

Baukultur: A Cultural Policy Challenge

Manifesto of the Swiss Baukultur Round Table

Preamble

On the initiative of the Swiss Society of Engineers and Architects and with the involvement of the Federation of Swiss Architects, the Swiss Baukultur Round Table convened in March 2010. The shared objective is a sustainably designed living environment of high quality. The essential goals are the systematic networking of the various actors in the sphere of Baukultur and their collaboration in the design and use of the living environment, raising public awareness of historical and contemporary Baukultur, anchoring Baukultur as a holistic, interdepartmental concern at the federal level, and participating in the European discourse on Baukultur. For the Swiss Baukultur Round Table, it is the task of cultural policy to preserve and further develop the built heritage, to promote contemporary Baukultur creation and to convey Baukultur in all its facets. With reference to the Federal Act on the Promotion of Culture and the Federal Council Dispatch on Culture 2012–2015, the Confederation must involve the actors of Baukultur in the development of an appropriate overall strategy that goes beyond cultural policy to include other policy fields.

The growing pervasiveness of information and communication technology within everyday life in the wake of globalisation raises the question of the mutual dependency of the virtual and real worlds. For one thing, digitalisation opens up unimagined possibilities for artistic creation. But as sensual and social beings, people are also dependent on a designed living environment of high quality so as to realise their creative potential.

Raising the population's awareness of the designed living environment, especially the awareness of children and young people, is an important task of general education. Baukultur must be more strongly integrated into cultural education in schools and extracurricular activities. Moreover, education about Baukultur must be deepened at all levels of training and development of specialists, whether in the context of basic vocational training, higher vocational training or tertiary education.

Baukultur explained

As a basis for their collective efforts, the members of the Swiss Baukultur Round Table endorse a holistic understanding of Baukultur.

Baukultur is part of cultural identity and diversity.

Baukultur is an essential, inseparable part of cultural identity and of the diversity of cultural forms of expression. Swiss Baukultur, which enjoys high standing, is an important element in the external perception and public image of our country.

Baukultur stands for interdisciplinary collaboration.

Baukultur stands for the claim to interdisciplinary collaboration. It comes about through various closely interlinked disciplines. The disciplines of Baukultur include architecture, landscape architecture, interior design, urban design, spatial planning, civil engineering, heritage protection and monument preservation, as well as the creation, maintenance and dismantling of works of Baukultur.

Baukultur is both temporally and normatively unconstrained.

Baukultur is a temporally unconstrained concept. Baukultur encompasses both existing built heritage and contemporary creation. Those who create Baukultur help shape an episode in the continuum of past, present and future. Baukultur is also a normatively unconstrained concept. Baukultur comprises exceptional works and the everyday built environment in equal measure. Baukultur includes all scales, whether individual properties, the interface between interior and exterior space, ensembles or the public realm. Simultaneously, it stands for the highest standards of quality without any criticism of style.

Baukultur unites form and function.

Like other forms of cultural expression, Baukultur is an aesthetic and symbolic manifestation of social conventions that reflect change over time. In this sense, Baukultur is a cultural-historical concept. Much more strongly than liberal arts such as literature, painting or music, however, Baukultur is tied to a function. Although the aesthetic dimension of Baukultur is of outstanding importance, it is committed in a special way to sustainability, to the social, environmental and economic dimensions of human activity. In particular, this also includes the consideration of life cycles and the development of construction processes and materials. Baukultur brings artistic, technical and economic aspects into harmony with one another.

Baukultur is omnipresent.

Compared to cultural manifestations such as literature, painting or music, individuals can decide to a much lesser extent whether and when to expose themselves to the designed living environment.

Baukultur is a shared challenge for the public, building clients, planning professionals and the construction industry.

Baukultur denotes not only the designed living environment, but also the process of its creation and maintenance, which means it is, among other things, a procedural concept. The responsibly minded use of spatial resources is part of Baukultur. A well-designed living environment demands, trustful collaboration and respectful interaction between the planning and consulting disciplines on the one hand, and amongst all partners involved in the building process on the other hand. In joint action, the public, building clients, planning professionals and the construction industry create Baukultur.

An important precondition for high-quality Baukultur is a mature sensibility for Baukultur among citizens, private building clients and contracting entities in politics, business and public administration. All people must therefore have the opportunity, from an early age and in various contexts, to develop an understanding of Baukultur and thus to mature not only into qualified citizens and building clients, but also into competent contracting authorities and decision makers. A basic understanding of Baukultur and an appreciation of expertise in the field create the intellectual climate for fruitful communication amongst all partners involved as well as for a good culture of interaction within the construction sector, which also requires lasting business relationships and fair dealings with one another in a spirit of partnership.

Baukultur is an economic and location factor.

Baukultur makes a significant contribution to value creation and employment. As an important cornerstone of the creative sector, Baukultur is also essential for the image of cities and regions, and their attractiveness for residents, tourists and businesses.

