

The German experience of urban regeneration, taking the Blasewitz-Striesen Nord-Ost district (Dresden) as an example, and the possibility of its application in historical cities in Russia

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Abstract

The article illustrates the practical application of legislative and planning tools for the preservation and development of the historical and architectural urban environment in the city of Dresden, taking the districts of Blasewitz and Striesen as examples. It examines the principles of rapid response and countermeasures to the destruction of the historical, architectural and urban environment, as well as decision-making procedures and implementation mechanisms. Furthermore, it describes the distinctive features of the system of preservation of urban heritage in Germany which guarantee the effectiveness of preservation, and which can be considered as principles for applying the German experience to historical cities in Russia.

Keywords

urban regeneration, urban regulations, urban space, urban/historical heritage, urban development

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INTRODUCTION

Urban heritage carries history and memory of era and place. The preservation of our heritage is one of the most important tasks of society. Evidence of the past in the urban landscape, as a reference point for the formation of citizens' identities, and the issue of preserving urban heritage, should be among the priorities in the development planning strategy for historical city centres¹.

In Russia, since the adoption of the *Executive Order for the Establishment of the List of Historical Settlements No. 418/339* in 2010, the number of cities or settlements with 'historical' status has decreased from 478 (listed in May 1970) to 41². Important cities of special historical and cultural significance, such as Pskov, Ryazan, Velikiy Novgorod, and others, have lost this status. According to experts, the reasons for reducing this list are diverse: political and economic aspects, inadequate regulatory frameworks among others. It is nevertheless now necessary to assess the value of the historical and architectural urban environment of about 500 settlements previously included in the lists for further classification and determination of the limits of urban development given the requirement to preserve the architectural and urban environment³.

When searching for effective conservation tools, it is advisable to study the experience of other countries, for example, Germany. With one of the highest densities of protected cultural heritage⁴ (2018), the number of official objects recorded in the list of monuments in Germany is more than 1 million, including not only individual buildings, but also a significant number of fragments of urban territories⁵.

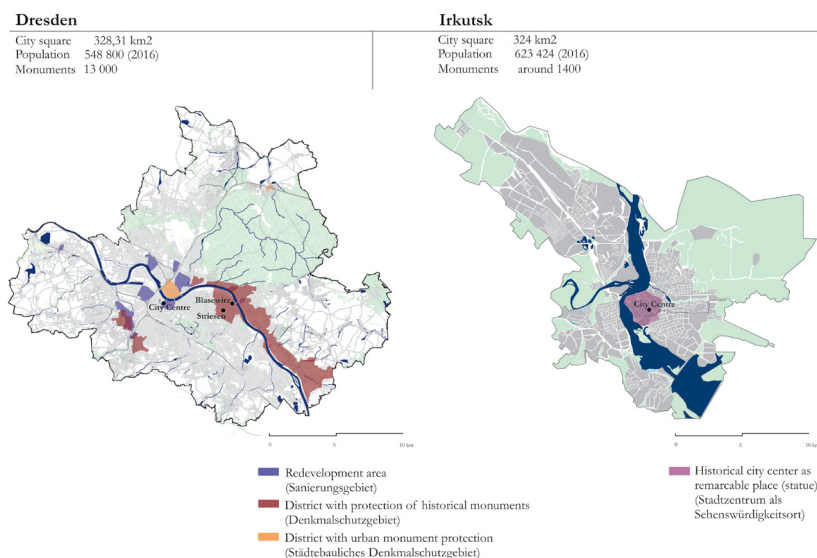


Fig. 1. Comparative characteristics of the studied cities of Dresden and Irkutsk: area of the city, population, number of objects of historical and cultural heritage and presence of areas with protected status

CITIES CHOSEN FOR STUDY

The choice of cities was based on similarities and differences. When analysing the similarities, attention was paid to historical and urban aspects and, above all, the existence of urban heritage. The differences relate to the approach to the handling and preservation of urban space as part of urban planning activities. It is imperative that the selected German cities already have positive results and experience with urban heritage that would be useful for Russian cities.

