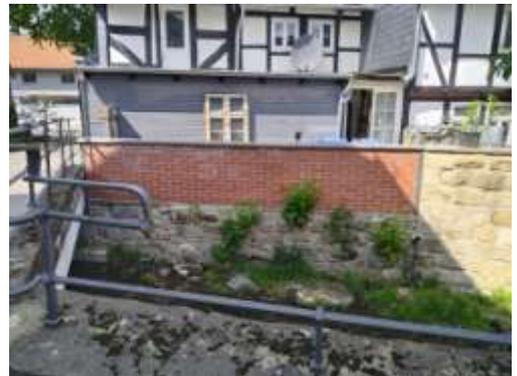


1100 Years of Goslar: A World Heritage in Decay

Report about an institutional failure
(Short version)



Written by architect Henning Frase

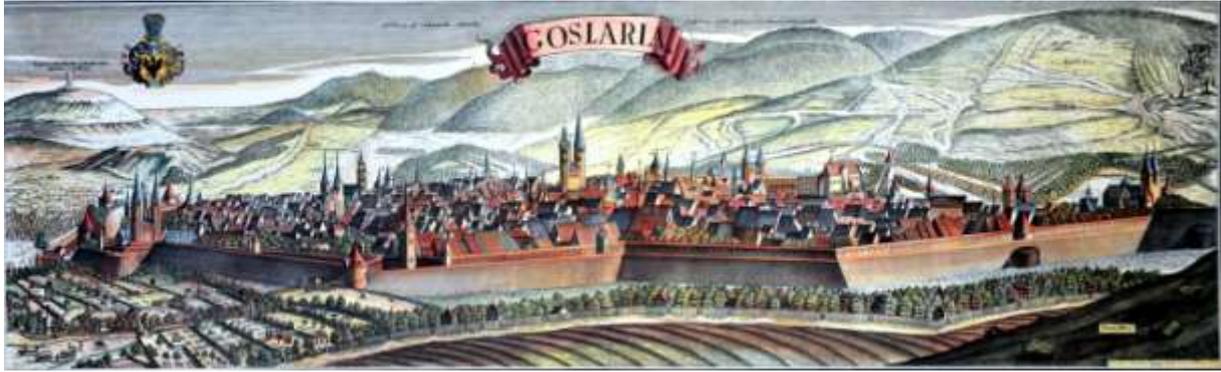
for

World Heritage Watch

Berlin, June 2022

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Goslar around 1730

Unesco World Heritage City

The town of Goslar was first mentioned in a document in 922 and celebrates its 1100th anniversary in 2022. The important period for Goslar as a central palatinate of the Holy Roman Empire began in 1009 with the first imperial synod under King Henry II. Mining at Rammelsberg dates back to the 9th/10th century and is the oldest underground area of a medieval mine still accessible today in Germany.

Until the loss of the Rammelsberg and the associated mining industry in 1527, the town of Goslar was an extremely wealthy town. This is still clearly visible in the townscape, despite many losses of historic building fabric over the centuries. In addition to the palatinate with the cathedral, the townscape was characterized by many impressive buildings and fortifications. The subterranean medieval system supplying houses with freshwater, as well as the many churches, were a sign of wealth. Almost unique and mainly to be found only in Goslar are medieval basements of several floors which could be built due to expertise from mining.

In 1992, UNESCO declared the "Mines of Rammelsberg and the Historic Town of Goslar" a World Heritage Site. In 2010, the existing World Heritage Site was extended to include the Upper Harz Water Management System. The title acknowledged the value of a cultural landscape characterized by mining with outstanding built structures and a large number of important houses of great artistic and architectural value. The Old Town of Goslar alone, with a historical area of about 116 hectares and about 1,500 listed buildings, is of highest integrity and has never been destroyed by the impact of war, bearing witness of urban self-image and great craftsmanship.

