have been developed. Paradoxically, the modernist belief in techno-utopianism, when new technologies were supposed to solve so many of the issues related to the construction and operation of buildings and human life in general, caused these objects to age much more rapidly. Since the construction of these often very bold structures took many years, even decades, from the design project phases to the start of construction and completion, the implemented technologies became outdated. And it is precisely technological progress that lies at the heart of

the concept of modernism, which proved to progress at an exponential rate.

Consequently, the method of replacing original materials and technologies with new ones seems legitimate.³⁶ However, this method becomes risky when coping, for example, with updating the buildings to the current thermo-technical standards. Late modernist buildings were often realised as a skeleton or another spatial system with the secondary structure as an envelope. To address the problem of the thermo-technical performance standards, the solution offered here is to completely remodel the façade of the building, which can be questionable in terms of the resulting appearance. Replacement of materials will therefore always be a matter of debate, but the extent of works and updates allowed must clearly be greater than for “traditional” historic monuments. If we want to preserve the architectural heritage of the second half of the 20th century and, perhaps more importantly, if we want these buildings to become active parts of the contemporary society, it is necessary for them to undergo a transformation. The document Madrid – New Delhi (ICOMOS and ISC20C – International Scientific Committee on 20th Century Heritage, 2017) discusses, within the framework of developing preservation strategies for these buildings, the establishment of limits of acceptable change.³⁷ As such, the identification of these acceptable limits of change and their nature becomes a key issue.

Defining this architecture as objects of late modernism suggests that the program itself, and its transformation into spatial concepts and the relationship between program, space and volume, becomes a defining feature. The complexity of the projects and their design mechanisms demonstrate that the physical appearance of these buildings is only one component of the whole and the outcome of systemic correlations. Therefore, the adaptive reuse of these buildings cannot focus only on the materiality of the building and underestimate the integrity of the whole.³⁸ Monika Mitášová and Marián Zervan have been exploring and identifying the defining processes and principles of post-war modernism in the Slovak environment, for instance, in their interpretations of the work of architect Vladimír Deděček. Their research presents the search for what they term the intra-architectural code.³⁹ Its definition is reached by analysing the life work of the selected architect and examining his/her working methods. Furthermore, and more specifically, through a hypothetical reconstruction of the selected architectural project, the author’s intentions and the decision-making processes leading to a given outcome, presented in the form of a text, as well as through the creation of so-called hypothetical architectural documentation, which is of a drawn and diagrammatic nature.⁴⁰

This complex relationship between the program and its method of translation and arrangement into the spatial relationships that generate architectural forms seems to be one of the potential heritage values of modernist architecture that can be preserved and developed. As Zervan states

in his accompanying text to the publication *Iconic Ruins (Strategies)*, the specific characteristics of late modernist buildings “...require innovative strategies in addition to terminological distinctions...distinct from preservationist approaches to historic architecture operating in the polarity of a pattern of all historic layers or a stylistic unity based on the “most significant” historic layer, as well as from DOCOMOMO approaches to modern architecture that preserve design fragments rather than what was typical of modern architecture: exceptional spatial configurations...”⁴¹. It is important to note that Zervan made this comment in 2017: since then, the interpretation of the values of modern heritage by preservation experts apparently developed forward. In the document from 2023 of the Monuments Office of the Slovak Republic, which resulted from the national “Restoration and Resilience Plan”, concerning the methodology of the principles of decision-making in matters of architectural and structural or restoration interventions in modern architecture (which also includes post-war modernism), the stipulated architectural-heritage values of these buildings include not only the historical value, the artistic value of the building and the overall image, but also the typological solution with regard to the original programme and the internal spatial solutions and arrangement of the spaces and their interrelationships.⁴² And thus, assumably, the traits that Zervan describes as typical of modern architecture.

In the cited document with regard to architectural heritage values, there is also mention of an “architectural approach”, which can be interpreted as an attempt to deduct the intentions and the method of design, the architectural thinking and the problem-solving of the authors of the buildings. In other words, as a thorough effort to understand the existing building in depth, equally in its dimension as an architectural project and the author’s methods and intentions. It is, however, debatable if such values and qualities can be evaluated and applied in general for post-war modernism as a “historic period”. Arguably, implementation of general rules and guidelines is not possible or efficient, and each building must be taken into consideration as an individual project.

