KHARKIV

PING PONG DIALOGUE

VIENNA

In many European cities today, there is a spatial and social disparity between living and working conditions. Some of this can be compensated for by social transfer payments and social welfare. However, the challenge of cities of the future is to reinvent proactive neighbourhoods, diverse circular economies, new alternatives of co-production and sharing, and to build the participation of the entire population for a productive city. Kharkiv and Vienna, two cities that at first glance have little in common, have collaborated on the occasion of the Kyiv Biennale 2023 in a pan-European setting on the topic of a productive city. While in Vienna the departure from sectoral, hermetic production structures towards a holistic ‘productive city’ is being rehearsed, the situation in Kharkiv is different. Despite the conditions of war, people in Ukraine are keeping life in cities active and productive. While it may be too early to speculate about the time after the war, it is not too early to think about a common and European transformation of the city as a living space. How can the cities of the future function from a pan-European perspective?

KHARKIV

PING-PONG DIALOGUE

2023-2025

VIENNA

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PRODUCTIVE CITY: A ‘PING-PONG’ DIALOGUE BETWEEN KHARKIV AND VIENNA

As part of the Kyiv Biennial Vienna 2023, architects from Kharkiv and Vienna began a professional exchange to learn more about each other’s living environments in a series of online meetings. In five sessions of ‘ping-pong style’ dialogue, participants shared, compared, and analysed their experiences of urban life and its architectural implications.

The dialogue continued in 2024, forming an idealistic community of architects from both cities. Together, we exchanged ideas on relevant topics regarding the future of urban areas. We embarked on a search for a counter-model to the fragmenting urban society, following a thematically charged program with changing guests.

With the support of the Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky Project Scholarship, this work can now be presented as a report. The concrete experiences with our familiar cities serve as the material for analysis and insight. We are convinced that, despite the dramatic differences in daily life for citizens of both cities, there are common points of approach and perspectives for future development. This is what we aim to explore in the dialogue. The wartime realities in Kharkiv, which leave deep cuts in the functioning of the city but also reveal new productive forces, stand in contrast to the burning issues of social, climatic, and ecological concerns in Vienna. By studying and comparing the reality in which each society functions, we aim to draw common lessons and conclusions and work out ways to move forward in further development of each city.

Johannes Zeininger
architect in Vienna and board member of IG Architektur

(2) Meeting of the ‘Ping-pong Dialogue’ Viennese team at the Kyiv Biennial in Augarten, Vienna, October 2023.

(1) The Viennese ping-pong table at the Kyiv Biennial in autumn 2023.

(3) The Kharkiv ping-pong table at Kharkiv Media Hub in autumn 2023.

This dialogue, initially purely professional, developed into friendly and sincere communication, especially after a week-long meeting of both teams in Vienna. We are sure that these meetings need to continue in Kharkiv. There are a lot of societal and space-related challenges the city is facing and our colleagues from IG Architektur may help us find the solutions. Creating a permanent international team to work on the issues of both cities jointly would be great, although this may need to wait until Ukraine is victorious in the war.

Olha Kleitman
co-founder and lead architect of ‘SBM Studio’ in Kharkiv, head of the NGO ‘Through The War’, member of the Union of Architects of Ukraine

THE KYIV BIENNIAL 2023 IN THE EUROPEAN DIASPORA

The Kyiv Biennial is an international contemporary art biennial that takes place in Kyiv once every two years. Its first edition in 2015, named The School of Kyiv (which also took place in Vienna in 2016), emerged from the Maidan Revolution. Self-organised by the Ukrainian civil society with the help of an international network of art-related institutions, it was initiated and led by curators Hedwig Saxenhuber and Georg Schöllhammer, in collaboration with the The Visual Culture Research Centre in Kyiv. The Biennial served as a forum to reflect on an alternative history of Ukraine, focused on the liberation from any form of oppression and the empowerment of social movements. Designed as 'Learning how to Maidan', it shaped the ethos of all subsequent editions of the Biennial, inviting artists to connect the third space of art with prefigurative politics aimed at achieving a socially, politically, and ecologically just society.

Given the brutal russian invasion of Ukraine, the possibility of a large-scale biennial project in Kyiv seemed highly uncertain, if not impossible. Rather than giving up the project and submitting to the logic of war that attacks all things civil, the Biennial turned back to its founding idea of being multi-centric and mobilised cultural institutions in Europe to host the 2023 edition in a connected, solidaristic European format.

The key chapter of the Kyiv Biennial 2023 – the central exhibition – took place between October and December 2023 in Vienna, with the main exhibition at the former Augarten Contemporary and satellite exhibitions at other independent cultural spaces around the city.

In a sense, serving as the proscenium and the opening of this art exhibition, a series of online meetings took place. The intention was to connect the harsh realities of war and the destruction of urban structures with the imagination of a possible future scenario. At the suggestion of the curators and on the initiative of IG Architektur, a group of renowned Viennese architects worked with colleagues from Kharkiv over the course of the Biennial (and beyond) in a virtual exchange, bouncing ideas back and forth, like across an imaginary ping-pong table, developing concepts for the city of Kharkiv.

Beyond the prevailing fantasies of international investor-driven architecture, which had already begun segmenting the reconstruction areas after an indefinite end to the war, based solely on the economic feasibility, this space focused on developing ideas for European border cities. These ideas were dedicated to economic and social, as well as urban and spatial planning guidelines for a sustainable city, as envisioned for Vienna.

The conditions were diametrically opposed: Vienna, the old Habsburg metropolis, essentially completed by 1930, has a very different spatial concept compared to Kharkiv. In the early 1930s, after moving away from constructivist modernism, an understanding of the city emerged in Kharkiv that would shape urbanism for decades. The guiding idea was that urban planning should shape society. Spaces were to be created for the celebration and glorification of 'New Life', reinforcing the unity of the people and the party. The city was intended to serve as a representation of collective public spaces that would communicate the social order and political hierarchy clearly. Architecture was seen as a symbolic act, a monumental sculpture demonstrating future collective ways of living. Public spaces, like squares and streets, were necessary for the massive public demonstrations that legitimised the party's rule.

Even after the end of the Stalinist cult in 1956, the monumental gesture was dialled back, but the idea of creating a political centre through urban planning remained dominant until the end of the Soviet Union. The shaping of urban space could occur without regard to property ownership. The laws of capitalist land economics were suspended.

Public space became a deliberately constructed configuration, which sometimes involved brutal alterations and even demolitions of entire neighbourhoods. This is where the debate between Vienna and Kharkiv found its footing during the Biennial.

This project was seen as one of the central projects by the Biennial: art can always open a third space of imagination, radicalising the horrors and dystopias of war in a subjective form, yet it can also create visual horizons of hope. It can shift the mental horizon away from the apparent constraints and real horrors of everyday life. Urban planning and architecture, however, affect the real lives of people. How and whether a city addresses these concerns is key to the future of an emancipatory European framework for our coexistence.

Kharkiv can serve as a model for this. It is still exposed to rockets, shells, bombs, and drone attacks on a daily basis. It is not certain that this capital of constructivism and modernism, this great and historically rich metropolis of architecture, can ultimately remain democratic and European. The fact that this project is still alive strengthens our hope.

Georg Schöllhammer
editor, author and curator in Vienna

A WELCOME BREAK

A call from the Biennial organisers reached us in Kharkiv in our volunteer headquarters during one of the many mass rocket attacks.

The suggestion to have a series of meetings with Austrian architects and to discuss the future of Vienna and Kharkiv was an unexpected one. Looking back, however, I can say that we are truly happy to have had the opportunity to get distracted from the horrors of the present, the exhausting thoughts of what comes next and the dread of the unknown. We were able to dream, build models of Kharkiv in the future and compare them with Vienna. What was especially inspiring is that we found like-minded people in the spheres of architecture and city planning in the IG Architektur group. There were heated discussions as well. We invited experts from related spheres: constructors, economists, developers, experts in transportation and education. The meetings were dynamic. We joked a lot, despite the difficulties of translation. It was difficult to prepare for these meetings because the archives were not working and access to electronic resources with the general plan of the city was also blocked because of safety concerns during the martial law period.

We started from the history of our cities, especially by studying the periods of their growth. Then we took turns making reports about different aspects of city life. Initially we felt that the Austrian architects did not realise the full potential of our city, located so close to the enemy border, but with time they saw that this dynamic student city with 1.5 million inhabitants and great ambitions for the future is worth investing in. We also felt the Austrian influence: the comfort Vienna offers to its residents and the multitude of measures to make the city even better were definitely impressive to learn about. The present-day people-friendly reality contrasted with our cliché perception of Vienna as a rigidly cold capital of an old empire.