Condition of buildings and built structures

The condition of many unique built structures, as well as the streets and green spaces throughout the historic district, give the impression that they have not been adequately protected and appreciated. This is true of very many buildings, as well as the majority of streets and sidewalks throughout the historic district and green spaces with valuable trees. Particularly striking is the poor condition of small monuments whose preservation was neglected, leading to demolition in some cases. The radiating granite pavement in front of the town hall, which has been there since about 1840, has been missing in parts in front of the building for 12 years. No effort was made to restore it for this year's celebration of the city's 1,100th anniversary. To list everything in detail would result in a seemingly endless list. Overall, the result is a severely neglected cityscape. On closer inspection of the individual buildings, this picture deteriorates dramatically.

Need for rehabilitation

Various buildings and small monuments, including those of particular historical value, are in urgent need of renovation. In the Old City area, an estimated 180 buildings are in a structurally poor condition. In addition, there are about 200-300 buildings with a major renovation backlog. Rescue programs for historically valuable buildings, or the placement of buildings with suitable prospective buyers do not exist either. The finding alone, made in the context of the urban redevelopment in the Lower Town, that about 211 of 374 evaluated buildings are in a medium structural condition and about 99 are in a structurally poor condition, can only be explained by years of lack of supervision of the existing building fabric. This evaluation did not take into account the remaining approximately 1,126 listed buildings.

Vacancies

A conspicuous feature of the entire city area is the large number of buildings which have been vacant or dilapidated for ten or more years. Some of them are or were owned by the city. In these buildings in particular, unfortunately, there is a conspicuous backlog of renovation which has led either to demolition, as in the case of the administrative building at the Hildesheimer Strasse cemetery in 2014, or to visible damage, as in the case of the mausoleums in the cemetery or the pavilion in the gardens on the ramparts, the demolition of which is to be feared in the near future. Vacancy registers for the entire area of buildings in the Old Town are not known to exist.

One of the most striking buildings is the house of the former restaurant Piano in Bergstraße 4, whose rear building borders the parking lot of the music school. This parking lot is also used by many arriving tourists. The building has been empty for about 25 years and is visibly decaying. The historic fabric of the building is clearly getting lost. Numerous similar cases can be observed, for example, in the Breite Straße, Bäringerstraße, and in the upper part of the Old Town.



The Old Town conservation area with its individual listed monuments. *Map: Masterplan Altstadt Goslar 2009*

Streets, parking lots and green spaces

The city of Goslar has about 9.0 km of streets, which are an important part of the appearance of the Old Town. Their condition is similar to the buildings. For many years, until the most recent renewal work on the Abzucht and the Moritz-von-Sachsen Square, there was no uniform street design.

About half of the streets in the Old Town - both roadways and sidewalks - are either in poor condition or consist of various mixtures of materials in a wide variety of laying patterns, giving the Old Town the appearance of a hardware store display. A uniform paving of the streets and sidewalks throughout would greatly enhance the cityscape.

Even more unfortunate is the condition of the street trees in Old Town. The root zone of many trees is not protected, and they grow over their boundaries or are damaged by vehicular traffic. An example of this can be found in front of the Market Church, in the area most visited by tourists. Directly on the city wall at Werderhof on the main entrance road to the old town, a willow tree (recently removed) about 3 m high grew out of the masonry. A similar situation can be observed at the Frankenberg Church.

Lighting and energy supply

The entire streetscape of the Old Town is illuminated by different versions of lanterns. Lighting adapted to the style of the Old Town exists mainly only around the market square. The lighting model chosen by the city as a successor to the lanterns from the 1960s does not harmonize with the important facades.

A problem that has existed for years are the distribution stations in the Old Town. They are either defaced or built so close to the buildings that the intermediate area remains permanently wet and can cause damage to the buildings. Most of the basic lines for energy supply are outdated and have not been renewed in the entire area over a long period of time. This affects larger parts of the old town.

House entrances

A striking feature of the Old Town is the variety of different individual plinth designs. There is a wide range of different materials and patterns of tiles, granite and sheet metal cladding, or clinker. Even the entrance of Charley-Jakob-Str. 1, directly next to the city administration with the lower monument protection authority is unmissable even for tourists and residents.

