Sanierung und Erweiterung von Sozialwohnungen, Saint-Nazaire, Frankreich – Mehr Raum für alle Renovation and extension of social housing apartments, Saint-Nazaire, France – More room for all
Wenige Eingriffe, maximaler Mehrwert: Transparente Fassaden mit Wintergarten und Balkon bieten viel Freiraumqualität. Carefully considered measures, maximal added value: transparent facades with winter gardens and balconies offer various free-space quality.


Jean-Philippe Vassal gab jüngst zu bedenken: „Ein solches Vorhaben muss sich auf den Bestand stützen, denn aus wirtschaftlicher Sicht bringt, was dem Bestehenden behutsam hinzugefügt wird, viel mehr als das, was standardmäßige Neubauten bieten können. Und es ist auch deshalb interessanter, weil es hier schon Leben gibt, das sich plötzlich wohlfühlt, da sich jede einzelne Wohnung neu erweist und öffnet kann.“

Druck herausnehmen. Mit Unterstützung des Bauherrn starteten sie die großangelegte Aktion, den bestehenden Turm umzugestalten und ihm zwei neue Flügel anzulegen, um 80 unterschiedliche Wohnungen (40 sanierte + 40 neue) bieten zu können. Die Funktionsanalyse des Turms brachte die entscheidenden Punkte zutage, die hier zu berücksichtigen waren. Man musste die Anzahl der Wohnungen je Eingang verringern. Es stellte sich nämlich ein echtes Dichteproblem – auf Gebäudeebene, nicht auf Bezirksebene (mit tatsächlich geringer Dichte: 48 Bewohner/hektar). Denn in diesem zehngeschossigen Wohnbau mit je vier Wohnungen auf einer Ebene teilten sich an die 100 Personen dasselbe Treppenhaus. Es ging also darum, den Druck auf die Gemeinschaftsräume zu mindern.
Natürlich musste man die Bewohner auch von den Außenbereichen und dem Ausblick profitieren lassen. Das Projekt setzt auf das Konstruktionsprinzip des U-förmigen Tunnels, was das Ersetzen der sehr geschlossenen Fassaden durch große Fensterbuchten ermöglicht. Außerdem hatten die doch recht großen Wohnungen zu kleine Wohnzimmer, vor allem bei den großen Typen, sowie beengte Balkone (5,50 m²).

Neue Hülle, neue Erschließung. All diese Probleme wurden durch die Errichtung zweier neuer Treppenhäuser, die Hinzufügung von Dielen und eine neue Gebäudehülle gelöst. An zwei Fassaden des bestehenden Gebäudes wird über die ganze Länge eine neue, drei Meter tiefe Schicht gelegt, wovon zwei Meter von einer neuen Polycarbonat-Fassade geschützt sind und so einen Wintergarten von mehr als 20 m² bieten. Vor dem Wind, aber auch vor der Sonne geschützt, stellt diese nicht belichtete Innenfläche, sobald es das Wetter erlaubt, eine natürliche Erweiterung des Wohnzimmers dar. Vor dieser neuen Gebäudehülle verläuft eine Balkonreihe längs den Fassaden und bietet eine zusätzliche Aussichtsplattform. Im Übrigen hatten die bestehenden 3 m²-Badezimmer kein Tageslicht, so dass nun ein größeres Badezimmer (9 m²) in einem früheren Wohnraum untergebracht und zur Kompensation weiterer Wohnraum in der zusätzlichen Ebene geschaffen wird.


Betrüffich ist nur, dass zwar die Seitenflügel stehen und bereits seit mehreren Monaten bewohnt sind, die Baustelle rund um den bestehenden Turm jedoch derzeit stillgelegt ist, weil jüngst große Spuren von Asbest in einigen Verkleidungen entdeckt wurden. Bis zur Klärung, wie nun vorzugehen ist, ruhen die Arbeiten, so dass die vierzig vergrößerten Wohnungen eben nur fast fertig sind. Bleibt zu hoffen, dass sich in dieser so bedauerlichen Situation ein rascher Weg durch das Stillstandsland findet.


Resultat einer genauen Untersuchung und präzisen Analyse des Viertels: Die Sanierung und Ergänzung ist ein Musterbeispiel zweckmäßiger und ökonomischer Transformation. Result of an accurate survey and precise analysis of the quarter: Renovation and addition are a model functional and economic transformation.

Perfekte Lösung: Lacaton & Vassal sanierten den bestehenden Turm und ergänzten ihn um neue Zubauten. Sie optimierten die Erschließung und bieten 40 zusätzliche neue Wohnungen. Perfect solution: Lacaton & Vassal renovated the existing tower and added two new extensions. They optimize the communal areas and offer 40 additional new apartments.
Anne Lacaton and Jean-Philippe Vassal are known for providing a great deal of added value at low cost by employing just a few, carefully considered measures. In the process they create poetic, efficient and highly contemporary spaces. Now there is a further demonstration of their particular abilities, this time in Brittany.

Quality within a budget  If you walk around districts with social housing you very quickly come to recognise the specific “handwriting” of projects by Lacaton & Vassal. In all the urban renovation projects in which this French pair of architects have been involved, including the residential tower block in Bois-le-Prêtre in Paris (architektur.aktuell 4/2012), the residential buildings of Grand Parc in Bordeaux (currently under construction) and the housing complex “Plein Ciel” in Saint-Nazaire (currently approaching completion), their interventions are never aimed at drawing attention to themselves or at copying bourgeois ways of living and their external characteristics. They concentrate instead on the quality of the apartments. They present extremely generous, spacious, bright apartments that open to the outside, and they achieve this within a tight budgetary framework.