Mäusebunker

One example that seems to develop the outlined idea of an in-depth understanding of the building and the preservation of its principle rather than its image is the proposal of the Berlin-based collaborative studio bplus.xyz for the adaptive reuse of the Central Animal Laboratories, popularly known as the Mäusebunker, in Berlin’s Lichterfeld. The Mäusebunker building (Gerd and Magdalena Hänska, Kurt Schmiersow, 1971–1983) was built together with the Institute of Hygiene and Microbiology as part of a political strategy to create a research centre in West Berlin.

This building represents its functional programme of animal testing laboratories in a very formal and straightforward way, as a function with a high level of control – a bunker-like structure, sealed off from the environment

and external influences such as direct sunlight and air. Its defensive character, of protecting and controlling the environment, led to the nickname Mäusebunker (mouse bunker). The building represents the idea of the period as architecture as a machine, technical progress and the reduction of geometric forms. Together with the choice of material and formal language, it exemplifies post-war Western architecture. The complexity of the architectural forms is achieved through a relatively simple construction method of precast combined skeleton and wall reinforced concrete structure and a secondary structure of prefabricated façade panels, with certain structural elements designed, developed and tested specifically for this project. The high level of technological specialisation and innovation is also typical of this period of architecture and construction. Due to unforeseen complications relating to the building's foundations, the project was delayed, costs increased, and it was never completed to the original planned extent – an “unfinishedness” that somehow seems to be a defining feature of post-war modernist architecture. The Institute of Hygiene and Microbiology was listed as a monument in 2021, the Mäusebunker in 2023.

A compelling fact about the adaptive reuse of the Central Animal Laboratories building is the approach of the Berlin State Monuments Authority. The Mäusebunker is in a relatively good technical condition, as despite the progressive methods, high-quality materials were used for its construction. As an almost hermetically sealed building, designed for a very specific function – laboratories – with a high level of control, it is relatively unusable for any other programme. From a preservation point of view, if the current or original state of the building were strictly protected as a testimony to the time and as an example representing Brutalist tendencies in architecture, the building could only become a kind of specific museum, a monument to itself. Such an approach would require either a philanthropically oriented private investor with large resources, which would not be an ideal situation in terms of privatisation of the building, or if managed from public resources it would create an additional burden on taxpayers.

The Berlin State Monuments Authority is aware that the Mäusebunker needs to be fundamentally transformed to serve another, currently socially more relevant function. The Authority seeks to apply the strategy that it can only protect buildings that can be reused, and therefore those that can be profitable and socially useful at the present time. The possibilities for adaptive reuse of this building are being explored through the “Modellverfahren Mäusebunker” (Model Procedure Mäusebunker) initiative⁴³, which is being conducted by the Berlin State Monuments Authority in cooperation with the new owner, the Charité University Hospital, and the Berlin Senate's Department for Urban Development.