Failures

The city of Goslar is responsible for the preservation of many built structures, and also has a supervisory duty over the entire private building stock, as far as the preservation of the old town under monument law is concerned. The Lower (municipal) Monument Protection Authority of the City of Goslar is responsible for handling matters relating to monument law. A single fully trained monument conservator works for the old town, who is in home office three days a week.

Years of failure to carry out the necessary repairs or safeguarding works have already led to an irreparable loss of part of the historic building fabric. Where renovation is still possible, this leads to immensely high follow-up costs to catch up with the renovation backlog. Before the necessary renovation work begins, one of the main tasks of the Goslar city administration will be to convince the citizens of the necessity of the upcoming work, and to provide the affected owners with professional support and assistance.

This must be done against the background of the obligation to protect the world cultural heritage and to preserve it for the next generations and for all humankind. Such a task can only be accomplished in harmony between citizens and city administration, which is indispensable for the continued existence of a living urban structure.

Demands

To the City of Goslar

The redevelopment of the Old Town must become a top priority, and the mayor should immediately present a comprehensive and thoroughly financed redevelopment plan for the Old Town that meets the high demands of a world heritage site.

It is important to look for the reasons why so much of the stock of architectural monuments is in such poor condition. In many cases, only worse can be prevented, but the original condition cannot be saved in its entirety. In particular, it should be examined whether the financial resources, expertise and number of employees in the responsible departments are sufficient. The design statutes should be revised and given greater binding force. More thorough inspections should be carried out during and after every construction project. A comprehensive survey of the Old Town seems essential and should be carried out according to the following criteria:

- On which buildings were construction measures carried out that do not comply with the regulations for the protection of historical monuments.
- A complete damage register of all buildings in the Old Town.
- A vacancy register of buildings and search for suitable prospective buyers for vacant properties are needed.
- Uniform urban design
- Construction management of the City of Goslar to assist with planning and construction implementation.
- Establishment of a building materials exchange for the donation of historical building materials. An example of this can be found in the World Heritage City of Quedlinburg.
- A rescue program for acutely endangered buildings of architectural-historical importance - e.g. the Marstall (former royal stables), the Pavilion in the ramparts, Trollmönch, houses in Frankenberger Street etc.
- Rapid and consistent implementation of flood protection measures to prevent another flood disaster like the one in 2017.
- Creation of a cellar cadastre for cellars, corridors and other underground facilities.

To those responsible for World Heritage in Germany

The Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and Media should investigate

- how to improve the World Heritage monitoring in Germany, and
 - how German monument protection law can be improved in order to identify at an early stage undesirable developments such as those described above, and to remedy them through improved intervention options; and
- commission a regular report by an independent body on the condition of German World Heritage sites.

The federal and state ministries responsible for building and urban development should urgently set up a program that makes it easier for homeowners to renovate listed buildings in a way that is appropriate for the monument and at the same time takes climate protection requirements into account, and in doing so work closely with homeowners and civil society.

The Author

Henning Frase works as a freelance architect and expert for damage to buildings mainly in Berlin and Lower Saxony. In addition to many years of work in the field of structural damage assessment and the restoration and repair of built structures, he has had close personal bonds with the city of Goslar and has known the city's development for decades. He has renovated three listed buildings in the old town of Goslar.

Photographic Documentation Based on Examples

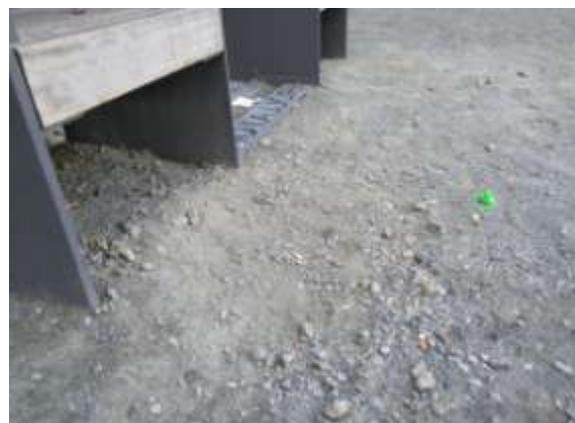
All Photos by Henning Frase

Market Square



View in May 2022 with advertisement for the 1.100-year city jubilee.