In Russia, the city of Irkutsk was chosen. Like many Russian cities, it has seen a rapid loss of examples of historical wooden architecture, for reasons such as the inadequacies of the regulatory framework.

In Germany, the city of Dresden, with its rich historical past, was chosen. Dresden is one of the cities in East Germany in which, during the GDR era, approaches to heritage protection were in many ways the same as in the Soviet Union. Dresden also experienced structural changes to its economic and social fabric after the end of the GDR, and it was important to choose the right strategy for preserving historical heritage. This was one of the reasons for choosing the city, where many interesting and effective tools for the protection and development of the historical and architectural urban planning environment have been devised and applied since the 1990s.

Dresden and Irkutsk have comparable urban development characteristics: the area of the city, population, landscape, and a rich historical and cultural heritage. The historical centres in both cities have undergone dynamic development, which raises the acute question of how to preserve historical buildings, ensembles, symbols of urban history, and cultural heritage while at the same time meeting the necessary new functional requirements for urban development (Figure 1).

COMPARISON OF THE TERMS OF THE CONCEPTUAL APPARATUS OF URBAN HERITAGE IN GERMANY AND RUSSIA

When comparing the terms, concepts, and definitions of normative documents in Germany and Russia which form the regulatory framework for the preservation of urban heritage, we can note that objects such as monuments, ensembles and landmarks have the status of legally protected objects in both countries and are defined in the same way in terms of context and semantics. However, in addition to these elements, the historic areas contain other components without protected status but which form the spatial context and the appropriate backdrop to the heritage objects, i.e. in their totality they create the historical and architectural urban environment – the cityscape. In both Germany and Russia we distinguish four conceptual groups of elements of historical architectural urban environment: ‘structures’, ‘spaces’, ‘architecture’ (‘material elements’) and ‘historical character/cityscape’ (‘genius loci’). However, the composition of the components of each conceptual group dif-

fers. In particular, it can be noted that in Germany detailed classification of spaces in terms of historical value differentiates between street space, green space and bodies of water. There is also a classification of buildings which do not have protected status: objects that shape the 'appearance of the place' and the silhouette of the built environment. In addition, Section 1 of the Federal Building Code⁶ makes reference to the 'shaping of the town- and landscape' which includes protected objects. In Russia, the components of the architectural and urban environment are not classified in such detail, and the historical and architectural analysis of urban planning does not always consider their value in the overall context of the preservation of historic cityscapes. The task of preserving the historic character of a city necessitates the expansion of the conceptual apparatus to designate all types of historical and urban environment which shape the cityscape and to create tools to describe and regulate their preservation. In Germany all groups are represented within the existing legislative framework. The key instrument in Russia is the Federal law 73⁷ on the protection of cultural heritage sites, whereby, in the author's opinion, the set of components is not sufficient to solve the problem of preservation of the cityscape. Since such tasks are not set out in law, discord often arises, when the destruction of the historical ensemble occurs during point development, as shown by an example of historical development in the city of Irkutsk, when the mosque complex lost much of its dominant role and its value as a cult object. (Figure 2).

THE SYSTEM OF LEGISLATIVE AND PLANNING INSTRUMENTS FOR THE PROTECTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF URBAN HERITAGE, CONTRIBUTING TO THE PRESERVATION OF HISTORICAL CITYSCAPES IN GERMANY TAKING DRESDEN AS AN EXAMPLE

In the period from 1990 to 2020 Dresden created a series of planning and legislative instruments that ensure not only the preservation of the historical cityscape, but also define the development of specific areas of the city. This comprehensive legislative framework for territorial development includes local urban planning regulations governing overall urban design and also the formative elements of each building. These regulations were developed individually for each area, taking into consideration their potential in relation to the *Integrated concept of urban development*⁸. The regulations are based on the fundamental requirement to preserve the historic cityscape. They describe in detail all measures to be taken in relation to urban development and planning. Before approval under the regulations, a thorough historical and architectural survey is carried out requiring the creation of appropriate methodological tools to describe the architectural and cultural context. These tools enable the definition of the necessary protection parameters.

