

Abstract

Hallstatt, in the Upper-Austrian “Salzkammergut“ counts as an area of great monumental value and therefore has been part of the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage List since 1997. The historical architectural structure serves mainly as scenery for tourism. The structural interventions from the second half of the 20th century and the early 21st century fall in the category of “Imitations-Kitsch”. This structural interventions transformed the single factory town Hallstatt, which has been used for salt-production since the Middle Ages, into an alpine idyll. The formal distortion of historical architectural substance by technical incompetent renovation measures and the razing of old buildings did not have any sustainable commercial success for tourism in Hallstatt. On the contrary, the economical output of tourism in Hallstatt decreases annually.

This scientific report analyses the patterns of urban development of this town with the help of previously unpublished sources.

In order to reconstruct the original patterns, a graphical rectification of the historical plans was necessary. The original plans were captured digitally and rectified on the basis of still existing points of determination which can still be found in present Hallstatt. The investigated structures comprise several layers which lie on top of each other, for example boundaries, patterns of paths and ground-plans of buildings.

In the course of these investigations several signs come together to a general picture. From which a specific conception of urban planning of the investigated area, dated from the Middle Ages, can be derived. With these facts we have got proof for a structural conception of urban development of a “protoindustrial” production centre for the first time.

These scientific results also made it possible to localize production plants and public buildings which were destroyed by a fire disaster in the middle of the 18th century in the surviving structures of the village.

So the structure of the village which seems to have grown organically on the first sight is actually founded on geometrical, strictly systematic patterns. The method of rectification of the historical plans made it possible to expose these geometrical patterns in their original form.

With this method abstract criteria for structuring, which could be an important basis for future decisions on urban development and architectural interventions, were gained. On the one hand these patterns can be used for contemporary planning in order to include new objects into the original architectural pattern. On the other hand it is conceivable to concept new architectural objects which are in deliberate contrast with these patterns, but which are nonetheless designed in awareness of them.

In both cases the examination of the original patterns is indispensable.

The improvement of the quality of architectural culture in connection with the label “UNESCO World Cultural Heritage” is an important precondition for an urgently needed reorientation of tourism in the area of investigation. To work out this concept the authenticity of the whole ensemble is essential. The technical correct protection and the preservation of the remaining historical objects and structures can only be guaranteed by systematic architectural investigation. By editing historic plans and analysing the abstract criteria of structuring, this scientific report tries to make the first steps in this direction:

- The unique combination of landscape and architecture in the inner “Salzkammergut“ was essential for the admission to the UNESCO World Heritage list. The original

buildings and architectural ensembles are vital for the regional cultural identity and are also of functional value for tourism.

- The contemporary architectural culture neither reaches the quality of the original architectural objects in the public nor in the private sector. Even if they could be renovated, historic architectural structures are still being destroyed in the region of the World Cultural Heritage. So the cultural capital of the region is in a process of diminution, which logically results into negative consequences for the economical development of the whole area.
- The technical correct protection and preserving use of the remaining historical objects and structures can only be guaranteed by systematic architectural investigation. The results of investigation should also be communicated practically. This is only possible if architectural investigation tries to approach public building contractors, building and construction industry and also private builders.

The missing awareness of abstract criteria of structuring cannot only be compensated by investing great amounts of money in the architectural structure of Hallstatt. On the contrary this way of dealing with the architectural structure of the village resulted into great architectural deficits. It was tried to imitate historic buildings, but the results do not seem authentic.

Only the consequent translation of the results of architectural investigation into the architectural reality of the World Cultural Heritage region can create authenticity and in this way establish a foundation for economically successful tourism.