The members of our international team interacted very well with each other; we managed to create synergy and mutual understanding. It was quite unlike several similar projects attempted during the war. For example, a project in which Mr. Foster's team was involved seemed to be lacking in such synergy. When we tried to tell them about the peculiarities of Kharkiv, its climate and overly dense development issues, they offered standard solutions for European countries with a milder and more humid climate and a very different structure of city development.

Despite all the difficulties, meetings with IG Architektur inspired us during the most horrific full-scale war of this century.

Olha Kleitman
co-founder and lead architect of 'SBM Studio' in Kharkiv, head of the NGO 'Through The War', member of the Union of Architects of Ukraine

THE BREATHING OF CITIES

The dialogue on the development history of Kharkiv and Vienna leads to a specific consideration of the life cycle of cities. Based on the understanding of the city as an organism, processes observed in urban development are similar to the respiration of living beings. However, from the perspective of human life, the time horizon of cities, from their foundation to their dissolution or extinction, is many times longer and may seem ‘eternal’ as a metaphor in some places. The Roman poet Virgil already called Rome the ‘Eternal City’ and raved about its never-ending nature.

Since the emergence of modern cities in the course of industrialisation, growth has been the challenge and driving force behind urban development and the urban population. Economic decline and emigration, on the other hand, were and are triggers of shrinking processes.

Vienna, with the collapse of the Danube Monarchy, experienced an enormous and long-lasting process of shrinkage. The population fell from 2.2 million in 1916 to less than 1.5 million in 1988, thus returning to the population figures of 1890. In the meantime, the population has risen again: to over 2.0 million in 2024.

Massive destruction during the Second World War, the decades-long global political peripheral location on the ‘Iron Curtain’ as well as internal processes caused by migration to the surrounding areas and a striking birth deficit were the main causes for the shrinkage. Even a campaign for ‘guest workers’ from the Balkans and Turkey was unable to reverse the trend. It was not until the opening of the borders to the former Eastern Bloc countries, the collapse of Yugoslavia and the influx from other countries that a dynamic reversal of the trend took place. In the meantime, the city has taken a deep breath again and the chest of the city’s body aches from the internal pressure of its lungs. Finding relief for this is one of the most urgent goals of urban development, and urban policy is in the process of finding solutions.

The state of swelling and growing is felt in all areas of daily life. In the last 40 years, almost half a million people have moved into the city, significantly more than the population of Austria’s second largest city. Graz currently has a population of around 340,000. The consequences in the context of the EU merger are an economic boom, general statistical prosperity, the problematic densification of available space and socio-cultural friction between ethnically differentiated groups. The term ‘melting pot’ is back in use, as it was in Vienna around 1900.

Kharkiv is the second largest city in Ukraine with a population that grew steadily to 1.6 million by 1989. Due to its border location in the north-east of the country and russia`s brutal war on Ukraine (Russia attempted to occupy the city by force on several occasions without success), the population is believed to have been reduced by more than half a million people, most of whom left to avoid the constant shelling. On the other hand, the city absorbed large population groups from the surrounding rural areas as well as internally displaced persons, who were able to move into the existing urban structures.

A big city exhales. An unstable shrinking process can be observed in the city, which is characterised by the intensity of the fighting. The city, internationally regarded as a modern industrial and scientific metropolis, is confronted with a growing number of destroyed buildings, deaths and injuries. Its infrastructure is constantly being targeted and bombed. The energy supply, a vital nerve of Ukrainian cities, is severely damaged. The operation of the 42 universities and colleges in Kharkiv alone, which used to attract students from all over Ukraine and from abroad (including from russia) and made the metropolis a young and vibrant city, had to be severely restricted. In this situation, it is remarkable that Kharkiv simultaneously experienced an unprecedented mobilisation of civil society.

Dealing with shrinkage presents affected cities with new and unfamiliar challenges.

In Kharkiv, this happened unexpectedly as a result of the russian invasion to an extent that cannot yet be clearly assessed. Until now, the task of urban development policy has been to shape growth processes in a functional, socially acceptable and increasingly environmentally friendly way. As a result, there are hardly any tried-and-tested political strategies or proven political instruments for the future-oriented management of shrinking processes. This was also a subject of the debate between Kharkiv and Vienna: How long does it take for a lack of growth and ongoing shrinkage to be perceived as a long-term problem in the development of a city and how can a positive perspective be developed from this?

Saltivka – what now?

In 2024, the Norman Foster Foundation launched a global open architecture competition for the renovation and repair of prefabricated buildings in Ukraine. Refurbishment proposals were sought for the huge residential district of Saltivka in the north-east of Kharkiv, which was hit hard by russian attacks in 2022. They are also intended to serve as prototype solutions for the reconstruction and sustainable renovation of these concrete panel buildings from the Soviet era.

International aid in cooperation with a country in need of aid is a standard case when it comes to reconstruction after disasters. We decided to take part as a transnational team. However, our familiarisation with the task raised doubts about the assignment. The restoration and improvement of the dilapidated building structure of post-Soviet, partially abandoned prefabricated buildings, and the questionable urban typology of Saltivka require a more fundamental approach to the future development of Kharkiv. The shrinking process of the endangered city, the situation of the prefabricated housing belt around the city centre and the turn towards a sustainable living environment encouraged us to adopt a holistic view of the urban organism. Statistical data and observations showed that before the war, massive construction activity took place in the central city area, triggered by a real estate boom. Since the outbreak of the war, enormous areas in the central city are now empty. From our point of view, Kharkiv primarily needs an update of its spatial resources and an economic management programme for the existing stock that is realistically geared to future requirements. We declined to participate because of the strict one-sided requirements, and the results that were published later on reinforced our point of view.

Saltivka is a synonym for the exhalation of a city.

Under the requirements of withdrawal and deconstruction, areas such as Saltivka should be seen and developed as optional areas for future inhalation. This should not leave us out of breath. At the same time, core cities must be consolidated and brought closer to the urban concept of short distances and sustainable urbanity in order to increase the quality of life of the residents. This goes hand in hand with the transformation of the industrial age and its strict separation of functions.

Johannes Zeininger
architect in Vienna and board member of IG Architektur

KHARKIV

HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

VIENNA

1. KHARKIV, THE METROPOLIS OF MODERNITY

Kharkiv is a symbol of resilience and transformation in the face of adversity. As of late, however, Kharkiv has been reshaping its traditional roles, accepting new challenges and redefining its identity amongst the difficulties of modern-day Ukraine. War has brought about the changes not only to the composition of the population and its size, but also to the citizens' cultural, national and urbanistic perception of their future in this place. It needs to be noted that Kharkiv went through fundamental changes after the beginning of the russian invasion. Kharkiv of today is completely different from what it used to be.

Before the full-scale invasion, the city mostly existed as a student, scientific and industrial centre, attracting huge numbers of young people from all over the country. They came to Kharkiv to gain knowledge, for cultural growth and career building. Many millions of people have gone through the melting pot of this city, gaining something and leaving their own cultural footprint on it – something that is impossible not to notice when you are here. The current war turned a new page in Kharkiv history. This can be felt in the very atmosphere of this million-strong city. Although the population numbers today look similar to pre-war numbers, many changes occurred. The people who left Kharkiv were replaced with refugees from occupied territories of Ukraine, mostly from the east.

When the great war began, a significant part of the population left the city. Kharkiv was then seen in a very unusual light: its almost empty and eerily silent (but for distant explosions) streets resembled those of a ghost city.

From the perspective of an ordinary city dweller, a disproportion between the people in personal vehicles and pedestrians became very apparent. The stagnation of the public transport system – caused by being 'free' during the war and mid-level corruption – has added to the rising popularity of cars. Given the increased possibility of war-related emergencies, people may also feel more comfortable in their own vehicle than in a crowded bus, tram or trolleybus.

In terms of cultural and worldview paradigm, the fact that Kharkiv people are rediscovering their national roots and identity can be seen with the naked eye. More people in this mostly russian-speaking city started speaking Ukrainian. Despite the war, there are many lectures, exhibitions, movie viewings, and theatrical performances dedicated to Ukraine, Ukrainian culture and history. Kharkiv people started looking for moral support in the seemingly archaic past. When this past interacts with modern people, however, it brings about a huge amount of energy, prompting changes in ourselves and in Kharkiv on the whole.