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Fig. 2. Irkutsk: mosque in the Karl-Liebnecht Street in front of a new glass facade which disturbs the perception of the historical monument

Decisions to approve the regulations are taken at the level of the city administration, thus producing a differentiated and detailed guide to action. The development and application of these regulations requires a highly sophisticated design culture and standard of urban planning activities. In Dresden there are ten 'Urban Regeneration Districts', eight 'Monument Protection Districts' and two 'Urban Monument Protection Districts' (Fig. 1). The practical application of the following instruments – development plans and monument protection statutes – will be discussed below, taking the Blasewitz and Striesen districts as examples.

BLASEWITZ AND STRIESEN: HISTORICAL DISTRICTS IN DRESDEN

HISTORICAL AND URBAN CHARACTERISTICS

The Blasewitz and Striesen districts evolved from former villages close to the city of Dresden. Blasewitz is located to the east of the city centre and consists largely of villas for the wealthy⁹. Striesen adjoins the Blasewitz district to the south-west and is characterized by three-storey houses with attics, historically occupied by high-ranking citizens (Figure 3)¹⁰. Today, the Blasewitz and Striesen districts are of particular importance for the history of the city, having sophisticated urban planning, art and architectural features, as well as being a high quality urban environment with functional diversity, good infrastructure and a favourable location in the overall structure of the city. The urban infrastructure and level of comfort are continually improving. A characteristic feature of these areas is the presence of particularly valuable green spaces with an old stock of trees which form a historical and urban landscape worthy of protection. In recent years, there has been a rapid development of existing vacant lots with new houses.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK 1860-1996

In the 19th century, the principles of urban planning for Blasewitz and Striesen were laid down and have been preserved to this day.

In 1860, 1870 and 1899 normative documents, referred to as development plans were adopted for the new settlement of Neustriesen. A development plan for the entire suburb of Striesen was adopted in 1899, which allowed for open and closed type construction indicating detailed specific building standards and the permissible functional land use (the location of commercial and industrial zones) and defining the number, size and improvement of public spaces.

The development plans drawn up in 1860 and 1880 were also adopted for the Blasewitz district, followed in 1905 by the Building Code of the District of Blasewitz which is part of the general Building Code of the City of Dresden¹¹.

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Fig. 3. Aerial view of the Blasewitz district and the north-eastern part of the Striesen district with 'Blasewitz villas' and 'chessboard' arrangement of 'cubic houses', characteristic streetscape and the 'Blue Wonder' bridge

These legislative norms laid the foundation for urban development of the district, determining the planning structure and architectural and spatial streetscape. For a long time the district retained its architectural and urban planning features. To preserve them, a monument protection statute for the Blasewitz/Striesen-Nordost area¹² was passed in 1996. This preservation order recorded the cited characteristic historical urban planning and architectural features as objects worthy of protection.

URBAN PROBLEMS: A CHRONICLE OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN RECENT YEARS

In the period from 2004 to 2014, many historic villas in the Blasewitz district were demolished to free up land for new development. In this regard, there were repeated protests from local residents and political figures, highlighting the damage to the historically developed urban environment of the region. In most cases buildings were erected on the vacant plots which, unlike the demolished villas, did not correspond to the typology of local historical architecture and breached the harmony the historical cityscape, architecture and urban features of the region.¹³ As a result, there has been an excessive compaction of historically developed buildings and a loss of structures which were of particular significance in the history of the city. In new buildings, permissible floor space was exploited to the maximum by the addition of attic floors. The architecture of these new buildings in most cases was uniform and monotonous, meeting only the technically applicable norms and standards. It did not consider the

local historical context and resulted in the loss of regional town planning features, a reduction in the quality of the overall environment and the characteristic historical cityscape. Furthermore, the function of the surrounding area was frequently altered in order to ensure sufficient parking spaces. This led to a loss of landscaping of front gardens and a decrease in the number of green spaces in the area as a whole (Figure 4).