For Baukultur of high functional and design quality to emerge and fully develop, favourable framework conditions are needed. These include the fair and transparent tendering and awarding of planning and construction services. Architectural and engineering competitions and commissioned studies are central instruments for the development and maintenance of Baukultur. It is also essential to turn away from mere competition on price and to give greater consideration to qualitative criteria. Win-win situations should be used to counteract extreme exploitation of the market. Opportunities and risks should be distributed sensibly and fairly among the parties involved. The work of planning, preparation and execution requires sufficient time so that projects can be clearly specified, thoughtfully designed, tendered and executed.

Baukultur demands a social commitment.

Baukultur is also a political concept. It aims at increased recognition of Baukultur as a cultural accomplishment. In a globalised and increasingly virtual world, Baukultur makes, now more than ever, an indispensable contribution to a cultural identity anchored in the built environment and to the diversity of cultural forms of expression.

How Baukultur has been understood up to now

The prior understanding of Baukultur referred primarily to the past, specifically to built heritage, and took the form of heritage protection and monument preservation. The notion that Baukultur also pertains to its contemporary creation has yet to gain acceptance.

An early symbol of the Swiss Confederation's high regard for built heritage is the Federal Decree on the Protection of Historic Monuments of 1886. In 1962, the protection of Switzerland's natural and cultural heritage even received constitutional status. The Federal Act on the Protection of Nature and Cultural Heritage followed in 1966 (last amended in 1995). As an outcome, built heritage has a fixed place within Swiss federal cultural policy, at least in the form of built architecture. By contrast, contemporary Baukultur creation does not appear as a separate category until 2011. Its neglect is manifested in, among other things, the Dispatch on the Federal Act on the Promotion of Culture, in which the explanatory note to Art. 1 of the Cultural Promotion Act states: «In the promotion of current artistic creation, a distinction is made, for example, between the following categories: visual art, design, music, theatre, dance, media art and literature.» However, the neglect of contemporary Baukultur creation contradicts the goal of «strengthening cultural diversity in Switzerland», as stated in Art. 3 of the Cultural Promotion Act.

The Federal Office for Buildings and Logistics, for example, as one of Switzerland's biggest public building clients, explicitly acknowledges its exemplary role, and Baukultur is a recognised element of Switzerland's public image. Through 2011, however, cultural promotion in a narrower sense only partly takes contemporary Baukultur creation into account, and does so only rudimentarily. The Federal Office of Culture, for instance, has to date incorporated individual disciplines of Baukultur into the fields of art and design. But by categorising architecture under art and both interior design and landscape architecture under design, it does not do justice to the specific character of Baukultur, and it leads to a majority of people acting as experts who are not specialists in the field of Baukultur. Moreover, reducing Baukultur to architecture along with interior design and landscape architecture unduly narrows the spectrum of Baukultur.

Preserving, promoting and conveying Baukultur

The members of the Swiss Baukultur Round Table affirm it is the task of cultural policy to preserve and further develop the built heritage, to promote contemporary Baukultur creation and to convey Baukultur in all its facets.

Preserving Baukultur

In order to preserve our Baukultur, the primary goal of the Swiss Confederation's cultural policy must go beyond the granting of subsidies to ensure the quality of the cantonally managed heritage conservation in all of Switzerland. The Confederation must ensure that measures to guarantee the quality of monument preservation in all of Switzerland are further strengthened and not dismantled. Additionally, secondary material on the history of Swiss Baukultur that has been handed down, and which is added to every day, must be given greater consideration.

Exemplary measures

- Continuation of funding for heritage protection and monument preservation totalling at least CHF 30 million per annum
- Maintenance of the Federal Inventory of Swiss Heritage Sites (ISOS)

- Continuation of technical consultation on matters of monument preservation
- Continuation of support for the training centres for prospective monument conservationists at the ETH in Zurich and in Lausanne, as well as at the cantonal universities
- Continuation of scientific centres of excellence, such as the Expert Center at ETH Zurich
- Continuation of subventions to compile lists of historic gardens and sites for ICOMOS
- Support for research centres such as the Ballenberg Museum and the Information Centre for Cultural Heritage Conservation (NIKE)
- Support for the Swiss Heritage Society
- Continuation of the exchange between monument conservationists from Switzerland and abroad, such as the San Servolo exchange platform in Venice
- Carrying out the role as liaison for Swiss UNESCO World Heritage sites
- Continuation of the Federal Commission for the Protection of Nature and Cultural Heritage and the Federal Commission for Monument Preservation
- Continuation of the Federal Archives of Historic Monuments
- Contributions to other archives and foundations that are active in archiving and research, including the Archives of the Institute for the History and Theory of Architecture at ETH Zurich, the Archives de la construction moderne at EPF Lausanne, the Archivio del moderno at the Accademia dell'architettura of the Università della Svizzera Italiana, the Werner Oechslin Foundation in Einsiedeln, the Foundation Research Design Competitions, and the Archive for Swiss Landscape Architecture at the University of Applied Sciences Rapperswil

Fostering Baukultur

Contemporary Baukultur creation in and from Switzerland enjoys a high reputation internationally. Since innovation always requires a special effort, the Confederation must do its part to ensure that contemporary approaches to Baukultur are given appropriate platforms. Expert advice from the realm of contemporary Baukultur creation must be incorporated.