Modern-day Kharkiv is still a melting pot of the nation, although now the values have shifted. Rather than being a russian-speaking business hub, it has acquired a distinct image of a European frontier city. Its status has changed from a centre of science and industry to that of a warrior-city, a military hub close to the frontline. In order to survive, Kharkiv needs to have a tight-knit community of people who are in love with this city, who are ready to defend it and solve its many problems. Luckily, this is the case.

Andriy Hirnyak
architect, currently based in Lviv

(4-5) Volunteers collect the surviving bricks of the damaged building of the Biotechnology University in Kharkiv, December 2024

'THE CITY'S RESIDENTS HAVE STARTED SEEKING MORAL SUPPORT IN WHAT MIGHT SEEM LIKE AN ARCHAIC PAST, WHICH, WHEN INTERACTING WITH US IN THE PRESENT, RELEASES A GREAT DEAL OF ENERGY THAT PROMPTS CHANGE BOTH IN OURSELVES AND IN KHARKIV AS A WHOLE.'

(6) Aerial photography of Kharkiv

2. THE FORMING OF A METROPOLIS

Urban development is more than just planning. The process of becoming a city is subject to a long chain of influences that encompass all aspects of our existence. It's an approach.

1. Geographical Advantages, Faith, Trade, Plagues, and Devastations

The Roman city of Vindobona was built on a protected alluvial cone near the Nussdorf Ford. At the convenient passage between the Alps and the Carpathians, ancient trade routes intersected: from the Baltic Sea to the Adriatic and from Western Europe to the Black Sea. The Limes formed a northern border, and during the Frankish era, the transfer axis shifted 90°, turning the city's focus to the peoples of the East.

Vienna's urban development began with its elevation to the Babenberg residence. The medieval cityscape was shaped by strict regulations on market squares, fortifications, sanitary facilities, and more. The construction of the Hofburg, the founding of the university in 1365, and the settlement of monasteries promoted international connections, leading to growth spurts. Under the Habsburgs, Vienna became a political and cultural centre for 700 years. City, customs, and staple rights brought prosperity, reflected in the magnificent Renaissance facades. The establishment of the first permanent Danube bridge in the 15th century marked the beginning of the city's northern expansion.

The destruction caused by the war in 1683 led to a radical urban transformation. In the euphoric aftermath of victory, the aristocracy commissioned palatial complexes and gardens, which master builders skilfully integrated into Vienna's terraced topography, achieving grand architectural effects. With representative city palaces, the baroque imperial capital catapulted itself to the forefront of European urban architecture. Church construction reached its peak with the Karlskirche. The bourgeoisie also displayed its self-confidence, merging plots of land. Baroque bourgeois houses then dominated the cityscape. The metaphor of 'Vienna as a pearl lying in the shell between the Vienna Woods and Marchfeld' was artistically immortalised by Canaletto and Salomon Kleiner.

(7) Adolf Loos, plan for an extension and regulation of the inner city of Vienna

'THE VISION OF THE METROPOLIS WAS REALISED WITH THE END OF THE HABSBURG EMPIRE AND IS NOW ONE OF THE REASONS FOR THE HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE.'

2. Liberalism vs. Militarism

The city continued to grow. The new Linienwall (line wall) transformed into a customs border, from which the inns in the suburbs and the excursion and summer retreat destinations in the Vienna Woods benefited. To strengthen the industry, suburban neighbourhoods were systematically built, where thousands of home workers laboured in inhuman conditions. The scepticism towards technology by the imperial dynasty, such as their steam engine bans or their dismissive attitude towards the construction of the Wiener Neustädter Canal, proved to be anachronistic. The newly built circular road with military barracks quickly turned out to be a poor urban planning decision. However, some hesitations saved the city from misdevelopments that often occurred elsewhere. The loss of military function of the bastions created space for the construction of the 'Ringstraße' (Ring Road). The result of the first internationally advertised urban planning competition triggered the largest construction boom in the city's history. The population, a linguistic melting pot, tripled, and the urban area expanded fivefold. The city, with a population of two million by then, was stimulated by capital – largely provided by Jewish industrialists – which fuelled its cultural and intellectual life. However, usury, rentierism and mass housing led to the impoverishment of large sections of the population. The liberal credo of a capitalised urban transformation led to the destruction of three-quarters of the housing stock between 1840 and 1900. The densely built tenement neighbourhoods had the following quality: general building lines and regulatory plans were oriented towards Otto Wagner's rationalist vision of a grid-based development with clearly defined squares.

The concept of the 'Viennese Block', developed by Ludwig Förster and Theophil Hansen, with representative, harmonised facades, became the model for the large suburban neighbourhoods. Modernisation included department stores, museums, schools, churches, district offices, and much more. The surrounding geology provided building materials that shaped the cityscape: Leitha limestone, gravel, and brick.


(8) New Danube with Danube Island, Vienna

3. Infrastructure, River Reconfiguration, and Housing Policy as City Drivers

Infrastructure and public transport were modernised later than in other places, mostly as a reaction to hygienic or socio-spatial issues. Public space was radically transformed. Otto Wagner created a brilliant symbiosis of art and technology with the 'Stadtbahn' (city railway). However, large-scale railway and track facilities blocked local neighbourhood development. As compensation for the tremendous growth, the forest and meadow belt established a landscape ring around the city, which still remains effective today. With the regulation of the Danube in 1873, the urban area expanded over the Danube, but it hardly developed any urban qualities there. The contemporaneous World Expo was, due to a cholera outbreak and a stock market crash, a flop and failed to provide the expected city expansion impulses, except for a major hotel construction boom. It wasn't until a century later that the forward-looking flood protection project of Donauinsel (Danube Island) and Neue Donau (New Danube) created a new 21 km long recreational axis in the heart of the city. A final major impulse came during the interwar period with the housing projects of 'Red Vienna', which countered the housing shortage with large-scale courtyards and socio-cultural accompanying facilities. As a counter-model to suburban development, the tax-funded complexes are now regarded as urban planning icons. They made the city the largest municipal housing owner in Europe. The vision of the metropolis was realised with the end of the Habsburg Empire and is now one of the reasons for the high quality of life. For future challenges, historical concepts such as 'gentle urban renewal' and new satellite city models fall short. It is now necessary to address essential issues concerning inner densification, as well as the handling of the city boundary and its architectural and infrastructural integration with the surrounding areas.

Franz Denk
architect in Vienna

3. KHARKIV: MILESTONES OF CITY DEVELOPMENT

Archaeological excavations within Kharkiv boundaries prove that there was a settlement here during the Bronze Age, around 2000 B.C. There are findings from Scythian and Sarmatian periods, Early Slavic and Slavic settlements from the Knyaz era ('Knyaz' was the name given to rulers of Slavic states). All of these cultures chose high hills above river deltas as comfortable and safe places for their settlements. However, warrior cultures fought and devoured one another, so in 12-17th centuries, the present-day territory of Kharkiv was a part of the so-called Wild Steppe, first inhabited by Cumans and then by the Tatars. This was followed by a period when this area was not governed by anyone, nor was there any permanent population here. In 1654, a company of Ukrainian Cossacks under the command of Ivan Karkach arrived and settled in the vicinity of an old fortress (in the place which is now the central part of Kharkiv).

Rapid development of Kharkiv, like that of many other European cities, was primarily connected with the Industrial Revolution. However, historical upheavals of that period influenced the forming of the city structure and its population. In the general plan of the city from 1896 (roughly the beginning of the industrial revolution in Ukraine), the authors showed the current situation and tried to forecast the development of the city and growth of the population for the next 20 years. However, instead of the forecasted 20 thousand added citizens, the growth was 115 thousand. The city grew further from 173 thousand in 1897 to 288 thousand in 1917.

The beginning of large-scale development of Kharkiv was the construction of the train factory and the expansion of the railway hub, which connected the railways from all directions. Brick factories and a plant producing ceramic items, which belonged to baron Bergenheim, were among other big enterprises of that period.

A deficit of skilled workers for new production facilities prompted the creation of colleges and universities. Red brick became the main building material of the time, while ceramic tiles from Bergenheim's plant were used for interior work. The style of industrial buildings was also used in other projects, like the building of the Kharkiv Technology Institute (now Kharkiv Polytechnic University).

Starting from 1903, Kharkiv architects were actively involved in casting monolith reinforced concrete and experimenting with it. In 1910, public buildings with monolith reinforced concrete carcass begin appearing (with free interior planning). From this moment on and until the time of the pre-WW2 modernism, Kharkiv industrial buildings were mostly built within this carcass monolith system.