MEASURES TO COUNTER THE DESTRUCTION OF THE HISTORICAL ARCHITECTURAL AND URBAN ENVIRONMENT - A QUICK RESPONSE MECHANISM

CIVIC PARTICIPATION

The problem of the loss of historical environment was noticed by local residents. In June 2015, a group of committed people in the Blasewitz district organized an exhibition entitled "Our beautiful Blasewitz"¹⁴. The exhibition was educational in nature, as it presented material relating to the historical and urban development of the district and described its characteristic architectural and urban development features. Furthermore, it highlighted criticism of new projects. All statements reflected on the above-mentioned problems with regard to the design of new architectural objects, as well as expressing the desire for harmonious local development in the future. The exhibition impressively demonstrated the willingness of citizens to participate constructively in the development of their living environment. Thus, the distinctive feature of the situation in Germany is the presence of a critical mass of people having an ingrained formed identity which contributes to the preservation of urban heritage. This, perhaps, is a necessary precondition for the implementation of the principle of preservation of historical cityscapes.

EXISTING URBAN PLANNING REGULATIONS

After the exhibition, the administrative authorities in Dresden acknowledged the problem that the historical and architectural urban planning environment could not be fully preserved by applying existing legislative standards. For example, the current norm of 'blending into' the existing historical context, in accordance with Section 34 of the Federal Building Code (BauGB), was not sufficient to properly ensure the preservation of the existing historical cityscape. The current Monument Protection Act could not prevent the demolition of historical buildings without protected status and was therefore not able to adequately conserve the historical environment. As a result, many historical sites were lost.

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Fig. 4. Problems: demolition of a building; loss of valuable historical environment (Eichstraße 2, before and after demolition in 1996)

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL TOWN-PLANNING SURVEY

In the summer of 2015, the authorities in Dresden initiated a detailed survey of the areas including a thorough description of all architectural and urban elements. This survey included an analysis and description not only of buildings with protected status, but of all historical buildings as well as streets, squares, landscaped areas and bodies of water. A comparative historical analysis of building norms, rules and regulations developed since the founding of the districts was carried out to derive the protection parameters necessary to preserve their urban planning specifics. An expert assessment was made as to whether buildings without protected status have urban development value. A typological analysis revealed the presence of buildings of different eras which are important evidence of the city's history.

This analysis was used to identify the characteristic town-planning and architectural features of the region. It confirmed that in order to preserve the historical cityscape, it was necessary to divide the territory into subareas, governed by their own respective regulations. During the analysis, it was established that green spaces and building types play a decisive role in the shaping of the historical cityscape.

The following town-planning and architectural parameters for preservation of the historical architectural and town-planning environment were deduced:

- *Urban planning parameters*: construction method, ratio of built-up and undeveloped territory; building position on the site; the presence and type of front gardens and fences; location of additional facilities; public space design
- *Architectural parameters*: for example, volume and structure of the structure; height of the cornice; structure and design of facades; shape and construction of the roof

LEGISLATIVE INSTRUMENTS

The historical and architectural town-planning survey of the district was aimed at identifying the necessary legal tools to solve the problem of the loss of the historical town-planning and architectural cityscape of the district.

In November 2015, the results of the survey were formulated in a position paper and presented in public along with the proposal to pass a monument protection statute for the preservation of urban planning features¹⁵. The main goal of this statute is to preserve the integral urban development image of the region, by conserving all key historical, architectural and urban design elements that shape the appearance of the town- and landscape. At the same time, urban planning activities are permitted, subject to the necessary coordination between the administrative departments in Dresden. This allows both flexibility and the possibility of further development in the district and not its wholesale conservation. In January 2016, the statute¹⁶ was duly passed. The next step was taken in 2017 with the implementation of a system of regulations, each governing a specific section of the district, the boundaries of which were determined during the historical and architectural town-planning survey. In this case, five different territories were identified (Figure 5)¹⁷.