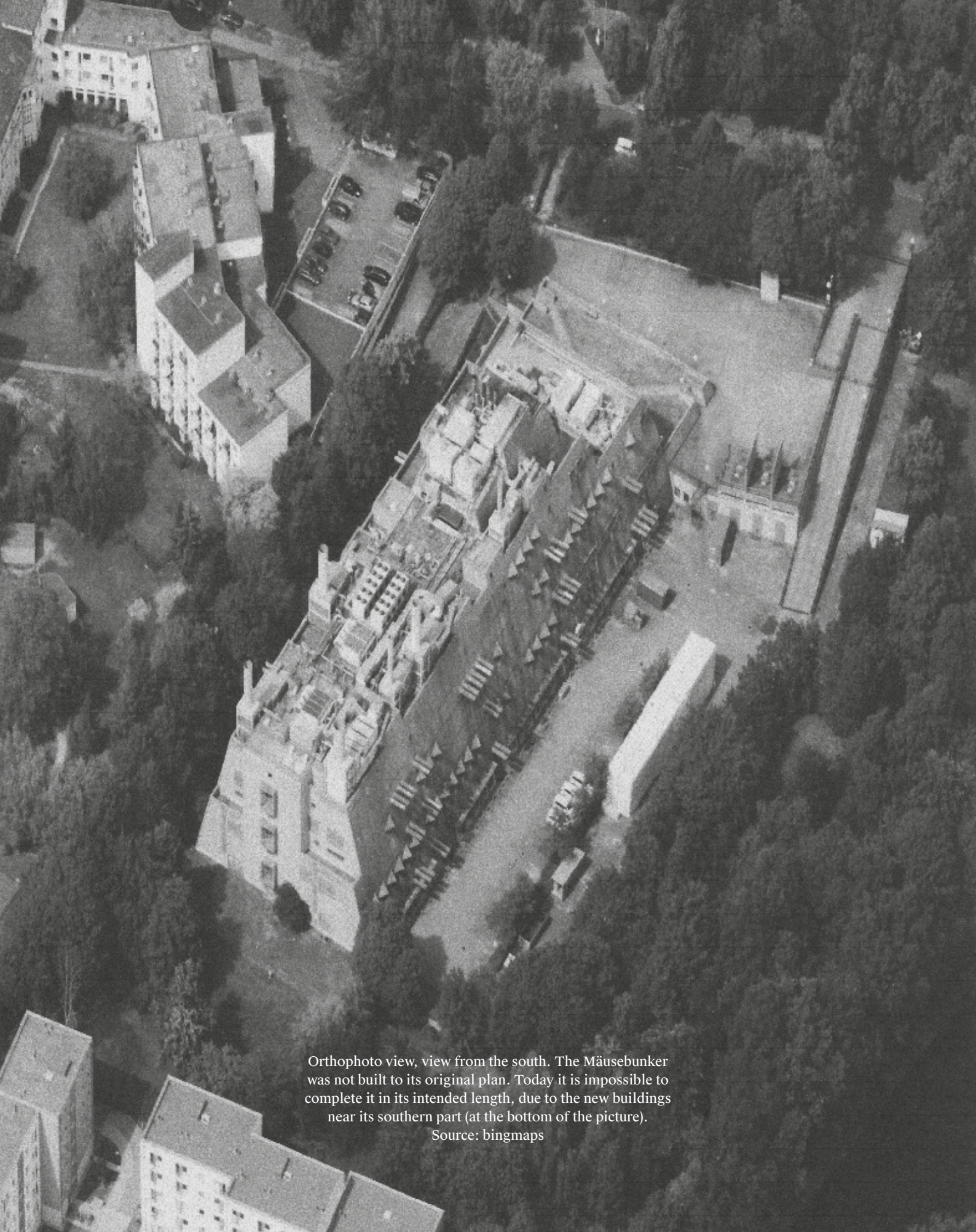
Within the initiative, the authority focuses on finding a new use for the building to ensure it answers contemporary needs and does not merely create a relic cast out of

time. This end is achieved through workshops, extensive collaboration with various stakeholders, including public administration, experts, and civil society, to explore sustainable and community-oriented reuse options for the building. The strategy includes public interest and reuse, economic and social viability, and community engagement and collaboration. Through this approach, the practice of preservation is confronted with practical considerations for reuse, creating a discussion where compromises from both sides need to be achieved, and thus encouraging development of unconventional methods and procedures.

In terms of the strategy categorisation proposed by Moravčíková, this approach could be classified as “restoration as an open project”. It should be pointed out that although the initiative to explore possibilities of adaptive reuse of this monument comes eventually as a “top-down” approach, the original plans to demolish the building in 2020 were halted after a successful initiative of publicly engaged architects and architectural historians and theorists through public petition (Gunnar Klack, Felix Torkar) and popularisation through an exhibition (Ludwig Heimbach). One of the first figures to call for the reuse of the building through open letters were architect Arno Brandlhuber (Brandlhuber+/bplus.xyz) with gallerist Johann König.⁴⁴ As with the Haus der Statistik, there is a combination of a “bottom-up” initiatives by the professional community that succeeded in shifting to a progressive “top-down” institutionalised model procedure in the form of discourse.