The city map of 1924 showed that Kharkiv had not been developed after 1916 (because of harsh historical upheavals, namely the violent suppression of Ukrainian independence by the 'soviets').

The next stage was characterised by the development of modernism (between WW1 and WW2). Construction of Derzhprom (the State Industry Building) in 1925-28 was the triumph of modernism

(9) Masterplan of Kharkiv in 1924

'THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AND HISTORICAL UPHEAVALS WERE THE TWO FACTORS THAT HAD THE BIGGEST INFLUENCE ON THE GROWTH OF THE POPULATION AND FORMING THE STRUCTURE OF THE CITY.'

(10) Fragment of the planning of the 601st microdistrict of Saltivka, Oleksiivka development

in Kharkiv. Derzhprom is an architectural landmark of world significance. At the time, it featured the most advanced stylistic solutions, technology and equipment. Such a gigantic monolith reinforced concrete structure appeared in Kharkiv as a result of extensive research and experiments that had been conducted since the beginning of the 20th century. New manufacturing facilities developed in the place of pre-existing facilities of the period before the Soviet revolution of 1917. Soon after, new industrial projects in the constructivism style began appearing.

The project of the 'New Kharkiv' district was a very ambitious one (a district designed for the workers of the Kharkiv Tractor Plant). It became one of the few implemented (albeit partially – only four blocks were built) projects of the 'ideal city'. Many solutions were very advanced at the time and attempted to create the conditions for 'an ideal life of an ideal factory worker'. Later, architect Viktor Trotsenko offered his vision of 'ideal plant worker's accommodation', which he fused with elements of Ukrainian modernism. These parts of the district still exist.

The general plan of 1932 shows that new industrial areas with workers' districts were included in the city area. Although the population grew from 288 thousand to 860 thousand in the next 20 years, the city didn't change much structurally. One of the reasons was that the residential capacity of the central part of the city was increased by adding 2-3 floors to many buildings. Additionally, many of the newcomers were villagers trying to escape from the soviet government-inflicted famine (Holodomor of 1932-1933). The authorities did not seem to care much for this category and no large-scale housing projects catered for these people.

Former cemeteries became building sites. Some parts were turned into parks, while others became sporting facilities, like 'Metalist' stadium with a velodrome and an athletics track inside it.

During the German occupation of the city during WW2, the population of Kharkiv was greatly reduced (to 192 thousand) and grew slowly in the post-war years (to 672 thousand at the end of this period). Post-war construction was not massive. New blocks appeared only along the biggest new avenue (currently Nauky avenue).

Massive construction and the expansion of the city started later (in the 60s), according to the new general plan, developed by the Kharkiv project bureau 'Kharkivproject'. A new residential district 'Novi Budynky' ('New Houses') was built. It was the beginning of connecting Kharkiv's historical centre with the workers' district 'New Kharkiv'.

Another district constructed at that time was Pavlovo Polye. It featured more comfortable accommodation for workers from project institutes and intelligentsia. Starting from post-war period and until this day, the main features constructed were multi-story buildings.

The next stage of development (70s and 80s) featured building a gigantic residential district of Saltivka (the biggest residential district of the former USSR). In the course of constructing Saltivka, the riverbed of Kharkiv river was widened and changed. A huge amount of sand from the old riverbed was used to build both Saltivka and Oleksiivka. The area behind 'Kharkiv Tractor Plant' district also saw new construction: mini-districts Obrij, Skhidniy, Sonyachniy appeared there. This is the period when the city population began to expand rapidly.

In the course of the last 20-30 years new residential buildings appeared not in newly-built districts, but in already existing districts by increasing the density of existing housing. Unfortunately, some buildings appeared in the green zones, which the general plan foresaw as the areas used solely for recreation.

Kateryna Kublytska
architect, restorer, conservator, based in Kharkiv

Yuliia Skyrta
architect, based in Kharkiv

4. URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN VIENNA IN THE 20TH AND 21ST CENTURIES. STRATEGIES AFTER WARS AND POLITICAL UPHEAVALS

(11) Settlement Wien-West, Vienna

Post-World War I (1921–1933)

After the First World War, Vienna faced a significant housing shortage due to the challenging economic and social circumstances of the time. The city administration developed innovative strategies to address this issue while simultaneously strengthening social structures. Two of the most defining approaches during this era were the garden city model and the 'Red Vienna' model.

The settlement model was based on the principle of small two-storey row houses with self-sustaining gardens, built collectively by the residents through cooperatives. This approach fostered a strong sense of community and neighbourhood cohesion. Land was leased long-term by the city to prevent speculation and trading of housing. Residents collaborated to construct their settlements, contributing valuable personal labour to keep costs low. A key feature of this model was its social component: self-managed cooperatives enabled low-income individuals to live in stable and socially supportive environments with their own resources and shared facilities.

In contrast, the 'Red Vienna' model prioritised the construction of large housing complexes with small rental apartments, financed through a luxury tax. These monumental buildings provided not only housing but also extensive communal facilities such as kindergartens, laundries and spacious courtyards. The Karl-Marx-Hof is the most famous example of this architectural style and symbolises the socio-political ambitions of Vienna's Social Democratic Party. The architecture reflected the aim of offering residents both protection and a sense of grandeur while fostering a vibrant community spirit.

Post-World War II (1945–1955)

After the Second World War, the focus was on rapidly restoring and repairing buildings. The city provided financial support for reconstruction and ensured that rents remained low. These measures allowed the population to remain in their traditional neighbourhoods and stabilise within the redesigned urban structure. Since approximately 90% of the population lived in rental apartments, maintaining and preserving these housing stocks was of paramount importance.

The Era of the Iron Curtain (1955–1989)
Phase I (1955–1965):

During the Cold War and the Iron Curtain era, Vienna's proximity to the border and resulting political isolation reduced its international significance. Urban planning responded to this situation with an emphasis on affordable yet liveable housing projects. Housing developments were often designed as linear low-rise buildings (2 – 4 floors) with generous open green spaces around, evoking the sense of an 'urban landscape'.

Phase II (1965–1989)

In the late 1960s, the concept of high terrace houses emerged, incorporating communal facilities like kindergartens, swimming pools, and recreational spaces within the buildings. These structures were built on the outskirts of the city, offering ample access to common spaces and green areas, thereby ensuring high living standards. Housing construction during this period was primarily carried out by non-profit housing associations supported by municipal housing subsidies, focusing mainly on rental apartments, with significantly fewer privately financed units.

(12) Karl-Marx-Hof, Vienna

Post-Iron Curtain Era (1990–2005)

With the fall of the Iron Curtain and the reunification of Europe, Vienna's role as a Central European city transformed. The city became increasingly attractive to international investors, leading to the creation of so-called «urban islands»—mixed-use complexes combining residential, commercial and retail spaces. High-rise and mixed-use buildings dominated these projects, private investments playing a significant role in their development. At the same time, the demand for exclusive rooftop apartments in central districts led to the first wave of gentrification. The city responded by implementing protective measures for historic buildings and strengthening social housing initiatives.

Post-Financial Crisis (2008–2021)

Following the 2008 financial crisis, Vienna entered the so-called 'concrete gold' phase, marked by speculative investments in real estate that significantly increased housing costs. The city administration implemented further measures to protect historic buildings while promoting urban densification, particularly in the city centre. These measures included adding additional floors to existing buildings and constructing compact, energy-efficient new developments.

The newly developed neighbourhoods, such as 'Seestadt Aspern' and the 'Sonnwendviertel', are examples of modern, sustainable urban development. These districts are largely car-free and offer extensive green spaces in their centre, aiming to ensure a high quality of neighbourhood and communication and promote social diversity.

These neighbourhoods seek to create a sustainable and eco-friendly living environment that includes both subsidised and privately financed housing, with many buildings featuring commercial zones on the ground floor. Moving away from functionally segregated urban areas, the focus has shifted towards overlapping functions to foster vibrant urban life in these new districts.

(13) Alt-Erlaa housing complex, Vienna

Conclusion

Vienna's urban development showcases how the city has consistently adapted its strategies to changing political and economic conditions. From the affordable and community-oriented housing concepts of the interwar and post-war periods to the urban 'islands' of the 1990s and the modern, mixed-use, and sustainable urban neighbourhoods of today, Vienna has prioritised the needs of its residents while maintaining control over urban planning.

Currently, Vienna follows a comprehensive strategy to improve the quality of life in the existing city. This includes numerous greening projects to mitigate summer heat, reorganising public spaces to favour pedestrians and cyclists and reducing dependence on private vehicles. Public transport and alternative mobility options are central to this effort, significantly enhancing the quality of life for city residents.

