



Sustainable Real Estate

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Abstract

Transformative urban heritage. Strategies for a sustainable European housing stock (SustHerit)

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Although subjected to considerable demolition in the 20th century, historic housing predating 1919 forms a substantial minority within the modern housing stock across Europe. It continues to represent an important element of the range of affordable housing types. This historic housing is often found as a compact, densely built-up area, enclosing the city centre. It is characterised by social contrasts: with segments in the ‘western quarters’ close to the city centre built for the bourgeoisie and smaller tenement and multi-storey buildings built for and are occupied by the working class.

This historic housing stock was constructed when energy efficiency was focused on providing heat from coal fires and using natural light and ventilation. It presents significant challenges for urban climate action plans (Hao 2020). In some cities, decision makers are considering demolition, arguing that this is less expensive and more carbon-neutral than retrofitting (Jones et al. 2013; Sugár et al. 2020). In other cities, planners and developers acknowledge the cultural-heritage value of this housing stock (Berg, 2017). They thus seek alternative approaches to undertake ‘climate gentrification’, upgrading property values to compensate retrofitting costs. Such adaptation examples have demonstrated the technical feasibility of approaching carbon neutrality. Yet retrofitting remains costly and often inhibited by local planning, regulation and policy (Sugár et al. 2020; Ide et al. 2022). These solutions, however, risk changing the social and economic structure of the city dramatically. Historic housing, which has often accommodated incoming populations in many cities, is at risk of being lost.

Research on achieving, affording and enabling larger-scale adaptation for the significant, but less culturally valued historic housing stock is absent from the current debate and literature. In the scope of this session, we will present the SustHerit project which stems out of the joint program call by Belmont Forum and JPI Climate “Climate & Cultural Heritage (CCH) 2023” and aims through an investigation of Prague, Vienna, Budapest and Marseille, to understand how adaptation of the historic housing stock, holding specific local technical-urbanistic and

social qualities, may act as a resource for climate adaptation and mitigation for sustainable solutions.

**Urban Historic Housing Stock, Europe, Sustainability, Transformation, Adaptability,
Vulnerabilities, Potentials, Obstacles**

References

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