

## P012\_The garden houses of the architect \_further procedure

### Prototyping

An IMM team visiting the small garden sites below the May-Siedlungen in Frankfurt Römerstadt, met members of the association who are responsible for maintenance. They learned that heavy boards have to be hung in front of the windows of the garden houses in order to prevent frequent break-ins.

This led to updated ideas on how to implement the garden houses. On the one hand, it provided the motivation to rethink the security concept of the garden houses yet to be constructed. On the other hand, this supported the intention to follow up on the existing fundamental idea of ecological sustainability.

### The goal is to construct garden houses that are degradable and transportable, i.e., location-flexible.

This concept combines the aspects of security and sustainability at the same time. If, for example, the garden houses spend the winter in a different location, this logically reduces the risk of break-ins. It also allows the previously used standing areas of the garden houses to regenerate.



### Following the ecological lead after the ideas of M. Schütte-Lihotzky and Leberecht Migge.

The aspiration at the time was to preserve as much natural space as possible, such as green areas, and therefore be able to offer them as relaxation and recovery areas to the entire urban population. Today, the idea is gaining increased popularity and is one of the primary goals of global politics in light of climate change. Even 100 years ago, self-sufficiency and sustainability played an important role for social and cultural thought leaders. Physical exercise and mental health were also part of a holistic approach.



### Excursion to Trais-Horloff

The closeness of the idyllic green spaces to the small river Nidda in Frankfurt- Römerstadt finds a pendant in the village of Trais-Horloff, 50 km away. Here, vacation homes line the clear waters of the lake region and the water protection area. The place offers peace and potential for relaxation and recovery, which is of great importance for the later choice of location of the planned garden houses. In addition, empty properties in the surrounding region are suitable for the storage of the cabins. Since the region is a water protection area with frequent flooding, there is a restriction on building weekend houses firmly anchored in the ground. Instead, they are placed elevated on blocks or posts.



### Elevated construction

This serves as a model for the IMM's garden houses construction. Placed on blocks, the cabins should be easy to move and shift even after construction. A simple hydraulic jack is sufficient to lift the hut to be moved a few centimeters at each corner and lower it onto an easy-to-use movable frame.

The advantage of this type of construction is that, unlike the garden houses of M. Schütte-Lihotzky, it is not necessary to build concrete foundations. In this way, the cabins can be easily moved to protect the plants and be removed during winter, thereby helping to avoid sealed surfaces.

In order to be able to store the cabins during the off-season in a way that conserves resources as much as possible, their physical volume should be minimized wherever possible. Smaller packing dimensions would have the advantage of significantly simplifying transport and requiring less storage space or permanently occupying green areas. The idea of sustainability is therefore not only fulfilled at the seasonal location of the garden houses, but is also found in their absence.



The installation, reconstruction and removal of the garden houses should be as easy as possible. Previous craft experience should not be necessary. This is also an aspect that was already considered important more than 100 years ago in the occupied forest area in Vienna, by M. Schütte-Lihotzky and Adolf Loos for the settlers' houses. There was a good reason for this: a large part of the settlers was hardly trained in craftsmanship. Because many of the residents were refugees, war invalids or single parents (mainly widows with their children), an uncomplicated possibility of use with little physical effort was necessary. In the past, as today, the key is to get away from Specialization.



#### **Mies van der Rohe in Trais-Horloff**

The artist Jörg Spamer also owned a weekend house in Trais-Horloff. IMM team members noticed similarities to Mies van der Rohe's Farnsworth House during a visit. In addition, the fact that the objects are equally not on concrete foundations, but, at the risk of flooding, have been raised a few centimeters from the ground, was surprising.

The Farnsworth House was planned and designed over 70 years ago. As a weekend house for relaxation and recovery, it is considered an example of modern architecture and is another model for the planned garden houses. This is because Mies van der Rohe's "less is more" approach, according to which one should concentrate only on the essentials of a building, is also reflected in the planned constructions and designed prototypes of the cabins.



Environmentally conscious urban planning and affordable housing are topics that could not be more relevant in times of globalization, climate change and migration processes.

The parallels that can be drawn from the Bauhaus times to the present hold impulses for thinking about sustainability and an autonomous way of life through self-sufficiency. Residential, relaxation and thus living space should be accessible to the entire urban population.