

# Post-war Heritage as Part of the History and Identity of Post-Soviet States in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE)

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The contemporary meaning of heritage is becoming increasingly broad. Practically, there are no criteria that automatically exclude any element of cultural environment from heritage. Any element, tangible or intangible, from the past may be recognised as heritage and receive protection status. The decision is made by society and in practice by the conservation officials on behalf of society.

Such a situation makes the activity of the conservation service more complex and difficult. Heritage protection was always a discipline addressing three questions: what is heritage, what is the purpose of heritage protection, and how should heritage be protected? However, nowadays the difficulty lies in the fact that the answers are not final and that they are changing constantly. In the case of buildings, architecture and urban planning created in the second half of the 20th century, it is necessary to answer the following question: which works of architecture and urban planning constructed in the post-war period should be considered as heritage? Obviously, it is also necessary to answer the question: are the aims and forms of protection similar or different to those of traditional heritage protection?

The protection of the more recent heritage is a challenge due to the difficulty to even find the correct terminology. The common terms “heritage of modernism” or “heritage of the 20th century” have different meanings. The lack of clarity of these terms includes not only the temporal aspects. In the narrower meaning, the term “heritage of modernism” is used to describe the objects created between the 1920s and 1970s. It is limited to architectonic and urbanistic objects that can be described as “functionalistic” and that stand for a certain ideological programme. These objects are directly connected with the guidelines of the Charter of Athens that recommended functional superiority, clarity of construction, universal, international style, and residential complexes. The term “heritage of the 20th century” is used in a much broader sense. It implies all the work created after the extinction of the original styles and of historicism in architecture. This interpretation covers the entire 20th century, during which the main goal of architecture was not to search for new stylistic forms, but to explore the possibilities of new materials, above all iron and reinforced concrete.<sup>1</sup>

Such a definition of heritage is used, for example, by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee or by English Heritage.<sup>2</sup> The difference in the terms “heritage of modernism” and “heritage of the 20th century” has had serious consequences. The term “heritage of modernism” has led to a selective attitude towards the works of the past century. In

practice, only iconic objects of the mainstream of modernism (in the narrow sense) have been protected. Underestimated or unwanted architectural trends have been excluded from protection. For instance, the Russian avant-garde of the 1920s is universally seen as worth protecting, but works of socialist realism are deprived of this privilege.<sup>3</sup> Social residential districts from the interwar period in Germany are protected, but fascist architecture is not. The modernist rebuilding of Le Havre in France is inscribed on the World Heritage List, but the rebuilding of Gdańsk in Poland in historic forms is not. The “White City” in Tel Aviv was accepted for the World Heritage List, but the protection of many other districts from the 1950s and 1960s have not even been considered.<sup>4</sup> More importantly, such exclusions are done without any analysis and scientific justification. The exclusion of certain periods and works of 20th century architecture has mainly political, ideological and doctrinal reasons. The problem exists worldwide.

However, this issue is particularly difficult in the former post-communist countries. Architecture and urban planning in those countries were ideologically conditioned – they realised certain ideological and political goals. Therefore, after the transformation of the system launched in 1989 in all the countries of the “Eastern bloc”, it is necessary to decide if the heritage of that era should be protected. This dilemma can be presented using the example of Lublin (Poland), a typical mid-sized city in Central Eastern Europe.

## 1. Heritage of the post-war period

Any heritage protection actions should be preceded by defining which elements/objects constitute the set of historic monuments and sites. In the traditional paradigm of heritage protection, objects/sites of exceptional artistic, historic and scientific value were considered historic monuments. The universal scale of their value assessment was applied; therefore, the number of these assets was rather small.

According to the contemporary paradigm, treating a property as heritage depends on a local context. Consequently, also properties and groups of buildings of regional importance could be considered heritage assets, thus adding groups of historic monuments and sites which are of significant value in a local context to the scope of the set of heritage assets.

Therefore, context is of great importance. A very specific context – which now affects the way heritage is defined – was created in post-Soviet states. Factors affecting

this context include, in particular: war damages, change of state borders, change of the political system, centrally planned economy, no private ownership rights, development of heavy industry, migration to urban areas and cities, and rapid urban development. These factors determined the appearance of many cities in Eastern Europe. As the result of these factors a typical city in Eastern Europe has the following form: a small centre of historic value, around which large post-war districts with uniform, simple buildings were established.

