

REUSE IN TEACHING

THE FUTURE OF THE
ARCHITECTURAL
DESIGN STUDIO

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Triest

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VIII WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Astrid Staufer

Where do we find the instruments of knowledge to deal with the climate crisis? Vienna offers some compelling pointers. The city itself provides a rich architectural background, especially in the form of its *Gründerzeit* building stock, which is continuously being repurposed and transformed. At our university, where the faculty recognised the importance of reuse early on, the theses and strategies for climate-conscious design proposed in the *Architektur Klima Atlas* have fallen on fertile ground.¹ We are now operating on a new basis where – to paraphrase the great Hermann Czech – everything is background.

After decades in which the construction industry enabled a great deal of nonsense – an architecture dominated by a tendency to formal abstraction, by its visual appearance – the crisis has brought an opportunity. The (old) existing building stock now offers us a treasure trove of (new) ideas – of rich and diverse approaches that take account of the interconnectedness of materials, structure, culture, and that need to be explored with both intelligence and passion.

At our research unit for design and construction, this process of exploration begins already in the second semester. With our colleagues from the structural engineering department and experts for circular construction, we organise an interdisciplinary course that draws some 500 students annually into a shared discovery of the multi-layeredness and complexity of the design process. Working with reclaimed building components and leaving behind the architecture of 'grand gestures' allows us to give new meaning to the existing built fabric, to reconfigure it in refreshing ways to create new space. Making structural joints and connections once again becomes an art form; construction is no longer seen as compulsory, but as a matter of choice.

We see teaching as part of a larger research project that addresses the most pressing questions facing practice today. The university is once again taking on a leading role in discussing where we go from here. We are trying to reflect intellectually on vital everyday issues and to situate them academically, as this publication vividly demonstrates. The task now is to ensure that practice follows suit, scaling up as required. The aim of this publication is to sum up this process, to map out both its breadth and its depth, filling in much more of the 'background'.

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¹ Jürg Graser, Astrid Staufer and Christian Meier, eds., *Architektur Klima Atlas: Klimabewusst entwerfen in Forschung, Lehre und Praxis* (Zurich: Park Books, 2024).