

Towards a convergence between architecture and monument preservation

Impact of highly specialised building practices on high-quality *Baukultur*

Gerold Kunz

From the dual perspective of an architect who heads a monument preservation office in a small canton on the northern edge of the Swiss Alps and of an architect who runs his own office, the term 'high-quality *Baukultur*' opens up new ways of dealing with construction and existing buildings. My hope is tied to a far-reaching interpretation of the term, not only in order to bring back together the seemingly separate realms of architecture and monument preservation under one thematic roof, but also to distribute responsibility for construction in general, and for existing building stock in particular, over many shoulders.

A widespread practice in our society, which is based on the division of labour, is to classify architectural services according to clearly identifiable qualifications. Thus, we have construction economics, which focuses on costs, while construction management takes care of deadlines and construction sites, whereas design falls under the responsibility of architects. So, at least in Switzerland, the hundred subtasks that originally belonged to the area of activity of an architect¹ have now shrunk to barely sixty. In addition, there is the increasing number of specialist planners for fire protection, structural physics, building information modelling (BIM), and so on, who are called in for a project and influence its execution, including design issues. Owing to this division of labour, the question arises as to how the entire planning team's responsibility might be apportioned as regards high-quality *Baukultur*. Do architects continue to provide

hundred per cent of *Baukultur*, even if they are only compensated for sixty per cent? Or do we assume that high-quality *Baukultur* is for free?

It is no different when it comes to the relationship between monument preservation and architecture. Both disciplines claim to make a significant contribution to high-quality *Baukultur*. While until a few years ago architects were in charge of new builds and, if feasible, greenfield locations, competence for building within the existing stock was in the hands of conservationists. Numerous structures built on greenfield locations in the post-war years have since moved into the scope of monument preservation owing to their architectural significance and have thus become part of the stock that must be handled with discernment. On the other hand, owing to the increasingly scarce land resource, inner-city densification is taking place, which is why more and more is being built on monument preservation territory. Once separate domains are merging, without competences being questioned. I very much welcome the fact that the term high-quality *Baukultur* is used today to refer to the entire building stock, including monuments and other components of cultural heritage.²

Equal partners

Indeed, the complex issues that arise from densification and from dealing with recent monuments of the post-war period at the technical level, which are exacerbated by the division of labour in the construction process, urgently require a closer association of architecture with monument pre-

servation. The specialist knowledge of both disciplines is needed in order to make a qualified contribution to the called-for high-quality *Baukultur*. Only if contemporary architecture and contemporary monument preservation stand as equal partners for a high-quality *Baukultur* can negative consequences of the disadvantageous division of labour in building practices be counter-balanced, and only then can the associated loss of responsibility towards *Baukultur* of all those involved in construction be compensated for.

The initiative for a high-quality *Baukultur* formulated in the *Davos Declaration*³ has thus come at the right time. By stating that "There is an urgent need for a holistic, culture-centred approach to the built environment" (Art. 3) and "urging all relevant stakeholders [...] to recognise the positive impact of high-quality *Baukultur* on the common good and to acknowledge their responsibility to contribute to its implementation" (Art. 21), it also ties the demand for high-quality *Baukultur* to the condition that everyday work based on the division of labour be reformed. Not only is a rethink of the planning and realisation phases, which are structured according to specialisms, called for, but also of the conception of the roles of public authorities and planners. As regards public authorities, this means that their main emphasis should shift from approval to moderation. As for planners, strategies involving the entire planning team in *Baukultur* issues will be demanded from them.

Transfer of knowledge

As regards monument preservation in Nidwalden, of which I am in charge,⁴ the high-quality *Baukultur* objective cannot be achieved without the participation of interested residents. The population is largely responsible for *Baukultur* quality, given that it lays down the rules, approves the funds, and sets priorities for dealing with existing stock. This is why the Office for Monument Preservation has launched a series of publications: *Baukultur* in Nidwalden, which looks at the built environment from different perspectives. The series relies on pictorial communication and addresses both interested laypeople and qualified specialists. It is intended to strengthen the bond with one's own *Baukultur* and promote professional discourse by making *Baukultur*-related knowledge available to the actors.

The intention of the Canton of Nidwalden's Office for Monument Preservation in launching the series was to break down *Baukultur*'s peculiarities into manageable units. The first volume, which contained 388 photographs from the Swiss Farmhouse Research Archives,⁵ was followed by a volume on the Bürgenstock model of 1962,⁶ an early example of building within the existing stock. A volume containing pictures from the Federal Office of Culture's Inventory of Heritage Sites⁷ and two volumes focused on current restorations⁸ have been published so far.