The architectural proposal of the Mäusebunker's adaptive reuse by bplus.xyz relies on an in-depth understanding of the building, its concept and physical nature, and draws on an inversion of its current conceptual and spatial situation. A formerly introverted space with very limited access is to become public and open through a new programme of studios, ateliers and workshops, partly subsidised by the city. The formerly functionally confined building becomes habitable by physically opening its façade and connecting the different floors of the building, so that the new openings allow the greatest possible exposure to daylight and natural ventilation.

The defining feature of the original building is its external envelope, using prefabricated façade panels which rest on the load-bearing structure. These façade panels create their own typology, where the different interior functions are represented on the elements of the individual panels, establishing a kind of vocabulary that constitutes the formal language of the building. The authors of the study propose that, where possible, the panels should be flipped and suspended from the façade, installing new steel panels containing window frames on the structure of the building, in principle in the same way as the original ones. In this way, on the one hand, bplus.xyz allows for preservation and use of the original elements of the building, while in turn the new elements that update the building in terms of use follow the original architectural-structural



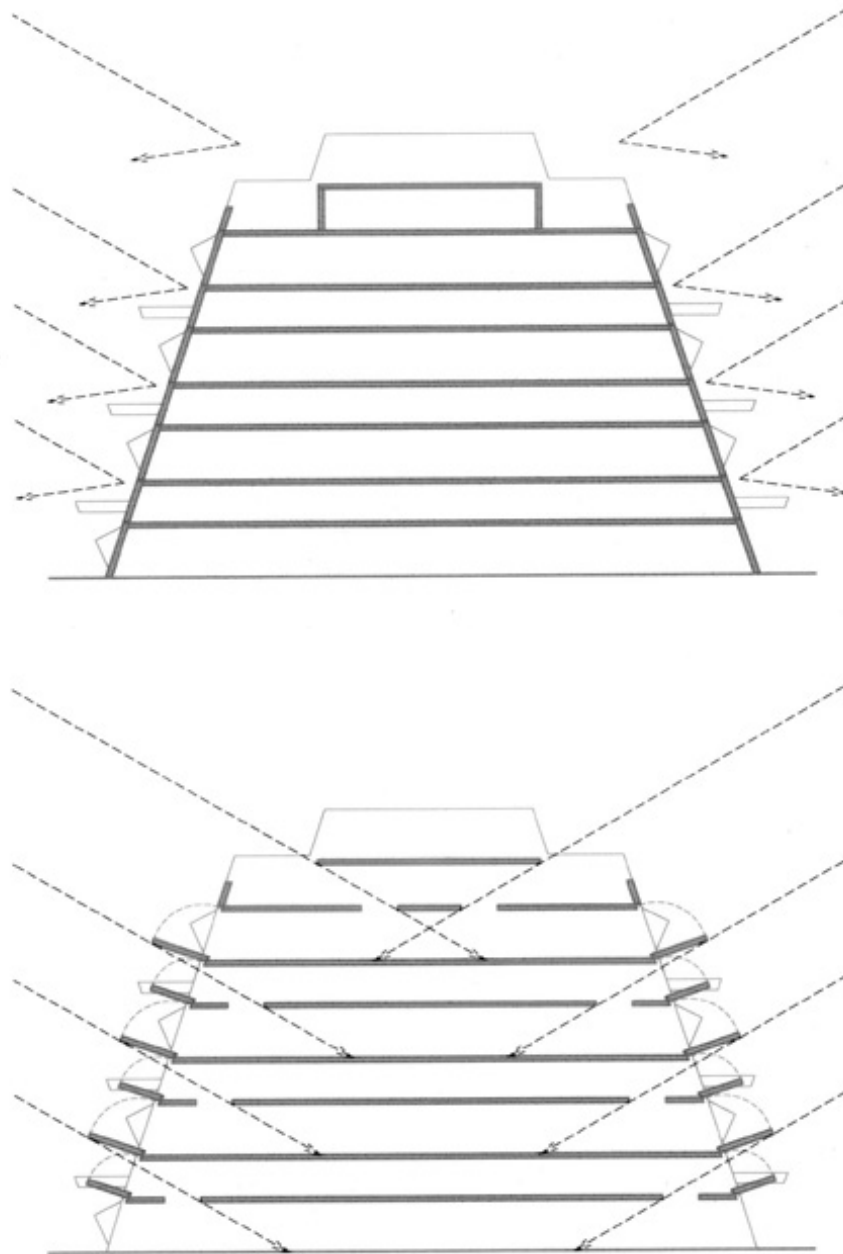
Orthophoto view, view from the south. The Mausebunker was not built to its original plan. Today it is impossible to complete it in its intended length, due to the new buildings near its southern part (at the bottom of the picture).