Vienna's evolving urban planning demonstrates its forward-thinking approach to preserving a liveable, socially equitable, and environmentally friendly urban structure. By combining sustainable planning with social housing initiatives, Vienna remains a role model for successful urban development steered by the City administration, illustrating how historical values and modern demands for urban living can be harmoniously integrated to create a dynamic and vibrant environment for all its residents. Some developments failed or transformations were too slow or too fast. However, despite these universally unavoidable issues, the functioning of the city administration has been an important positive factor. The city authorities are willing to learn. They are capable of putting the interests of the city community first – and acting accordingly.

'VIENNA'S URBAN DEVELOPMENT SHOWCASES HOW THE CITY HAS CONSISTENTLY ADAPTED ITS STRATEGIES TO CHANGING POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS.'

Ralf Bock
architect and author in Vienna

5. KHARKIV IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SPIRITUAL DECOLONISATION OF UKRAINIAN SPACE

Kharkiv is a modern metropolis with deep historical roots, embodying numerous dimensions of authentic Ukrainian identity. Viewing the city from an angel's, unattainable perspective, beyond ordinary perception, vividly reveals the formation of its architectural appearance around the Ukrainian spiritual tradition. Symbolically, the only surviving fragment of the 17th-century Kharkiv Fortress, having endured the global upheavals of the past centuries, is the Cathedral of the Intercession of the Holy Virgin. It was erected immediately after the construction of the medieval fortress by Ukrainian Cossacks on the site of ancient settlements. This Cathedral is a unique monument of Ukrainian architecture from the second half of the 17th century, built by our illustrious ancestors. In honour of their historical significance and contributions to the establishment of Ukrainian statehood – and their essential role in the modern process of state-building – Ukraine annually celebrates Ukrainian Cossacks Day on October 1st, which coincides with the Feast of the Intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The Ukrainian people's sincere commitment to Christian values and their age-old hospitality provided favourable conditions for the fortress-city to become a welcoming home for numerous families of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds. Consequently, the distinctive synergy of natural and man-made elements, as well as the historical legacy in the modern image of our city, is reflected in the temples of various faiths, carefully restored after their near-total destruction by Soviet authorities in the 1930s.

The beginning of russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 was marked by vigorous resistance to occupation and the unification of all sectors of society to defend the Ukrainian people and address critical humanitarian tasks. A significant number of clergymen became military chaplains, who, within various units of Ukraine's Defence Forces, organise and conduct prayers, religious services, blessings, ceremonial and memorial events, and other religious rites aimed at meeting the spiritual and religious needs of servicemen, employees, and their families. They also contribute to the development of personal and collective moral qualities among the personnel, foster tolerance towards people of different world-views and religious beliefs, assist in the rehabilitation of those requiring psychological support, and advise commanders on religious matters.

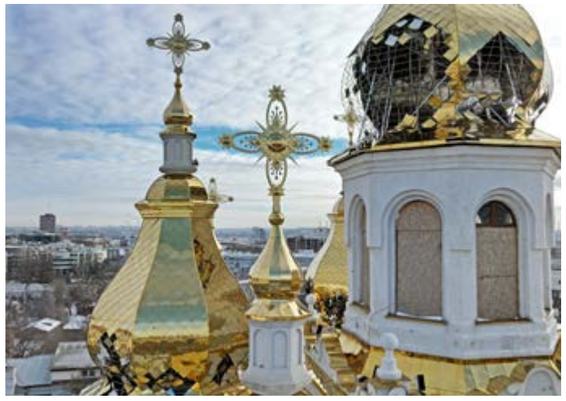
The dynamic growth of religious life among the vast majority of churches and religious organisations is also characterised by the regular provision of humanitarian aid and shelter to those in need, strengthening cooperation with citizens, governmental institutions, and non-governmental organisations. For instance, in the autumn of 2022, my comrades from the Armed Forces of Ukraine and I had the honour to guard and accompany a Ukrainian-Polish humanitarian convoy through the de-occupied territories of the Kharkiv region. This convoy was generously supplied with essentials for war victims by the faithful of the Roman Catholic Church in Ukraine and Poland.

In stark contrast to this, late 20th and early 21st centuries witnessed mass construction of religious buildings affiliated with a religious organisation whose governing centre is located outside Ukraine – in a country officially recognised as an aggressor state by Ukrainian law. These buildings, positioned in the most attractive areas of Kharkiv's public spaces, were intended as 'beacons' of the so-called 'russian world'. This organisation, despite the ongoing bloody war and contrary to Ukrainian law, remains part of the russian Orthodox Church, which blesses weapons and sanctifies occupying forces committing mass atrocities against Ukrainian civilians. It continues the religious annexation of Ukrainian eparchies in the temporarily occupied territories, restrains clergy from following the patriotic aspirations of their congregations to join the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, and persistently spreads imperialist, anti-Ukrainian narratives of the aggressor state. As of April 2025, the aggressor has committed more than 165,000 crimes of aggression and war crimes throughout Ukraine, including the killing or torture of 67 Ukrainian priests, pastors, and monks. More than 640 religious sites – most of them Christian – have been completely destroyed or significantly damaged. Within the first year of missile and artillery strikes, which claimed the lives of countless civilians, predominantly children, women, and the elderly, the evidence repository of armed aggression ('Missile Cemetery') in Kharkiv filled up with fragments of more than 3,000 missiles and large-calibre munitions.

Therefore, not only decommunisation but also the spiritual decolonisation of the Ukrainian space is a long-overdue task. Based on legality and the rule of law, the resilient and indomitable community of Kharkiv has all the objective grounds to lead the way in resolving this issue.

'NOT ONLY DECOMMUNISATION BUT ALSO THE SPIRITUAL DECOLONISATION OF THE UKRAINIAN SPACE IS A LONG-OVERDUE TASK. BASED ON LEGALITY AND THE RULE OF LAW, THE RESILIENT AND INDOMITABLE COMMUNITY OF KHARKIV HAS ALL THE OBJECTIVE GROUNDS TO LEAD THE WAY IN RESOLVING THIS ISSUE.'

(14) Spiritual Centre of Kharkiv



(15) Church of the Holy Myrrh-Bearing Women, desecrated by russian missile strikes, 2024

(16) The view of the historical part of Kharkiv

Vasyl Bilous
aerial criminalist, serviceman in the Armed Forces of Ukraine

KHARKIV

BUILDING CULTURE AND ITS FOUNDATIONS

VIENNA

6. MONUMENT PROTECTION DURING THE WAR

Since 24 February 2022, the whole world has been witnessing the escalation of russia's armed military aggression against Ukraine. All the real estate heritage of our country is under threat of destruction. Since the start of russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the enemy has made no exceptions and has been targeting buildings and structures not only unrelated to military installations, but also historical and cultural monuments, hospitals, churches, and residential buildings.

As of the beginning of 2024, 216 cultural heritage sites had been destroyed or damaged in the Kharkiv region since February 2022 (2 sites were completely destroyed, 206 sites were partially destroyed, and the condition of 8 sites remains unknown).

Today, the list is much longer and continues to grow. In 2024, no funds were allocated from the state budget for their restoration.

In the context of the urgent need to save the immovable cultural heritage, Ukraine has faced a number of challenges that could not have been foreseen in advance, just as it was impossible to predict the brutal bloody war in Europe in the twenty-first century.

The types of destruction experienced by immovable cultural heritage sites, as well as the problems and challenges faced by monument conservationists, are of varying degrees and nature:

- complete physical destruction of monuments;
- partial destruction as a result of a shell hitting the site;
- imperceptible but significant structural damage to the object as a result of blast waves;

(17) Fragments of destroyed monuments

- irreversible loss of authentic materials and parts of monuments;
- additional destruction due to untimely conservation;
- the problem of preserving objects of 'inconvenient' Soviet heritage;
- legal conflicts, the inability to quickly change legislation in times of war.

Among the affected monuments, there are objects that visually have very little damage, and there are those with a percentage of damage exceeding 80 per cent. It is worth noting that the inspection of buildings with 'minor damage' sometimes reveals serious structural disorders, for example, in roof structures (in buildings in the path of the blast wave, the entire roof structure – the rafter system – gets lifted and changes its original position, thus undergoing general deformation).

First of all, the task is to document the condition of the damaged buildings (often by creating a 3D scanner model of the building with the actual condition recorded) and, after examination by qualified specialists, taking into account their decisions, close the building contour as soon as possible, carry out stabilisation measures and preserve it for restoration in the future.