In the volume on the restoration of the Brückensitz residential building in Oberdorf (Nidwalden), the Office for Monument Preservation sheds light on its own preservation practices. The double inner book block enables a comparison between the architect's execution plans (rendered in the tried-and-tested colours yellow, red and black) and the photographs of the previous condition, execution and end result (see Fig. 1). This places emphasis on the process. The Office for Monument Preservation is seeking to motivate owners to conduct maintenance of their own properties and to instruct planners to make con-

versions according to preservation principles. It also addresses other specialists, who might like to establish a connection between their own work on a listed building and the Nidwalden example.

Spotlight on picture reading

From the start, knowledge exchange took centre stage in this series of publications. The initiative comes with an educational intention: pointing out unknown archive holdings and providing access to hidden materials. Publications containing photographs from the Swiss farmhouse research archive (see Fig. 2) or the Federal heritage sites archive, both of which are inventories from the late 1970s and 1980s, allow us to look back on a situation that many of the actors who shape local development today are likely to be familiar with. Here, history is not equated with grandparents' times, but can be experienced as part of one's own biography. Opening up recent archives makes it possible to view a balance sheet of one's own work.

Fritz Frey's Bürgenstock model (see Fig. 3) allows us not only to look back at the early 1960s, but also to compare conceptions of that time with our own today.⁹ The model shows the ideas of an architecture-savvy hotelier – whose brother-in-law, the architect Otto Dreyer, enjoyed professional success in Lucerne – concerning the expansion of a hotel village in the post-war years, that is to say, at a time when the *Venice Charter* had not yet been written. I view this model as one of the building blocks of the local high-quality *Baukultur*. His strategy, which consisted in complementing stately buildings of the Belle Époque with small buildings in country style or in an architectural language inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright's buildings in stone, wood and glass, was exemplary. The Bürgenstock model's comprehensive documentation provides unique insights into the development of an Alpine resort in the post-war years. The renovation implemented between 2010 and 2018 followed Frey's principle in that

existing buildings – from the Belle Époque and Frey era – were once again complemented with contemporary architecture.

The DNA of Baukultur

The book series, which has a thematic structure, divides local *Baukultur* into clear units. The focus is on the material out of which *Baukultur* is constituted. Be it photographs, models, plans or reports that were stored in large numbers in the archives or were created during restoration, only once they have been published do they become accessible to a wider public and to experts. The presentation emphasises illustrations, in the hope that this will contribute to effortless appropriation. The contexts that are important for the canton can be disclosed by reading the pictures. Historical shots are superficially reminiscent of a bygone era; experts can use them for analysis. Thanks to the material provided, questions about local *Baukultur*, the building typology or the development of the townscape can be answered.

Because of its size, a canton like Nidwalden is well suited to taking a differentiated look at formative influences on *Baukultur*. Its reasonably small surface area makes it possible to break it down into topics and probe its *Baukultur*-related self-image. The DNA of *Baukultur* not only includes traditional buildings such as farmhouses and chapels but also outside influences, anonymous architecture, infrastructure facilities, and more. In order to answer the question of what shapes local *Baukultur*, the term must not be confined to peak achievements. *Baukultur* deserves to be viewed in a holistic way, taking into account local people's contributions. The educational researcher Roland Reichenbach states that human beings are "*Baukultur*-oriented creatures". They depend on *Baukultur* in an elementary way, and can relate to it: "It shapes [people] in any case, but whether they behave in a more or less reflexive manner, or remain unheard, depends on their education in terms of *Baukultur*."¹⁰ The aim is thus not to measure the

maximum distance between high and low-quality *Baukultur* but, rather, to find the common denominator shared by local residents and experts.

Applied to the Canton of Nidwalden, however, the term ‘high-quality *Baukultur*’ does not help much if it only refers to the extraordinary achievements of a community. For an area like Nidwalden, other criteria are decisive. Thus, the volume on farmhouses, for example, portrays owners who single-handedly made changes to their buildings, which they carried out with the means at their disposal in order to adapt the basic Nidwalden farmhouse type to their individual needs. The image of the typologically pure farmhouse, as used in research and teaching, is juxtaposed with

innumerable variations. Only thanks to the large number of images can we identify the specific characteristics of the local *Baukultur* and compare them with the characteristics of another region. It is my hope that anyone equipped with this basic knowledge of their own *Baukultur* can meet the demands of a high-quality *Baukultur*.