Exemplary measures

- Establishment of a Federal Commission for Contemporary Baukultur within the Federal Office of Culture
- Representation of contemporary Baukultur on Pro Helvetia's new Board of Trustees
- Introduction of a specific Swiss federal award for recognised accomplishments in contemporary Baukultur (Federal Award for Baukultur)
- Introduction of a specific Swiss federal award for young talent in the realm of contemporary Baukultur creation
- Introduction of a Swiss federal award for exceptional construction services distinguished by innovations in technology, materials or building process
- Promotion of architectural and engineering competitions and commissioned studies as central instruments for the development and maintenance of Baukultur

Conveying Baukultur

Baukultur comes into being through collaboration between the public, building clients, planning professionals and the construction industry. The Confederation is therefore called upon to build up expertise in Baukultur amongst the wider population. All people must have the opportunity to develop a basic understanding of Baukultur from an early age and in various contexts.

Exemplary measures

- Introduction of a periodic report on Baukultur in Switzerland
- Introduction of a specific Swiss federal award for the conveyance of Baukultur
- Contributions to the European Heritage Days, the annual «15n de l'architecture contemporaine» architecture week, the Landscape Architecture Days, and World Interiors Day
- Consideration of Baukultur within interdisciplinary initiatives and projects for cultural education in schools and extracurricular activities
- Contributions to the association Spacespot, whose mission is to raise awareness of the designed living environment, and to the Swiss Heritage Center at the Villa Patumbah in Zurich

- Contributions to the Swiss Architecture Museum in Basel and a Museum of Civil Engineering, if not a jointly organised House of Civilisation
- Contributions to an Internet guide to Baukultur in Switzerland and to databases such as cuntradas.ch
- Encouragement of debates on the dynamic intersection between legacy and modernity, tradition and the present, creation and preservation
- Contributions to the International Architecture Biennale in Venice and to other biennials, such as the exhibitions in São Paulo and Rotterdam
- Portrayal of Swiss Baukultur abroad
- Involvement in the European Forum for Architectural Policies

Creating society's living room

The growing fragmentation of society weakens social cohesion. Strengthening the cohesive forces in society is therefore one of the great challenges of the present. Baukultur can make an important contribution to social cohesion. The designed living environment must be created in such a way that people recognise themselves in it, feel comfortable, enjoy meeting each other and establish and maintain networks. To create a living room for society is in this sense one of the noblest duties of Baukultur.

On the other hand, it is the task of politics to make high-quality Baukultur possible in the first place. This requires an overall strategy that incorporates not only the Federal Office of Culture and Pro Helvetia but also other federal institutions that influence the designed living environment, whether through monetary funding instruments or non-monetary framework conditions.

The institutions, instruments and frameworks to be incorporated include:

- the Federal Office for Buildings and Logistics (tendering procedures)
- the Federal Office of Professional Education and Technology, the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs, the State Secretariat for Education and Research and the ETH domain (recognition of architects' and engineers' titles)
- the Federal Office for Civil Protection (Swiss Inventory of Cultural Property of National and Regional Significance)
- the Federal Office of Energy
- the Federal Office for Spatial Development
- the Federal Roads Office (Federal Inventory of Historical Routes in Switzerland)
- the Federal Office for the Environment (Federal Inventory of Landscapes and Natural Monuments of National Importance)
- the Federal Office of Transport (historically valuable infrastructures and exceptional contemporary achievements in the realm of public transport)
- The Federal Housing Authority (funding practices; support for the European association)
- the Federal Consumer Affairs Bureau
- the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (Presence Switzerland)
- the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs and Osec (ingenious switzerland)

sia

schweizerischer ingenieur- und architektenverein
 société suisse des ingénieurs et des architectes
 società svizzera degli ingegneri e degli architetti
 swiss society of engineers and architects

BSA Bund Schweizer Architekten

FAS Fédération des Architectes Suisses

FAS Federazione Architetti Svizzeri



SCHWEIZER HEIMATSCHUTZ
 PATRIMOINE SUISSE
 HEIMATSCHUTZ SVIZZERA
 PROTECCIUN DA LA PATRIA

a Archivio del Moderno

BSLA

FSU

SPACESPOT

vsl.asai.

VEREINIGUNG SCHWEIZER INNENARCHitekten/ARCHITECTINNEN
 ASSOCIATION SUISSE DES ARCHITECTES D'INTERIEUR
 ASSOCIAZIONE SVIZZERA DEGLI ARCHITETTI D'INTERNI

In support of the basic statements:



Konferenz der Schweizer
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Schweizerischer Baumeisterverband
 Société Suisse des Entrepreneurs
 Società Svizzera degli Impresari-Costruttori
 Societad Svizra dals Impresaris-Constructurs