(18) The building of the Faculty of Economics of Kharkiv National University (KNU), 1925, designed by engineer Kushnarev. 3D scan of the building by Emmanuel DurandNational University (KNU), 1925

'IN THE CONTEXT OF THE URGENT NEED TO SAVE THE IMMOVABLE CULTURAL HERITAGE, UKRAINE HAS FACED A NUMBER OF CHALLENGES THAT COULD NOT HAVE BEEN FORESEEN IN ADVANCE.'

At this stage, the imperfection of legislation in this sphere, as well as the low level of involvement and interest of local authorities in the preservation of these objects, and, as a result, the loss of time and deterioration of the object (or even complete destruction) are very noticeable. We must admit that this problem had existed even before the full-scale invasion.

Another important point when dealing with damaged monuments is the coordination of the rubble removal work with restoration specialists and the prevention of removing the elements of destroyed structures to landfills (which, unfortunately, has been observed many times since the beginning of the war). These elements can be used in the future for restoration or become donor material for the restoration of other monuments of the same period.

P.S. Unfortunately, russia's barbaric destruction of the architectural and cultural monuments of our city continues. As this article was being prepared, the russians struck the Derzhprom building (1925-1928), which, apart from being a landmark of Ukrainian architecture and a symbol of the city, is also included in the UNESCO Tentative World Heritage List. October 28th 2024 was not the first time when Derzhprom was damaged and – as it turned out later – not the last one.

Experts documented the damage to Derzhprom for a report to UNESCO, and on 11 December 2024, members of the UNESCO Committee for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict supported the decision to organise a 'special monitoring' mission. Ukraine will be the first country to use this mechanism.

Kateryna Kublytska
architect, restorer, conservator, based in Kharkiv

Yuliia Skyrta
architect, based in Kharkiv

(19) The office building, 1903, by Reutenberg. Photo documentation. Destruction as a result of the russian attack on 31.12.2023

(20) The building of the Faculty of Economics of Kharkiv National University (KNU), 1925. Photo. Destruction as a result of the russian attack in March 2022

7. THE IMPORTANCE OF DEALING WITH EXISTING BUILDINGS: HELMUT RICHTER SCHOOL

The urgent shortage of living space for a dynamically growing urban population has resulted in equally dynamic real estate hype in Vienna since the turn of the millennium. The unrestrained speculative demolition of properly functioning buildings with legally protected low rent levels in order to improve yields by creating more usable space for condominiums, has increasingly required a political response. Amendments to building standards have made ex lege demolition of pre-1945 buildings much more difficult. Monument protection and cityscape protection are additional instruments that can intervene to regulate the city's historical stock.

If we look towards the outskirts, we see a different city. In Europe, urban development, starting with reconstruction after the Second World War, led to a massive expansion of cities as centres of economic growth and prosperity. New construction methods, materials and seemingly unlimited energy fuelled this development, only briefly disrupted by two 'oil shocks'.

Currently, the focus is on strategies for transforming our cities to achieve a balanced CO_2 budget and adapt them to global warming. Key works of this long-lasting 'construction and prosperity phase' are of socio-political and economic significance, the impact of which is only gradually being recognised. As landmarks of a liberal-democratic society that developed after the collapse of authoritarian systems in the 'free world' of Europe, much of this development has been internalised in their structures, spatial sequences and appearance.

(21) School operations ceased in 2017, followed by years of vacancy and vandalism.

'THE FUTURE OF HELMUT RICHTER SCHOOL, A YOUNG ARCHITECTURAL MONUMENT, SHOULD BE SEEN AS A TEST CASE FOR TRANSFORMATION STRATEGIES IN DEALING WITH THE EXISTING CITY.'

(22) Demo Lecture. The potential of the building is explored together.

(23) Completion of Helmut Richter School in 1994 in Vienna as an internationally acclaimed school building of the coming century.

In the 1990s, Vienna was searching for new paths in the field of education. The education of young people was aimed to take place in a future-oriented way, in spaces suitable for the future. As part of the 'School Building Programme 2000', Helmut Richter was commissioned to build a school in Hütteldorf on the western outskirts of Vienna. The building was completed in 1994 and received international acclaim as a flagship for Vienna's progressive approach to school construction. However, the avant-garde aspirations of the building did not match the school's operations and facility management at the time. After just over two decades of operation, local policy reasons led to the closure and migration of the school community to a standardised container school.

Since then, the school complex has been vacant and a tough struggle between a diversified expert community and the City of Vienna as the school's owner got started. The situation became rather complex. The course of events in key words: the decree that the school was unusable; an expert report saying that the facility could not be renovated; the media announcing the demolition of the building; property valuation of the empty site as a basis for lucrative new construction; the systematic neglect of the existing building; incipient vandalism; the refusal of appropriate interim use; finally the biggest adversary, the passing of time, the greatest enemy of vacancy and civil society participation.

In this protracted debate on the importance of preserving substance, positive developments were achieved thanks to committed experts. In the wake of the emerging urban political commitment to the preservation of existing buildings, the Helmut Richter School has been placed under full protection by the Federal Monuments Office, after years of examination, and declared a national monument. It is now up to the building owner to take appropriate measures to put one of the most important architectural monuments of the late 20th century in Austria back into appropriate use. The first attempt to pass the task of preserving the monument in terms of content and economy to an investor, by means of an invitation to tender, was unsuccessful. The game of time is entering the next round.

The future of Helmut Richter School, a young architectural monument, should be seen as a test case for transformation strategies in dealing with the existing city. The still open result ultimately allows conclusions to be drawn about the potential and vision of those responsible in Vienna.

Johannes Zeininger
architect in Vienna and board member of IG Architektur

8. THE NEED FOR A CONSENSUS

As you know, the creation of architectural objects involves the Client (investor), the Architect (author), and the Authorities (legislator) – in this order. With all due respect, we do not include the Builder (contractor) – they are the executor.

Architectural objects are usually a part of public space, the user of which is the community, namely very diverse inhabitants of this very space, which, by the will of circumstances, has become part of their lives. This artificially created space is the result of a long-lasting collaboration between the three aforementioned parties, which includes a multitude of arrangements. Times pass, laws change, and so do spaces, tastes, styles, and technologies, but it seems that the slowest to change are the people involved in the process of these 'tightly wound arrangements'.

And what about the end user? The very people who live their lives in these artificial spaces that the trio mentioned earlier created in creative agony? By the way, I'm talking about spaces that don't belong to the old and sometimes new 'good masterpieces' – thankfully we have them too. We all understand that architecture, including urban planning, is hard to change. You can hide a book or a painting, you can stop listening to music, you can put away furniture, but what do you do with bad architecture (and, God forbid, bad urban planning)? It's real estate, for goodness sake!

What is there to be done about it?

We need to understand that the User (read: community) has Rights! Namely, the right to be the fourth subject of the initial arrangements, to be involved in these arrangements throughout the entire process.

But there are no rights without responsibilities. Responsibilities through a serious attitude to the law (which is supposed to cater for the community), the responsibility to be able to agree primarily among ourselves, the responsibility to be able to convey our opinion to the three above-mentioned parties in a timely manner, and not when the construction is almost finished, the responsibility to understand how inclusiveness differs from invasiveness, immersiveness from the carbon footprint, and what the fair use of space means.

The motto of the Client is often 'More metres! More kilometres! More cubic metres!' The Architects say, 'This is the way I see it!', while the Authorities are known for their 'What? Where? When?' enquiries.

And this is where the main question appears: do we know anything about ourselves? What do we really want from Architecture?

(24) Searching for a Just Space

'THE SEARCH FOR CONSENSUS BETWEEN THE INTERESTS OF THE INVESTOR, THE COMFORT OF THE AUTHORITIES, THE RESPONSIBILITY AND TALENT OF THE ARCHITECT, AND THE FAIR SPACE FOR THE COMMUNITY IS AN ETERNAL INTRIGUE OF ALL TIMES AND PEOPLES.'

The search for a Consensus between the interests of the Investor, the comfort of the Authorities, the responsibility and talent of the Architect, and the Fair Space for the Community is an eternal intrigue of all times and peoples.