Lublin, which is one of the oldest cities in Poland (founded 700 years ago), is a good example of a city of this type.<sup>5</sup> It is located in the central east of Poland, in the northern part of the Lublin Upland. Based on archaeological research, the oldest settlement in the area of Lublin is dated c. 10 000 years B.C. However, permanent settlement in that area started at the beginning of the 7th century. The first fortified town was built between the 8th and 10th centuries. The fortified old town hill was destroyed, but in the 12th century a castellany was established. According to the archaeological findings the first stone tower – called donjon – was erected on the castle hill around 1260. At the same time the old town hill developed as an urban core with market place, streets and first church.

The town charter under Magdeburg laws was given to Lublin by the king of Poland, Władysław the Elbow-high on 15 August 1317. Lublin was the first city in the area between the Wisła and Bug rivers established under German laws. The Polish king Kazimierz the Great ordered to fortify the city with walls. King Kazimierz the Jagiellonian made Lublin the capital of the newly created Lubelskie Voivodeship (this function lasts until today).

In the 16th century, Lublin was one of the most important cities in the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania due to nobility gatherings (so called Sejm) and to its location on trade routes. The further development of Lublin profited from the location of the Crown Tribunal for Lesser Poland. As a result of these functions, many magnates built their palaces on the Lublin outskirts. In the mid-17th century Lublin – as many cities in Poland – was devastated by wars, fires and uprising. At the beginning of the 18th century, it was a poor and partly ruined city. The population decreased by half – only 9 000 inhabitants were counted.

A new stage in Lublin's development started in the second half of the 19th century. Many factories were built and a railway line connected Lublin with Warsaw in 1877. Before World War One, the population in Lublin exceeded 80 000 (50 percent of them being Jews). During the interwar period, Lublin, due to the formation of new Polish borders, was in the centre of Poland. The city had more of an administrative character than commercial or industrial. Before the Second World War Lublin had nearly 100 000 inhabitants. The large medieval town centre was surrounded by traditionally shaped residential and industrial areas.

During the Second World War Lublin was seriously damaged. Especially in September 1939 the centre of Lublin was bombed by German air force. During the German

occupation, the entire Jewish population – 40 000 inhabitants – was exterminated and the Jewish district was totally ruined and destroyed. As a consequence of this development and of the war damages, the number of old buildings of historic significance in today's Lublin is limited. The old town of great historic value is small in size. The whole area where historically important buildings can be found covers only three percent of the total area of the current city. Therefore, the entire central district is of great historic value and is considered a heritage site.

After the Second World War, the number of inhabitants in Lublin increased fourfold. Around the small pre-war centre, several residential, industrial, and business districts were founded. This means that in today's Lublin the great majority of buildings and urban areas were built after the war. From today's perspective, the post-war buildings in Lublin can be classified under three periods with common features:

- 1945–1956: modernism of the 1930s and dominating socialist realism
- 1956–1989: late modernist architecture, dominating unified residential architecture and urbanism
- after 1989: post-modernism, pluralism of forms, depending on investors' and designers' preferences.