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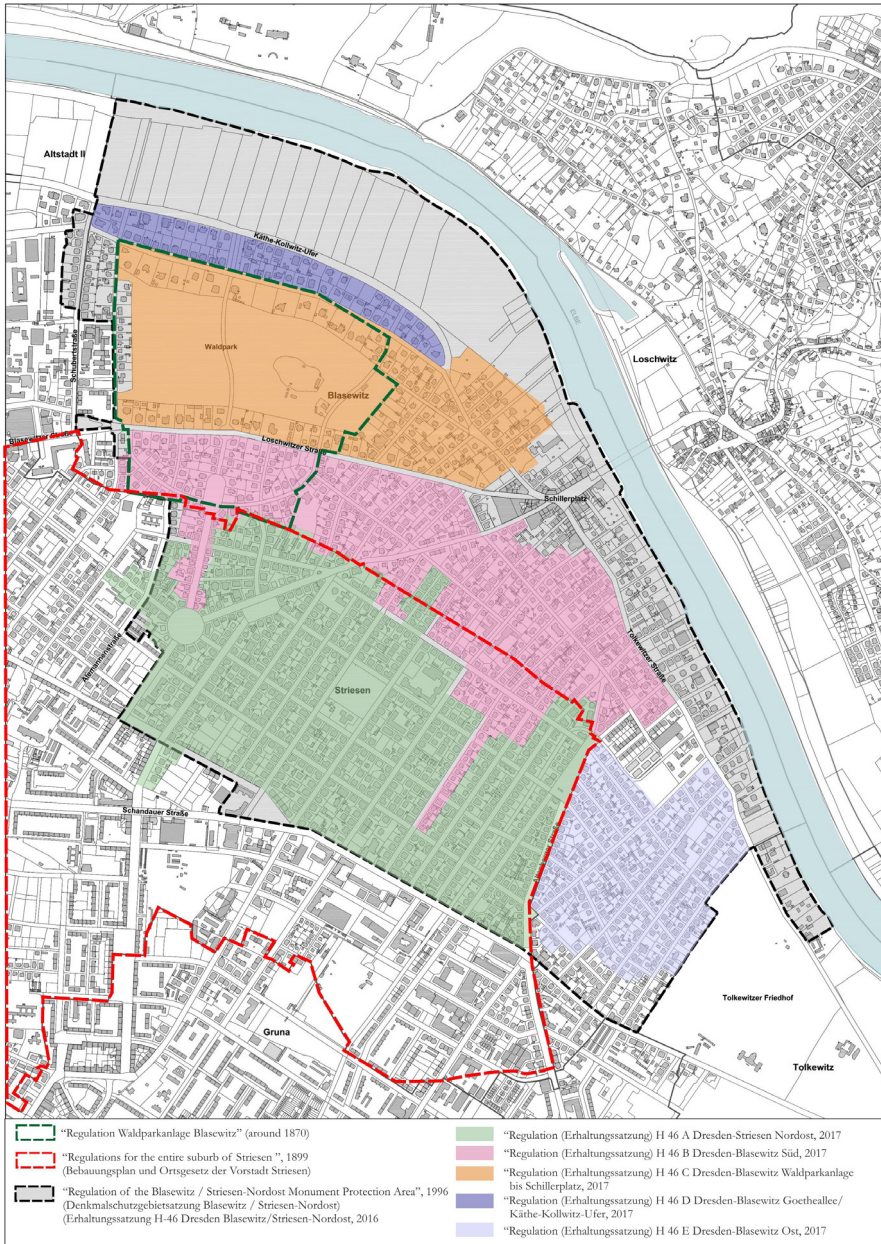


Fig. 5. Schematic view of the districts indicating the boundaries of regulations 1870-2017