Source: bingmaps



View of the west side. The triangular windows of the laboratories face north to avoid direct sunlight. The stairwell spaces, without the need for more substantial indoor climate control, have square windows aligned with the façade. The ducts serve as air supply for the ventilation technology located on the technical floors.

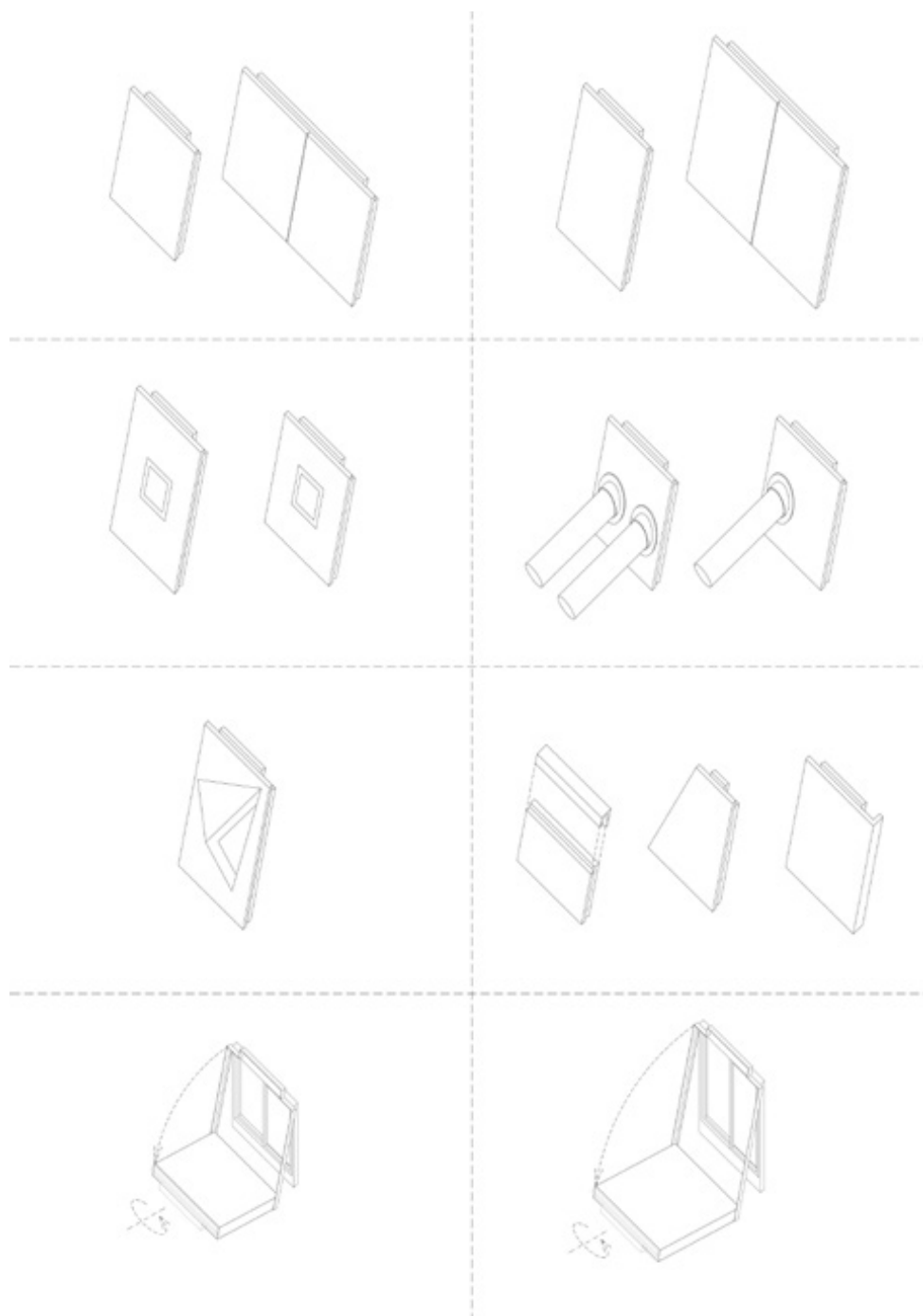
Photo: Igor Machata



Section diagram showing the principle of transformation.