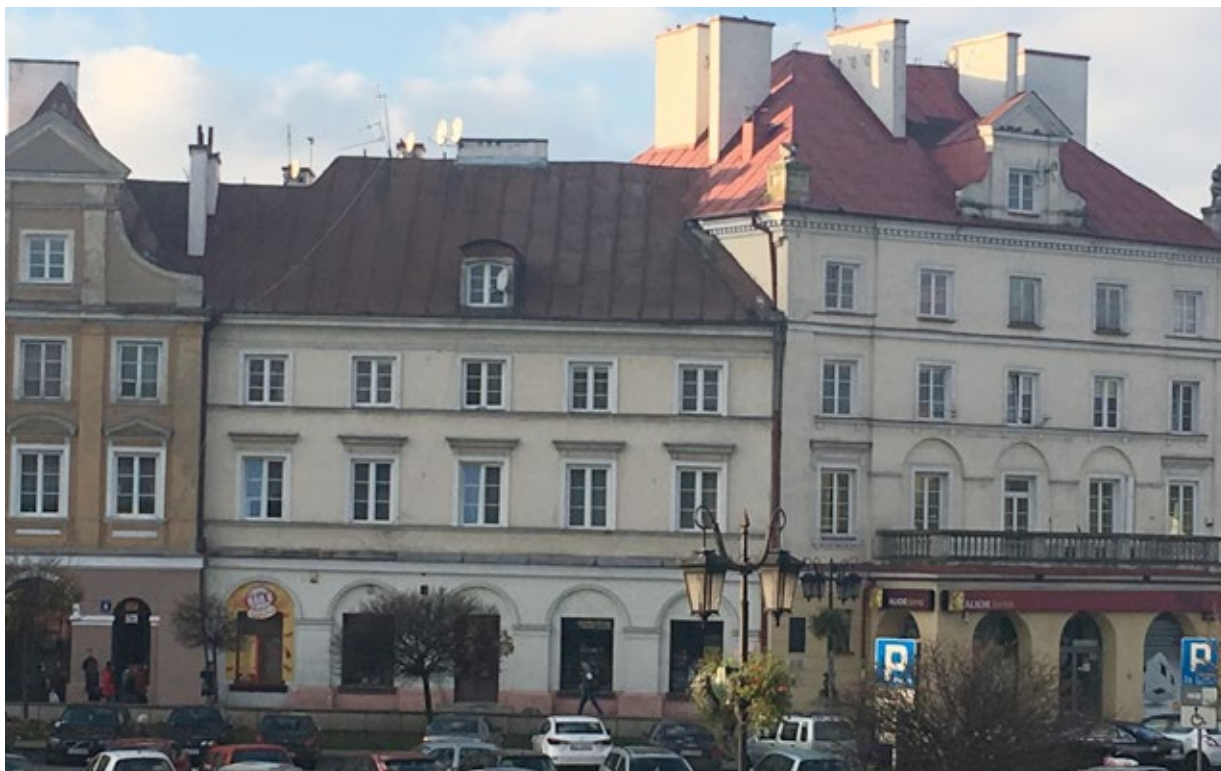
The total number of buildings erected during the post-war periods was immense, but, for ideological, economic and technical reasons, they are largely similar to one another. However, in each period, some buildings are exceptional, at least in the local context. Those buildings should be recognised as heritage of Lublin and protected.

## 2. Objectives of protecting post-war heritage

The second question concerns the selection of post-war heritage for protection. Traditionally understood historic monuments are protected as historical evidence and works of art which are attractive to a majority of the population. With regard to local heritage, it is their individual form and function that makes them stand out from the surrounding structures.

In Lublin, historic buildings are situated in the small city centre, while there are no older (pre-war) edifices in other districts. Thus, the most interesting and unique post-war buildings have become characteristic and distinctive components of the new urban landscape. They are distinctive features of the city areas and contribute to their individual character. One can state that the urban landscape of Lublin needs additional elements that are distinctive, individual, and give evidence of all city development periods. This is what the citizens of Lublin – unlike people just visiting the city – need in order to develop a relationship with their city and create its identity.

The post-war buildings in Lublin that may be regarded as valuable heritage can be divided into several groups. The



*Fig. 1: Lublin, Castle Square, tenement houses in the “historic” style*

first group consists of objects erected in the course of the post-war rebuilding of the historic districts. These objects replaced historic buildings destroyed in World War II. They were rebuilt in the form inspired by historic patterns and are similar to the surrounding authentic monuments. Their role was to complete the historic panorama of the town. Today they are protected. An example of such post-war buildings in the historic style are buildings around the Castle

Square. In 1942 the German Nazis exterminated the entire Jewish population of Lublin. Then, the whole Jewish district around Lublin castle was torn down. The large area surrounding the castle hill was empty. In order to arrange a new Castle Square, tenement houses in the “historic” style were built opposite the castle. From the contemporary perspective, these buildings are recognised as post-war heritage (Fig. 1).



*Fig. 2: Edifice of socialist realism – former headquarter of the Communist Party, nowadays rectorate of the Medical University of Lublin*



*Fig. 3: J. Słowacki residential district – the residential buildings were constructed in accordance with the “linear system” and “open form” developed by Oskar Hansen*

The second group of post-war monuments are buildings of socialist realism. They were built in many districts of Lublin and serve both for residential as well as public use. Buildings constructed in the socialist-realism period have architectural and interior design features that replaced the historic patterns. Of course, they are not the most remarkable socialist-realist edifices built in Poland. Neither their scale nor form can compete with Nowa Huta or MDM in Warsaw. However, when compared with other post-war buildings in Lublin, they are distinctive and original. An example of such an object is the former headquarter of the Communist Party. This prestigious edifice was erected in the city centre, on the grounds of a historic park. Today, it houses the Rectorate of the Medical University of Lublin. The building has not been modified or modernised; both the interior and the historic façade are original (Fig. 2).