The most important facade view of the city of Goslar - painted, drawn and photographed countless times for centuries - still presents itself unfinished after twelve years and more than €12 million in construction costs. For 12 years, a large area of the radiant natural stone paving which has been in front of the town hall since approx. 1840, has been missing in front of the town hall.



In 2021 it was considered to frame the radiant pavement of the market square with inappropriate grey granite slabs. This idea met with wide public resistance and was not implemented. Presently, the area is covered only by grey gravel.

Bergstraße 4



Backside of Bergstraße 4, photographed on 15 May 2022. The building is being destroyed piece by piece without any intervention being taken. Due to its location directly next to the parking lot behind the music school, which is used by many tourists, this is being noticed by tourists as well.



Glockengießerstraße 93a

The building is located directly opposite the city of Goslar's years-long major construction site for the new "Kulturmarktplatz" (culture market square) which houses the city archive and library, as well as the adjacent city museum.



The timber-framed facade has been exposed for many years and is without any protection against the elements. Easily recognizable, the truss was filled with non-permitted poroton bricks and with construction foam. Likewise, rainwater has been penetrating the protruding horizontally supported beams for years, promoting the possibility of destruction of the entire building.



The „Kulturmarktplatz“ building, which is entirely inappropriate in style and size.



Detail of the truss at the gable with poroton bricks and construction foam.



View towards the street with boarded-up window opening.



View from the Glockengießerstraße.

An der Gose 2

This building, constructed around 1510, has been vacant for many years and is visibly decaying inside and outside.



View of the street facade.



Due to the roof, which has been leaking for a long time, rainwater enters the building and destroys the building structure. Rainwater has been running through the broken gutter and down the building for years, destroying the framework and masonry.

Bäringerstraße 2

The building, built around 1700, stood empty and visibly deteriorated from 2002 to 2016. Parts of the building threatened to collapse onto the street, and rainwater ran into the interior through the broken roof for many years, causing very extensive damage to the entire structure. Approximately 60% of the facade facing the street had to be replaced. The deterioration of the building threatened demolition.



View of the inner courtyard in 2016. Defective gutters and lack of supervision led to rot in large wall areas of the truss. The inner courtyard was overgrown with trees and shrubs.



Interior view of the 1st floor with emergency braces as protection against collapse of the floor ceiling to the street side.

Breite Straße 33 und 34



The baroque building stood empty for 10 years and was almost completely demolished inside. The back was covered with a tarpaulin for several years.

The buildings are an absolutely indispensable part of the development on Breite Straße and were in danger of disappearing from the cityscape due to years of decay. Attention was already drawn to this in the 2016 World Heritage Monitoring Black Book. Since 2019, the buildings have been restored.



View of the backside of the building until 2019.

Kornstraße 8

Core building 1501 with later extensions. Seat of the Masonic Lodge Hercynia zum flammenden Stern i. O. Goslar. The entrance to the building is one of the most beautiful entrances in the city of Goslar. The sandstone work around the entrance is of outstanding quality. The repair work on the sandstone masonry to the sides of it is of such poor visual quality that it significantly disturbs the overall appearance of the facade.



Street view.



View of the side to the left of the entrance.



Decomposing sandstone at the foot of the column.



View of the right-hand side of the facade.



Detail of the restoration works on the right-hand side of the facade.

Marstall (former royal stable)

Built in 1519, rebuilt several times and now used as a restaurant. The slate roof, which covers several hundred square meters, is decaying on both sides of the roof. Due to the penetration of rainwater, the historic roof structure is damaged and may be lost.



View of the roof on the backside of the building with visible decay of the slate roof.