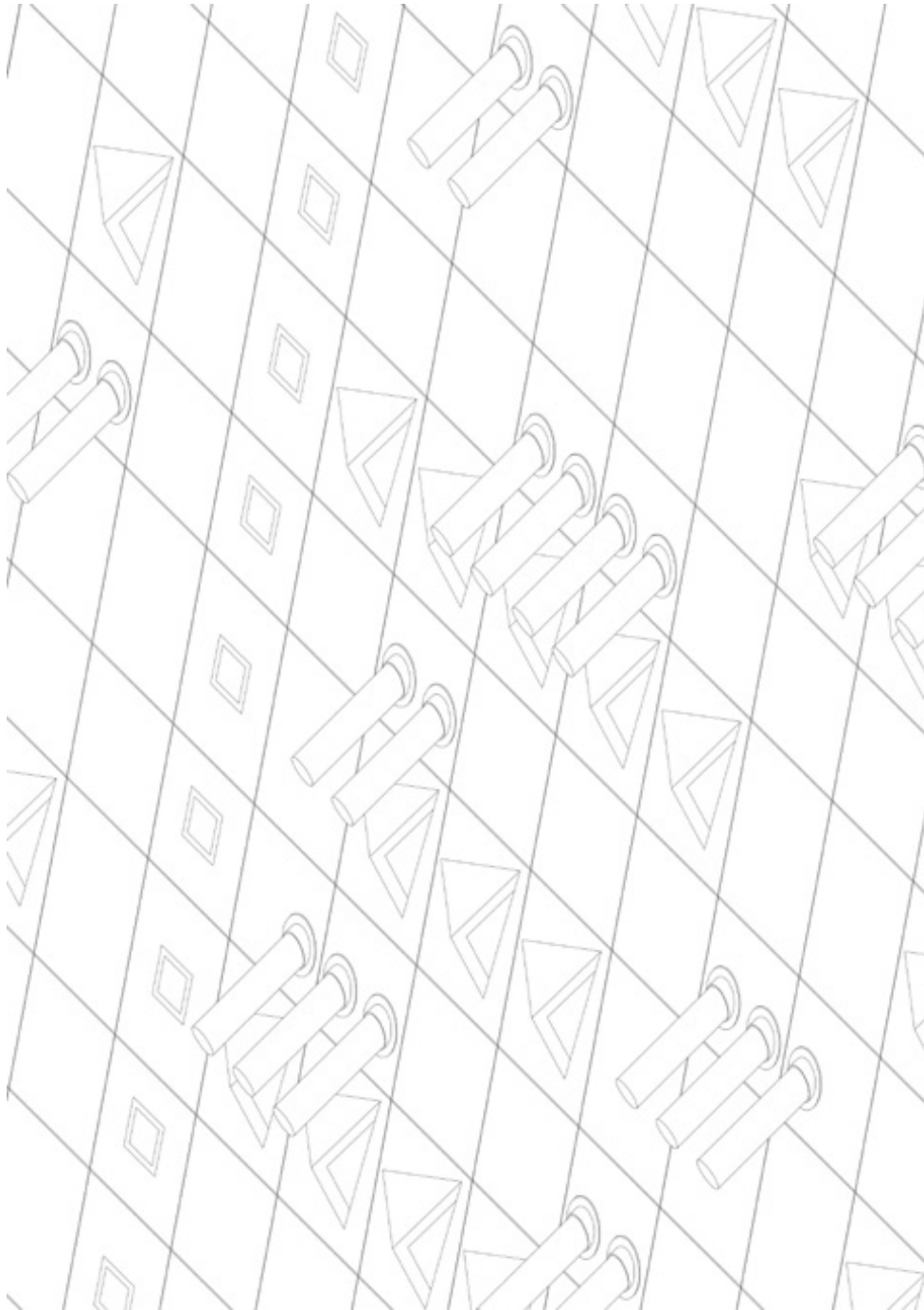
The original state of the building was one shut off from external influences and with its own floors isolated from each other. The proposal opens up the building by hanging the existing panels and connecting and combining the lower technical floors with the higher ones, in an ambition to bring as much natural ventilation and light into the building as possible - an inversion of the conceptual and spatial situation.