Innovation through research  Transparent facades that reveal spaces in-between, winter gardens and rows of balconies now shape the character of the housing complex “Plein Ciel” in Saint-Nazaire. This ten-storey residential tower block is part of a housing development in the district of La Chesnaie which is a typical example of 1970s urban planning based on a program of producing modern apartments for everyone and on an optimistic view of the future. In recent times this district was unable to attract anyone and in the eyes of city residents it had become worthless – a situation that generally means demolition, a new building or overall planning changes without any real consideration of the existing buildings. In the framework of the Ville-Ouest project, run by the ANRU – the national agency for urban renewal – in La Chesnaie, three of
the six towers were retained. One was renovated in the classic manner; a second was adapted in construction terms. Lacaton & Vassal were commissioned to make proposals for the third tower. They suggested to the client, the Silvhe housing office, an innovative alternative: the renovation of the 40 existing apartments and the use of the site to build 40 new apartments.

The architectural intervention by the team of Lacaton & Vassal is based on a study of the district in which they recorded its possibilities and positive qualities: the residents, green areas, fine mature trees; solid buildings, generally in good condition; fine views from the higher apartments; a good location close to the town centre with good transport connections; cosiness, often also people who feel a connection to their district but are pinned by its poor image.

They saw the plus points of the survey as confirmation of their plan for a radical and positive transformation and as the start to a longer-term project for a permanent upgrading of the apartments and the district that follows a different route. Jean-Philippe Vassal recently made the following point: "A project of this kind must be based on the existing fabric because, from an economic viewpoint what is carefully added to the existing brings far more than anything standard new buildings can offer. And it is also more interesting, as there is life here already which suddenly acquires a new domestic quality as each of the dwelling units is able to expand and open."
Deliberately simple construction method made of metal beams and precast concrete floors, enormous added value to the apartments due to more light and free space.
Relieving pressure  With the client’s support they started the large project of redesigning the existing tower and adding two new wings to it in order to provide 80 apartments (40 renovated and 40 new ones). The functional analysis of the tower revealed the decisive points that had to be considered. The number of apartments per entrance had to be reduced: there was a real density problem – at building, not district level (despite the low density of only 48 residents/hectare). In this ten-storey building with four apartments on each floor around 100 people had to use the same staircase. The aim, therefore, was to reduce the pressure on the communal areas. Naturally, the residents must also be able to profit from the outdoor areas and the view. The project makes use of the construction principle of the U-shaped tunnel which allowed the very closed façade to be replaced by large windows. Additionally, the living rooms in the quite large apartments were too small and the balconies were cramped in size (5.50 m²).

New envelope, new circulation  All these problems were solved by building two new wings, each with its own staircase, and making a new building envelope. A new, three-metre deep layer was added across the entire width of two façades of the existing building; of this layer a two-metre deep area is protected by a new polycarbonate façade to create winter gardens measuring more than 20 m². Protected from the wind and also from the sun, whenever the weather permits this indoor, unheated space offers a natural extension of the living room. In front of this new building envelope a continuous row of balconies extends across the façade and offers an additional viewing platform. The existing 3 m² bathrooms had no daylight, and so a larger bathroom was made in one of the original bedrooms and a new bedroom made in the newly attached floor space.

Fast and simple  The construction method is deliberately simple. The structures added to the existing concrete building are made of metal beams and prestressed concrete floors, chosen for their light weight and the speed with which they can be erected. The two new wings are attached to the existing tower in a way that meets the constraints of the site and allows the entry of sunlight. The dry construction method is based on a metal structure with composite floors and a concrete finish. The façades of translucent polycarbonate, with curtaining, can be slid to close off the winter gardens, which form unheated buffer zones of 20 to 40 m² and substantially improve the building’s thermal performance.

What is luxury?  This project is model functional and economic transformation. It starts with buildings that are generally regarded as having no qualities of any kind and are usually seen negatively. It enables the creation of generous, comfortable and energy-efficient apartments. Through the renovation of the apartment types and the living conditions social housing can participate in modern luxury - which is space - and the image of collective housing is vastly improved.

The only regrettable aspect is that, although the new side wings are already standing and have been occupied for several months, the building site around the existing tower has been closed, as recently traces of asbestos were found in some cladding material. Until the action to be taken has been clarified work has been stopped, so that the forty enlarged apartments are only almost complete. It is to be hoped that a way out of this regrettable standstill can be quickly found.
Housing transformation, Plein Ciel
Saint-Nazaire/France, 3 rue des Ajoncs

Bauherr Client: Sténa

Planung Planning: Location & Vossel Architects

Projektleitung Project manager: Julien Gallois, Maître-Réch architects

Statik Structural consultant: PLBt: CESMA

Fassaden Facade: Axima

Akustik Acoustics: Guy Jourdan

Dach Roof: SMAC

Mauerwerk Masonry: Sotem

Fenster Windows: Girard-Hervouet

Türen Doors: CMBS

Elektrischinstallationen Electrical services: CEGELEC

Heizung/Lüftung/Klima/Sanitär Heating/ventilation/air-conditioning/sanitation: OCE

Stahlstruktur Steel frame: Girard-Hervouet