The third and largest ensemble of post-war heritage in Lublin are buildings and urban complexes erected in the 1960s and 1970s. In the subsequent period, several thousand new buildings were built. A few dozens of these clearly stand out from the rest, for instance, the residential district (called J. Słowacki) designed by Oskar Hansen who had worked together with Le Corbusier. The district is composed of 18 different buildings erected in the early 1960s (Fig. 3). The residential buildings were constructed in accordance with the “linear system” and “open form” developed by Hansen.<sup>6</sup> All public utility buildings, however, have an individual architectural form. Apart from residential buildings, several very interesting structures of public

use were also built around this time. As there are five public universities in Lublin, this category comprises university premises in particular. Academic campuses are located close to the city’s historic centre and, hence, all buildings are significant for the urban landscape. Among the most remarkable in the Lublin landscape are the main edifice of the Catholic University in Lublin and Chatka Żaka – the student cultural centre (Fig. 4).

The above-mentioned examples represent the group of at least several buildings that stand out from the remaining architecture created in the second half of 20th century in Lublin. Therefore, these buildings and groups of buildings – due to their architectural and urban values assessed in the local context – can be accorded the status of heritage.

### 3. Protection of post-war heritage

Accepting that post-war heritage is of considerable value results in the need to take certain protection measures. This issue, however, has not been solved yet in Lublin.

The first problem is that historic monuments and sites of the post-war period are not generally protected within the formal heritage protection system. In 2010 in Lublin – as in many other cities in Poland – the city’s mayor appointed a committee to make a list of contemporary cultural properties. The committee members - architects, urban planners, art historians – succeeded in drawing up the list. However, the state historic preservation office did not list



Fig. 4: *Chatka Żaka, student cultural centre*

these properties as registered monuments. Therefore, unlike other properties of historic value, these structures are not formally protected. Works carried out in contemporary cultural properties do not even fall within the responsibilities of the municipal historic preservation office. As their value has not been formally acknowledged and they are not provided with any formal protection, they are redeveloped and upgraded. They are treated as contemporary buildings adapted to new technical and functional standards.

Thermal efficiency improvement is the most commonly applied action. However, as result the facades are fundamentally altered: architectural details are covered, the colours are changed, new materials are applied, and old window frames are replaced with new ones. Buildings which were subject to thermal efficiency improvement lose their value and this is the most burning issue in the field of protecting this group of heritage assets. In general, the problems resulting from the technical features of 20th century heritage are the most significant limitation of their protection. Modernist buildings were designed above all to be functional and up-to-date. This covered all aspects of architecture. New building materials, technologies, architectural forms, scale and spatial solutions were introduced. In many aspects, it was very experimental. After tens of years it turned out that these buildings were less durable than traditional buildings. Studies show that modernist buildings require renovation much more often than traditional buildings.<sup>7</sup>

A common problem is the quality of materials and craft. Many of the materials introduced in 20th century buildings

– concrete, synthetic materials, metals, glass – were initially of poor quality. After decades, their technical condition is very bad. Additionally, some of them have been recognised as harmful to health and the environment. Certain solutions of modernism such as big, open spaces, glass divisions, concrete walls have become a serious problem. They do not fulfil current functional and economic norms. Some spatial and functional solutions of modernism, e.g. large blocks of flats, are criticised. And yet, according to the tradition of conservation it is necessary to preserve the form and materials of historic buildings. Authentic building materials should be preserved. However, many of these materials are no longer produced and no methods of their conservation have been developed. Due to the quick progress in engineering, outdated materials and elements are replaced by new ones. This is in accordance with the spirit of modernism. We need to understand that many materials and elements used in modernism did not have an individual character. Widely used prefabrications and concrete are not works of craftsmanship – they do not have any individual features. The intended traits of this architecture are reproducibility and replaceability. Therefore, the protection of the authentic building materials is not self-evident. The substitution of the “historic” substance and use of new materials seem legitimate and allowed. A limited protection and conservation of 20th century architecture seems rational. However, it remains unclear where the limits of protection/interference are. Obviously, these dilemmas become more complex when we consider industrial or large-

sized buildings.<sup>8</sup> In Lublin, too, all these problems limit the protection of post-war heritage. Fortunately, there are certain properties which are not altered because of their distinctive form and character—even though they are not formally protected. However, the number of these properties is small.