Author: Igor Machata



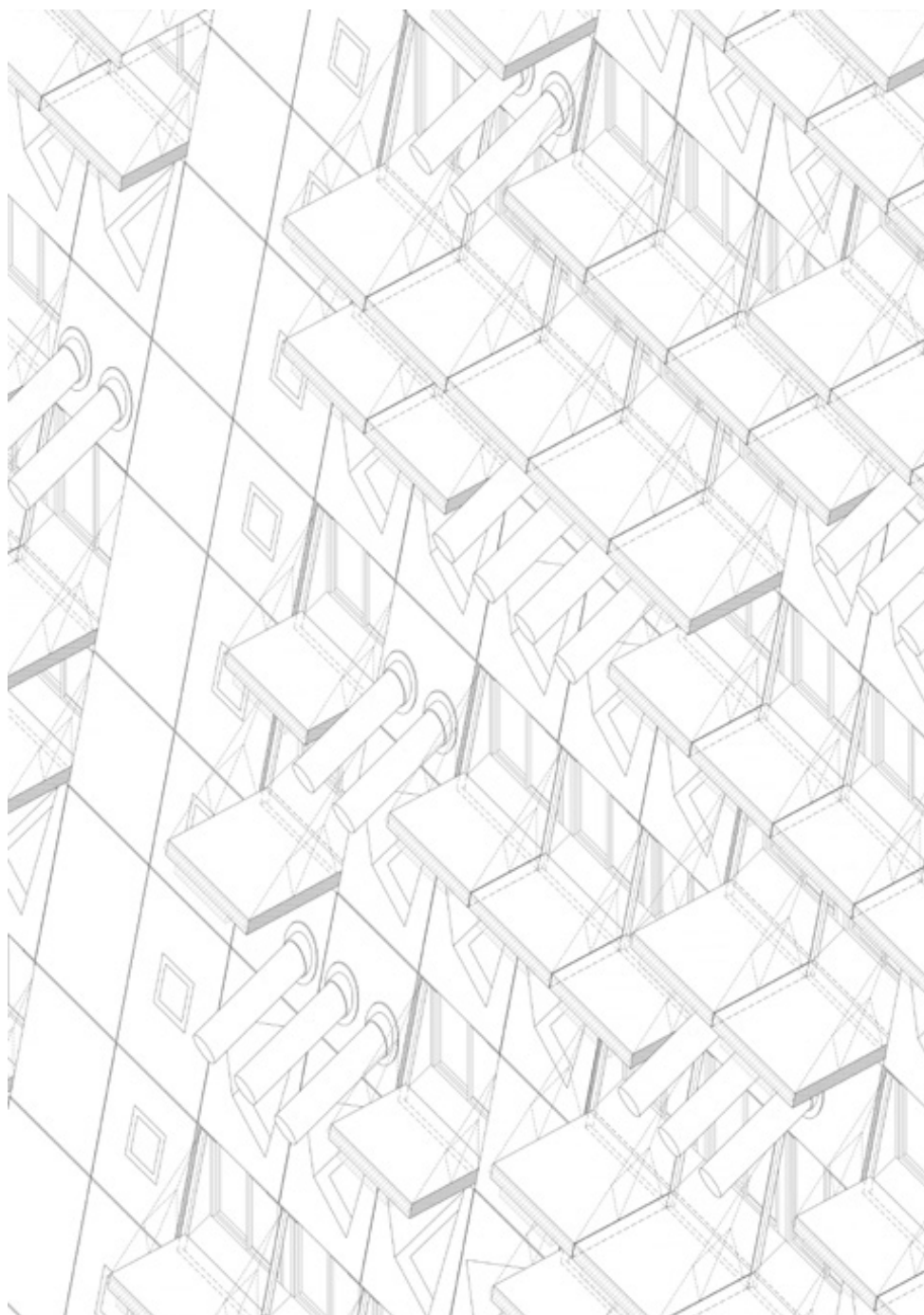
The opening of the building through the rotation and hanging of existing panels, and the installation of new façade and window frames, follows the systematic principle of the original building, developing a formal language or expanding its vocabulary of façade elements.