A year of the Covid pandemic and three years of war have changed the process of civil society development. On the one hand, new construction in some parts of the country has slowed down and almost come to a standstill. Only civil defence structures and defence lines are being built. The development of urban planning documentation is almost at a standstill. The question of what will happen to the country, the search for a concept of further existence for the country as a whole and for each individual here and now have sharpened the sense of personal responsibility among the most sensitive part of society. The volunteer movement is getting stronger, new names of strong, caring individuals are being born, NGOs are emerging, and the media space is filled with opinions, initiatives and activities. The experience of public resistance to strange decisions of local authorities is being accumulated, as evidenced by the cases of Sarzhyn Yar* and Vesnina Street**.

In this 'zone of turbulence', we quickly flew into the era of artificial intelligence tricks and augmented reality, where all participants have new opportunities to obtain more convincing (in their opinion) arguments in the search for a Just Space with the help of their smartphones.

The issue of responsibility for one's thoughts, words, and actions has not disappeared. By the way, you will not find the terms 'empathy', 'being human-centred', 'friendly design' in the legislation governing urban planning and architecture, and you will not find these words in the state building codes either, but only the primacy of these concepts will allow us to create the very Just Space that we all expect, without knowing it.

*Kharkiv residents actively reacted to the attempt to build up a part of Sarzhyn Yar, by organising a number of protests, forcing the authorities to reverse their decision.

**Kharkiv activists are suing the local authorities over the brutal reconstruction of Vesnina Street which included the dismantling of the tram line.

Yuriy Spasov
director of Kharkivproekt Institute LLC since 2008, architect, Member of the Union of Architects of Ukraine, Member of the Union of Designers of Ukraine

9. ALLIANCE FOR SUBSTANCE – EXISTING BUILDINGS AS AN ECO-SOCIAL RESOURCE

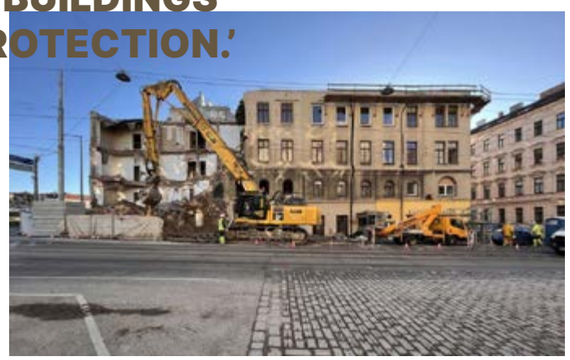
Demolition in Vienna in Recent Decades

The Gründerzeit is the phase of major urban development in Vienna between 1848 and 1914. Thousands of old buildings from this period, as well as buildings built until and after World War II, have been demolished and replaced with new structures. By 2018, albeit late, this trend of demolition led to significant regulatory challenges for further demolitions. The motives for demolition are primarily economic, but also stem from the attitude that renovating buildings is more costly than constructing new ones. The economic aspects are related both to the higher possible building area per plot and to the legal rent cap for old buildings, which significantly limits profits.

The arguments against demolition are cultural, social, and ecological. There is the loss of history and cityscape quality, of identification and orientation within the familiar built environment. Additionally, there are the effects of segregation for residents, and last but not least, the loss of the grey energy embedded in the existing buildings.

However, it is not just buildings regarded as historically significant that deserve our attention – a large number of buildings constructed after 1945, which have so far received too little attention, are valuable for various reasons, too.

‘IN THE CONTEXT OF DAILY LOSSES OF MAN-MADE STRUCTURES, A GROUP WAS FORMED TO PROTECT THEM. IT HAS DEVELOPED A MANIFESTO WITH EIGHT DEMANDS AND ADVOCATES FOR THE APPRECIATION OF EXISTING BUILDINGS AND BINDING SUBSTANCE PROTECTION.’



(25) The demolition of this building in Vienna was carried out despite the fact that tenants were still living in the building and against the order of the authorities to restore the roof, which had been demolished first.

(26) Members of the Alliance for Substance at the old WU (Vienna University of Economics and Business). According to the project developers, the building complex is scheduled to be demolished in 2027.

Alliance for Substance

In the context of daily losses of buildings, a group was formed to protect them. It has developed a manifesto with eight demands and advocates for the appreciation of existing buildings and binding substance protection.

The Alliance for Substance sees itself less as a group that highlights specific individual cases, but more as a platform for networking and as an initiator for the development of a culture of adaptation. It calls for a paradigm shift in construction, which, despite its recognised necessity, is only slowly being implemented. However, it seems that large sums of money will continue to be made at the expense of future generations as long as possible. The construction industry is certainly not alone in this regard.

The transformation of existing buildings should become the norm. The resource waste associated with the cycle of demolition and new construction should be made more widely known, and the enormous land consumption should be reduced. How can this be achieved? Through public outreach, through revision of regulations for existing buildings, and through adjusting the control mechanisms in construction.

The Alliance for Substance is also convinced that adapting existing buildings leads to a higher quality of architecture!

An eight-point manifesto was presented as an open letter to the Ministry of Climate Protection and personally handed over to Minister Leonore Gewessler. This sparked an interesting dialogue on current developments and examples, which continues to this day.

Many institutions and initiatives have supported these goals. Over the past year, the intention to network has been repeatedly confirmed, with members of the Alliance being invited to various working groups, workshops and panels.

Martin Hess
working in architecture, member of Alliance for Substance, board member of IG Architektur

KHARKIV

SPACE AND THE URBAN BODY

VIENNA

10. THE SATELLITE SUBURB AS AN URBAN EXPERIENCE

Satellite suburbs are one of the characteristic features of the development of large cities, where urban agglomeration grows through the gradual spread of urban processes to the surrounding areas.

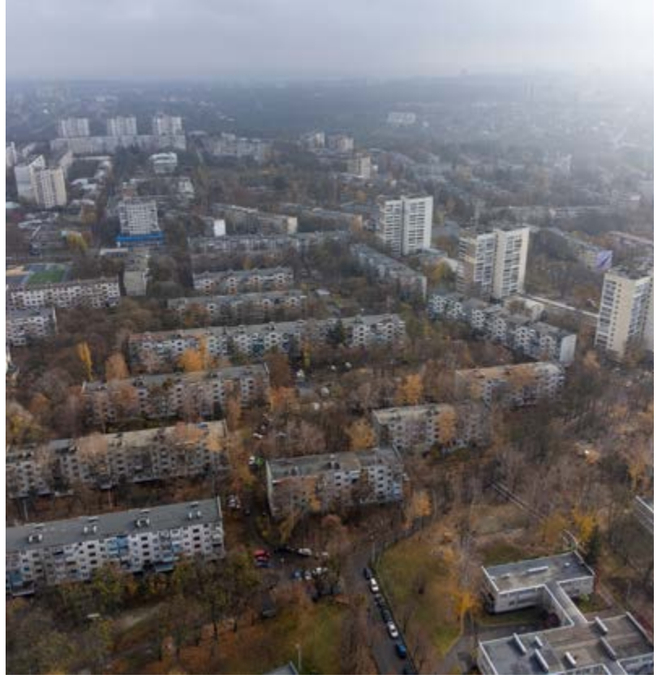
Kharkiv does not have satellite suburbs, but there are remote areas that are becoming more attractive to residents due to infrastructure development and cheaper housing costs, compared to the central areas.

However, this also leads to the emergence of urban areas where life feels very different from that in the central part of Kharkiv. There are good neighbourly relations between the residents of these areas, unlike in the city centre, where a lot of housing is rented and neighbours change very often.

Dormitory districts are characterised by a higher level of self-sufficiency than just the periphery of the city. They have their own cultural and social characteristics. This can be expressed through local events, cultural projects, or the development of businesses. For example, Zhukovsky village was founded in 1958. It was intended mainly for workers of the Electroprivid Design Bureau, Kommunar, and the Kharkiv Aviation Institute. Later, a 'military' town was built near the Krylov Academy.

The suburbs of Kharkiv are not just villages – they often have their own history, characteristic features, and local culture. Gradually, their life becomes more and more similar to the city. For example, the Novyi Kharkiv Social Town neighbourhood, founded in 1930, was designed for the workers of the Kharkiv Tractor Plant. This plant was the central point of reference in the district planning. The project reflected the main urban planning ideas of the Soviet avant-garde: the concept of the linear city and the creation of 'housing plants'. It was intended to embody the city of the future, an ideal model of the proletariat's existence, where all household tasks, including cooking, were to be handled centrally.

(27) 'Mausoleum' – 'Sovietskyi' service centre and the microdistrict 520 in Pivnichna Saltivka, Kharkiv. 1975-1985



(28) Saltivka district

(29) KhTZ district

The district was joined to Kharkiv after the Second World War. It was very difficult to get to the city centre. There was a large area with many factories between KhTZ (Kharkiv Tractor Plant) and the city centre. The metro to this area appeared in 1978. Nowadays, people who are not connected with factory work live there and the area is infamous for the highest level of crime in the city.