Analysis of the dynamics of current urban development activities in Germany (using the example of the above-mentioned areas), during which the loss of architectural and historical heritage objects is possible, mitigating these losses and making the necessary decisions to prevent changes to the historic cityscape can only be achieved if the following conditions prevail:

- active civic participation
- appropriate administrative structure of the city
- competent and qualified personnel
- sophisticated, high-quality architectural and historical survey procedures and town planning activities

In the district of Striesen, there are already some first examples of the construction of new buildings that blend in well with the existing urban context. These were built according to the development plan drawn up by the administrative authorities in Dresden, which also carried out direct supervision of their development.

THE MAIN CONCEPTUAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE APPROACHES TO THE PRESERVATION OF URBAN HERITAGE IN RUSSIA AND GERMANY AND THE POSSIBILITIES OF APPLYING THE GERMAN EXPERIENCE IN RUSSIA

The analysis of the system of urban heritage preservation in Germany and its comparison with Russian practices allows us to conclude that the main difference lies in the approaches and systems of general, initially important justifications that determine the definition and fulfilment of conservation and urban development tasks. We can say that in Russia and in Germany we have different paradigms of systems for the preservation of urban heritage, i.e., the difference lies in our approach to answering the age-old questions of “what to preserve” and “how to preserve”. In Russia, unfortunately, the principle of prohibition still holds, despite the opinion expressed in expert circles that this should be abandoned. This ‘prohibitive principle’ regulates and determines the banning of certain types of urban development activities on territory within fixed boundaries stipulated by law. Outside these boundaries no restrictions are in place which leaves the surrounding area – the historical environment – unprotected. This means objects can be torn down without prior consultation, with the loss of the historical architectural fabric, the destruction of the historical context and the loss of the historical town- and landscape and its ‘genius loci’.

In Germany the preservation of architectural historicity is based on the principle of preserving the overall historical image of a built environment. For this purpose, there are methodological tools to describe the historic architectural and cultural context, which allow you to derive the necessary protection parameters. These are to be approved at a local level.

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Fig. 6. Dresden, Striesen-Nordost Monument Protection District: a positive example of new development on the borders of the Monument Protection District, designed in accordance with the Development Plan

To adapt the German experience to Russia we must change the concept of the preservation approach, which means abandoning the ‘prohibitive principle’ and turning to the concept based on the preservation of the historic cityscape, developing a hierarchical system of detailed regulations by analogy with the German documents subject to local approval. These tools should not only take into account the preservation of urban planning features and landscape, the historic architectural character and cityscape, but also ensure that new buildings ‘fit’ into the historical context, preventing (potential) disputes.

CONCLUSION

- The preservation of urban heritage should be based on the principle of preserving the historical cityscape. For this purpose, methodological tools should be created to describe the architectural, historical and cultural context, allowing the derivation of the necessary protection parameters. These are to be approved at a local level.
- It is advisable to develop differentiated and detailed urban planning regulations (for each district of the city) using the strategy of heritage-led development.
- The system of regulations must ensure the principle of protection of all components of the historic and architectural environment that ensure the preservation of character and cityscape. These components should also include those without protected status but which contribute to the shaping of the historic cityscape.

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DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTOR(S)

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IMAGE SOURCES

Fig. 1. Anastasia Malko, photo, 2017

Fig. 2. Anastasia Malko, schematic, 2017

Fig. 3. Peter Haschenz, photo 2019.

Fig. 4. Ralf Kukula, photo 1995, 2015 [from the exhibition "Unser Schönes Blasewitz" 19.06.2015-17.07.2019, picture 6].

Fig. 5. Anastasia Malko, plan, 2020 based on materials of Stadtverwaltung Dresden, Stadtplanungsamt, Amtsleiter, Architekturgemeinschaft Dr. Braun & Braun, Dresden 2015, Bebauungsplan und Ortsgesetz der Vorstadt Striesen 1899.

Fig. 6. Anastasia Malko, photo 2017.

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