1 In Switzerland, SIA Regulation LHO 102 divides architectural work into six phases (strategic planning, preliminary studies, project planning, tendering, implementation and exploitation). Unless otherwise agreed, the architect's core mandate comprises one hundred subtasks ('100TL'). As a rule, this includes basic services related to project planning (phase 3), tendering (phase 4), and implementation (phase 5).

- 2 See Davos Declaration 2018, p. 10, Article 4.
- 3 Davos Declaration 2018, p. 10 and 13, Articles 3 and 21.
- 4 Cantonal building conservationist, 2008–2021.
- 5 Kanton Nidwalden, Fachstelle für Denkmalpflege, Gerold Kunz (ed.), *Bilder aus dem Archiv der Schweizerischen Bauernhausforschung 1975–1991*, Stans 2017.
- 6 Kanton Nidwalden, Fachstelle für Denkmalpflege, Gerold Kunz (ed.), *Fritz Frey's Bürgerstock-Modell von 1962*, Stans 2018.
- 7 Kanton Nidwalden, Fachstelle für Denkmalpflege, Gerold Kunz (ed.), *Die Nidwaldner ISOS-Ortsbildaufnahmen aus den 1970er/1980er Jahren*, Stans 2019.
- 8 Kanton Nidwalden, Fachstelle für Denkmalpflege, Gerold Kunz (ed.), *Das Bauernhaus Brückensitz in Büren/Oberdorf NW*, Stans 2020; Kanton Nidwalden, Fachstelle für Denkmalpflege, Gerold Kunz (ed.), *Das Kapuzinerkloster in Stans*, Stans 2021.
- 9 The extensive transformation of the hotel village by a group of investors from Qatar had just been completed at the time of publication of this book.
- 10 Roland Reichenbach, 'Baukulturelle Allgemeinbildung. Eine bildungstheoretische Annäherung', in: Archijeunes (ed.), *Elemente einer Baukulturellen Allgemeinbildung*, Zurich 2021, pp. 56–57.

Abstract

Pour une jonction entre architecture et sauvegarde du patrimoine

Effet d'une pratique constructive prônant la division du travail dans le cadre d'une culture du bâti de qualité

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La pratique actuelle de répartition des prestations architecturales conduit à s'interroger sur le responsable ultime d'une culture du bâti de qualité. En effet, les architectes ne se réservent plus guère que 60% des honoraires lorsqu'ils renoncent à gérer l'économie et la direction de chantier. Dès lors, comment peuvent-ils continuer à garantir 100% de la culture du bâti en n'étant défrayés qu'à hauteur de 60% ?

Les domaines de compétences entre sauvegarde et architecture tendent de nos jours à se mêler. Tous deux prétendent agir de manière déterminante sur la culture du bâti de qualité. Nombre de bâtiments réalisés après-guerre sur des terrains vierges sont, en raison de leur signification culturelle, devenus des objets relevant du domaine de la sauvegarde du patrimoine. Par ailleurs, en raison de la raréfaction des terrains, on assiste à une densification

à l'interne, dans des zones qui relèvent de la compétence de la sauvegarde du patrimoine. Des domaines autrefois indépendants tendent à fusionner, sans que l'on se pose la question de la juridiction qu'il sied d'appliquer. Cela exige de toute urgence une collaboration plus étroite entre architectes et conservateurs du patrimoine. Les connaissances spécifiques des deux disciplines sont nécessaires en vue d'assurer une contribution qualifiée en matière de culture du bâti de qualité. Ce n'est que lorsque l'architecture et la sauvegarde du patrimoine participent à égalité qu'il est possible de contre-carrer les méfaits de la division des tâches et de compenser la perte de responsabilité de l'ensemble des participants sur le chantier.

L'objectif d'une culture du bâti de qualité n'est pas envisageable sans la

participation de la population. Afin de la garantir, le service cantonal des monuments historiques a initié la série *Baukultur in Nidwalden*, qui analyse le domaine bâti sous divers angles. Cette publication s'adresse à la fois aux amateurs intéressés et aux spécialistes qualifiés. Elle a pour objectif de renforcer le lien avec sa propre culture du bâti et de promouvoir le discours professionnel, en mettant à disposition des divers acteurs les connaissances de ce domaine.

Cette série organisée selon diverses thématiques structure la culture du bâti locale en entités lisibles. Le poids est mis sur les photographies, maquettes, plans ou rapports déposés dans les archives ou réalisés en cours de réhabilitation. Ces connaissances de base sont indispensables pour répondre aux exigences d'une culture du bâti de qualité.