Based on the presented characteristics of the problem we can draw the following conclusions concerning the protection of 20th century heritage in post-Soviet countries:

1. In the post-war period several completed urban and architectural periods can be distinguished. They can be analysed and assessed in terms of their historic, functional, and identity-related values. The analysis proves that these properties differ in values, both as heritage assets and as carriers of identity. The most valuable post-war urban and architectural units should be considered heritage and be subject to protection.
2. Heritage of the post-war period is of particular importance in cities where pre-war heritage was destroyed during the war and which developed significantly (Lublin). In cities of this kind, post-war heritage is an important element complementing the set of heritage and is a crucial element complementing the identity of the city.
3. Historic preservation methods applied to post-war heritage assets depend on their scale, characteristics and urban context. Traditional heritage protection rules and forms are not applicable in this case – the permitted scope of works and upgrades need to be broader than in historic monuments of the traditional kind. The principles and forms of protecting post-war heritage still need to be developed. This issue has to be addressed by historic preservation theory and practice.
4. In order to publicly acknowledge post-war heritage, informational and educational actions need to be undertaken – e.g. the inscription of post-war heritage on the World Heritage List can have a profound effect. In order to achieve this goal, it is necessary to convince societies in several post-Soviet states. Therefore, the UNESCO nomination of post-war heritage should be serial and international (especially regarding socialist realism and socialist modernism).

<sup>1</sup> P. Biegański presented such an opinion on 20th century architecture: “all the elements which are born out of a progressive approach of engineering should be highlighted within the architectural creativity”. P. BIEGAŃSKI, *Potrzeba ochrony obiektów architektury czasów najnowszych*, in: *Problemy ochrony architektury najnowszej (1850–1939)*, BMOZ, vol. XXIX, Warszawa 1971, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> In the process of creating the “Gap Report” for the UNESCO World Heritage List, 14 categories were defined, one of them being “Modern Heritage”. All objects created after the 19th century fall into this category: “Modern heritage: buildings, groups of buildings, works of art, towns, industrial properties (from late 19th cent-

ury onwards).” A similar interpretation was put forward for the protection of monuments in England by introducing “20th century architecture”; see Roger BOWDLER, *New Ways of Working*, in: *Conservation Bulletin, English Heritage*, no. 52, 2006, p. 37.

<sup>3</sup> See e.g. *Stalinistische Architektur unter Denkmalschutz?*, (ICOMOS Hefte des Deutschen Nationalkomitees, no. XX), München 1995; *Bildersturm in Osteuropa*, (ICOMOS Hefte des Deutschen Nationalkomitees, no. XIII), München 1994.

<sup>4</sup> An example of an innovative urbanistic realisation which should be protected is Juliusz Słowacki District in Lublin designed by Oscar Hansen. See B. SZMYGIN, B. KLIMEK, *Hansenowskie osiedle im. J. Słowackiego w Lublinie – dzieje budowy, współczesna wartość, propozycje zakresu ochrony*, in: *Scientific Bulletin of Chełm. Section of Technical Science*, no 2/2007, pp. 1–12.

<sup>5</sup> The history of Lublin is presented in: *Lublin. The Guidebook*, M. DENYS, D. KOPCIOWSKI, A. MARTINKA, J. STUZIŃSKI, J. TEODOROWICZ-CZEREPIŃSKA, S. TURSKI, Wydawnictwo Gaudium, Lublin 2012, pp. 7–22.

<sup>6</sup> Oskar HANSEN, *Ku formie otwartej*, Fundacja Galerii Foksal, Warszawa, 2005,