The Saltovka neighbourhood, which has been heavily affected by russian shelling, was founded in the 1970s and 1980s. Until 2022, it was one of the most densely populated districts in Kharkiv (over 400,000 people). Saltivka includes large residential areas, shopping centres, medical facilities, educational institutions and other infrastructure facilities that make the neighbourhood quite autonomous. Due to its size and infrastructure, it can be compared to a large suburb that is not necessarily dependent on the central part of the city, but is still closely connected to it.

All of these districts were an experiment at the time and proved to be convenient and comfortable. Many green areas, parks and squares were provided in the districts to ensure a comfortable environment for residents. Alongside the residential buildings, schools, kindergartens, medical facilities, shops and other objects of social infrastructure were built to meet the daily needs of residents.

Unfortunately, the processes of urbanisation and interference in the city's 'lungs' have negative consequences. Kharkiv is losing a large amount of green space, forests and farmland, and the local authorities are willingly contributing to this.

Kateryna Ahafonova
architect and co-founder of 'SBM Studio' in Kharkiv, member of the Union of Architects of Ukraine

'DORMITORY DISTRICTS ARE CHARACTERISED BY A GREATER LEVEL OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY THAN JUST THE PERIPHERY OF THE CITY. THEY HAVE THEIR OWN CULTURAL AND SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS.'

11. THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE EXISTING CITY

(30) Smart-Block Geblergasse in 2019

(31) Smart-Block Geblergasse in 2021

We have consumed too much, used too many resources. Now it is up to us architects to fix this.

Yasmeen Lari, architect, Pakistan

Vienna, ranked in international rankings as one of the most liveable cities, is currently experiencing enormous growth due to an influx of people, which is also leading to socio-cultural tensions. The metropolis, despite political conflicts, is working on developing a multicultural profile. The influx is dynamically accelerated by the expectation of opportunities for success and quality of life. In the past 25 years, nearly 400,000 people have moved into the city, which is more than the population of Austria's second-largest city.

Already during the Gründerzeit, the period from 1848 to 1914, the former imperial and residence city of the Habsburgs was characterised by enormous growth. The population increased by around half a million through annexations and immigration, reaching 2.4 million. Dense Gründerzeit housing was the response to the city's growth in the 19th century. Tenement houses with 'Bassena and Gangklo', extreme overcrowding, lack of light, hygiene and social problems formed the daily life in the mass quarters of the suburbs. The beginning of modernity during the interwar period, particularly in Red Vienna, shaped by the guiding principle of the minimum standard apartment and the solidarity of large housing units, set new standards as a counter-model and stigmatised working-class neighbourhoods as second-class housing.

Today, a quarter of Vienna's housing stock still dates back to this time. Small-scale building plots, the persistence of the former 'Friedenszins' ('Peace Rent' is very low rent which refers to the times before World War I), and the often self-initiated comfort upgrades of so-called 'room-kitchen-study' apartments (consisting of one main room, a kitchen, and an additional smaller room) still shape the city's housing landscape. The over 100-year-old housing stock with its adaptable building structure has retained its social attractiveness, and its potential for improving the quality of life in the densely populated city of the 21st century. Living in sustainably transformed old buildings has become one of the key goals for the climate transition.

Institutions and educational facilities will need to be converted for this purpose. The goal is to confront the dream of eternal growth, which also means waste, exploitation, and destruction, with the appreciation and responsible management of resources and existing structures. A focus on renovation and transformation, as well as the development of a 'repair society' is required. Topics like 'Great Repair' and an 'Architecture of Care' are currently preparing the theoretical foundation for this.

Johannes Zeininger
architect in Vienna and board member of IG Architektur

'LIVING IN SUSTAINABLY TRANSFORMED OLD BUILDINGS HAS BECOME ONE OF THE KEY GOALS FOR THE CLIMATE TRANSITION.'

(32) Long trail to transform our cities.

12. LACK OF PEDESTRIAN STREETS

Kharkiv is a living Pompeii that has not yet been buried.

Yuriy Shevelev

(33) Nauky avenue, Kharkiv, 1970

(34) Nauky avenue, Kharkiv, 2025

A pedestrian city is a modern city. This is the thought that should constantly resonate in our minds when we try to imagine Kharkiv in the future.

However, this statement requires solving many problems that we face in our daily lives. Let's take a look at a few of them: safety, health, environment, and economic growth. We will provide some statistics and observations about how these issues affect our lives in a car-centric city.

First of all, let's consider safety related to roads. According to Opendatabot (a service for monitoring registration data of Ukrainian companies), almost 20 thousand accidents with injuries and deaths occurred during 10 months of 2023. The main three reasons are speeding (38.5%); violation of manoeuvring rules (22.6%); violation of intersection rules (8.7%).

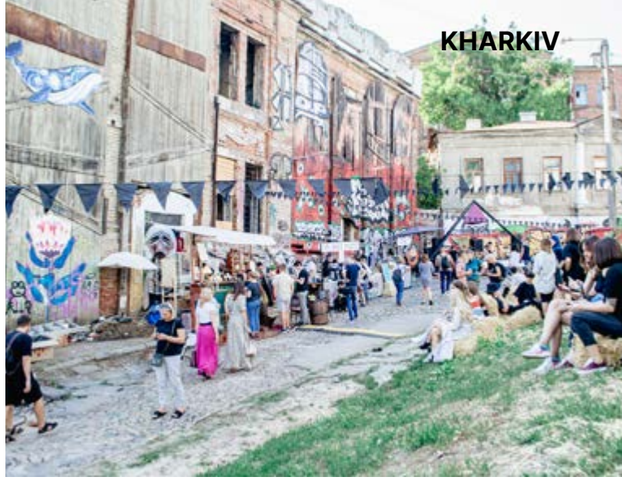
Secondly, let's consider health. Worldwide, lack of physical activity leads to 3 million deaths, or 6% of the total number of preventable deaths.

The third point to consider is care for the environment. The average age of a Ukrainian car is 22.7 years. Thus, our vehicle fleet is the oldest in Europe and can hardly be characterised as environmentally-friendly.

Speaking of economic development, it needs to be noted that there are always a lot of different shops, fast food outlets and cafes in places with active pedestrian traffic.

In Kharkiv, various civic groups have repeatedly encouraged the city authorities to create pedestrianised streets. One example is Kvitka Osnovianenko Street, located in the heart of the city. It is a good idea, but the approach is not systemic. The task is to rethink the principle of organising public space, which will lead to an improvement in the situation in our city.

'A PEDESTRIAN CITY IS A MODERN CITY. THIS IS THE THOUGHT THAT SHOULD CONSTANTLY RESONATE IN OUR MINDS WHEN WE TRY TO IMAGINE KHARKIV IN THE FUTURE. THIS IS THE THOUGHT THAT SHOULD CONSTANTLY RESONATE IN OUR MINDS WHEN WE TRY TO IMAGINE KHARKIV IN THE FUTURE.'



(35) SAMSOBIFEST, Vorobyov Lane. Kharkiv, 2021

Another interesting place that does not leave the active community of Kharkiv residents indifferent is Vorobyov Lane, located in the city centre. Here, before the war, the city's SAMSOBIFEST festival was held for two years in a row, with good music, street food, lectures, workshops and performances. The main objective of the festival was to draw attention to a place with great potential, to rethink the space of the lane, and to promote its reconstruction. All the funds for the festival were raised through a crowdfunding campaign, and an online architectural workshop was conducted to design the festival. In March 2021, it was reported that the mayor's office supported the activists' idea to make the lane pedestrianised.

Unfortunately, there are also many anti-examples where pedestrian comfort was not treated as a priority. Nauky Avenue, Shevchenko Street, and the Avenue of Kharkiv Heroes were densely landscaped not so long ago, but at the behest of the city authorities in the 2000s and 2010s, mature trees were cut down, pedestrian zones were removed, and roads were widened, which only resulted in more traffic.

The modern world has come to the conclusion that this race cannot be won. Wider roads simply encourage more driving. As a result, the extending road network will never be able to keep up with the growing numbers of cars.

Have we really gained so much that we can easily part with our past and be in constant dependence on the imaginary comfort?

Ihor Razbeyko
architect, based in Kharkiv

(36) SAMSOBIFEST, Vorobyov Lane. Kharkiv, 2021