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Axonometry of the original/current state, view of the facade.
Concept of enclosure of the building and façade regarding
its original function. Representation of the interior functions
through the elements of the façade panels.

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Axonometry of the proposed state, view of the facade.
Openness of the building after transformation due to change
of function, using existing façade elements and developing
the original system language of the façade panels.

Author: Igor Machata

idea. The new façade frames can be interpreted as developing and expanding the formal vocabulary and language. The new function requires a new solution for the façade, which is achieved through development of the panels that represent the program of the building. The proposal of bplus.xyz aims to understand the original context and intentions of the project and to turn its situation around. What was ideologically and physically closed has become irrelevant and obsolete. Openness and transparency transform the original ideas and create new meanings and relevance for the building in contemporary reality. The focus of the design is not on protecting the external appearance, the image, or the apparent materiality of the building. However, the latter is still present through the use of the original panels, thus the design could be considered reversible to some extent. Mainly, the emphasis lies on understanding, preserving and developing the principle of the building, its architectural approach, which lies precisely in the aforementioned complex relationship between the building programme, its elaboration into a spatial layout and the resulting form, realised through specific technological and construction procedures.

Every Building Should Be a Monument

The need to protect is current, valued and urgent. However, it should not place the past above the needs of the present. Hence, the title of this section of the text intends to point more to the feature of preservation that lies in the opportunity to examine the objects of its protection, their evaluation and formulation of ways of their reuse and transformation. In the context of the present time, as a climatic and cultural crisis, considering that existing buildings are now being demolished after less than 30 years of use, we should perhaps, from a purely pragmatic point of view, treat every building as a monument.

The thesis of the Anthropocene from the beginning of the millennium suggests that we have left for the stable and for the humankind prosperous geological epoch, the Holocene, and moved into a new one. One where humans are defined as geological force. "...The processes that today inundate the Earth with an ever-increasing number of technically produced objects have gained dynamics of

their own, whose consequences are comparable to those of the biosphere, the atmosphere and the hydrosphere. This "technosphere" can be viewed as a new emerging sphere within the Earth system whose power is comparable to that which the agrarian world attributed to nature and is equally resistant to attempts at rational control. Its total mass, consisting of everything – from buildings to roads, cables, transistors, ballpoint pens and rubber bands – is today estimated at 30 trillion metric tons, equivalent to about 50 kilograms per square meter of the Earth's surface and more than five times the total terrestrial biomass. The Earth of the Anthropocene will be fundamentally different from that of the Holocene, which witnessed the birth of human civilization..."⁴⁵ Hans Joachim Schellnhuber describes this moment as the so-called Second Copernican Revolution, comparing the discovery that the Earth is not the centre of the Solar System with the situation we are in now.⁴⁶ Then, humanity had to rethink the relationship between the Earth and the other planets; at the present time, humanity must re-evaluate the relationship between itself and planet Earth. The cycle of demolition and new construction is the approach of the Holocene; today we live in the Anthropocene, a time with different conditions and starting points. Such a change of perspective trivializes our persistent approach and creates a space for reflection and rethinking.

The approach towards preservation of the post-war modernist architectural heritage presented in this study aligns with the earlier-mentioned concept of experimental preservation as articulated by Jorge Otero-Pailos. Such a framework critically reflects on conventional preservation practices, advocating for an integration of contemporary needs with the historical and artistic value of architectural works. The Mäusebunker case study suggests this paradigm shift has started to be implemented in an institutionalised way, and demonstrates how innovative preservation strategies, or strategies on the spectrum between preservation and new architecture, that were developed through collaborative strategies can ensure that architectural heritage continues to serve societal purposes while maintaining its historical and artistic significance.

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