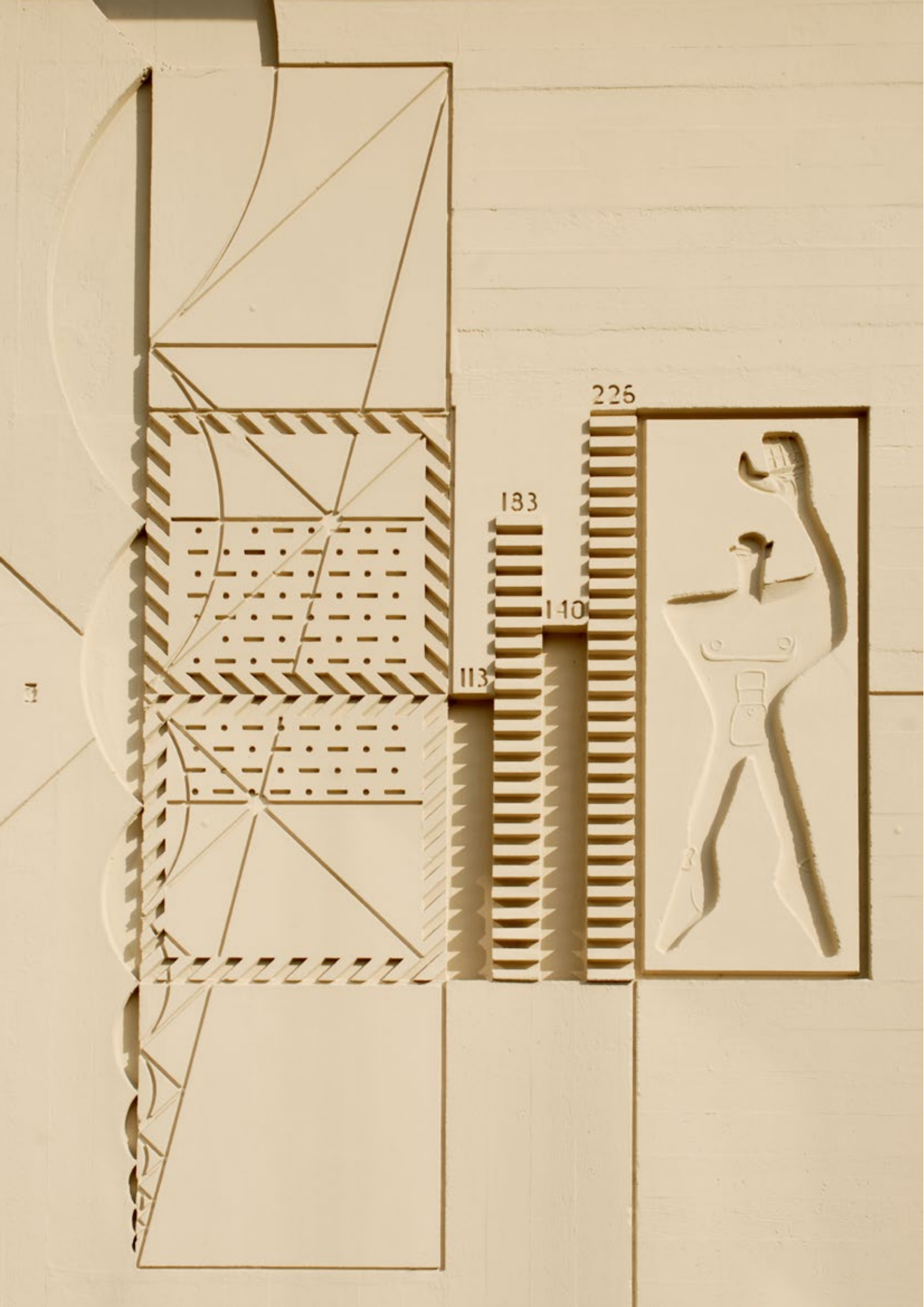
<sup>7</sup> Susan MACDONALD, *20th-Century Heritage: Recognition, Protection and Practical Challenges*, in: *Heritage at Risk. ICOMOS World Report 2002/2003 on Monuments and Sites in Danger*, Munich 2003, p. 224.

<sup>8</sup> N. MENDGEN, *Preservation and Re-use of the Blast Furnace Site – UNESCO World Heritage Site Völklingen Ironworks*, in: *The Soviet Heritage and European Modernism, Heritage at Risk. Special Edition 2006*, pp. 119–123.

## Nachkriegserbe als Teil der Geschichte und Identität postsowjetischer Staaten in Mittel- und Osteuropa

### Abstract

Der Autor stellt Lublin in Polen als typisches Beispiel für eine osteuropäische Stadt vor, die sich nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg unter sowjetischem Einfluss drastisch verändert hat. Es gilt nun zu definieren, welche Gebäude und Komponenten der Stadtplanung aus der Nachkriegszeit als kulturelles Erbe einzustufen sind und ob die Ziele und Methoden des Schutzes denen des traditionellen Denkmalschutzes entsprechen können. Der Autor kommt zu dem Schluss, dass das Erbe der Nachkriegszeit sowohl der Ergänzung des Bauerbespektrums dienen als auch für die Identität der Stadt entscheidend sein kann.



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