View of the front side of the building with clearly visible decay of the slate roof.

Schreiberstraße 11

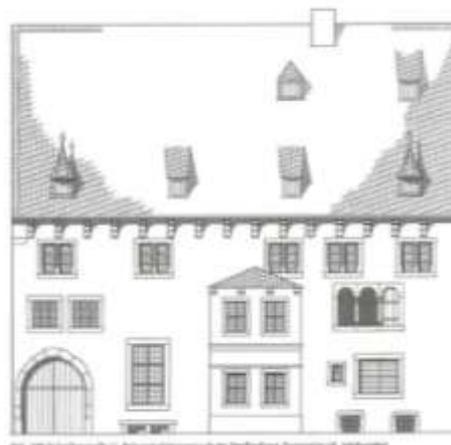
Built from 1250 and extended in 1502, the building is one of the oldest buildings in the city of Goslar and is located directly next to the Siemens House, the ancestral home of the Siemens family of industrialists, one of the tourist highlights of the city of Goslar. The building has been remodeled several times over the years. In 1976, with the permission of the city of Goslar, the bower was demolished and modern windows were installed instead of the Gothic windows.



View of the facade 2022.



Backside of the building Schreiberstraße 11.



Hypothetical reconstruction of the facade Schreiberstraße 11, Fig.: Elmar Arnold: Aus Stein gebaut.

Marktstraße 26 and Part of the St. Aegidii Church

Rear side of the building located on Bäckerstraße Marktstraße 26. The building is decaying with the knowledge of the Lower (municipal) Monument Protection Authority of the city of Goslar for years. Every time it rains, water runs into the half-timbered structure.



Downpipe at the building broken for years.

Obere Mühlstraße 10

Built in 1608. The building has been vacant for a few years and is increasingly decaying.



Street view.



Backside view.



View of the side and backside.

Worthstraße 9

Built around 1510, the building still has a very beautiful baroque staircase inside and has been in a conspicuously poor condition for decades. The facades facing Worthstraße and at the rear of the building appear disfigured by the single-pane windows. The half-timbering has been recognizably in need of repair towards Worthstraße for many years.



View from the Worthstraße.



Backside of the building Worthstraße 9 seen from the Dohmstraße. The façade has almost completely lost its historic appearance.



Another backside of the building with a clear loss of its original appearance.

Frankenberger Church and Frankenberger Plan



Overgrown and less visible church.



Plants growing too close to the building. Risk of humidity and loss of visual integrity.



Trees growing on the city wall. The growing roots destroy the top of the wall.



Trees growing on the city wall. The growing roots destroy the wall.



Backside passage to the church. Probably due to a roof strut broken for a long time, Water has run down the facade and has Destroyed the truss.



Destroyed truss at the transition from the swellwood to the stems and struts.

St. Stephani Church at the Breite Straße

The paths around the baroque church consist of asphalt pavement that has been repaired several times. The stairs from Breite Straße to the churchyard have slipped and are not safe for traffic.



Tree growth directly on the choir of St. Stephani Church. The roots of the tree grow directly next to the foundation walls and can cause severe damage when they grow into the foundation walls. If the tree snaps off due to its slanted position, there is a risk that parts of the building will be broken out of the choir of the church.



Tree growing in the gutter, 2021.



The gravestone has been decaying for years with knowledge of the Lower Monument Protection Authority. For its conservation it should be moved to another location, or separated from its underground, and have a roofing.



Pavillon in the Gardens of the Ramparts

The pavilion is located in the gardens of the ramparts behind the St. Annenhaus. The slate roof and the gutter have been damaged for about 10 years. Rainwater has been running into the building for many years. Approximately 45% of the roof and walls have already been damaged to such an extent that the original building fabric has been irretrievably lost. Rescue actions up to the offer to move the pavilion to save it from demolition have been unsuccessful so far. The deletion from the list of monuments and the subsequent demolition seem to follow in the near future.



The pavillon with its entrance.



Side wall destroyed by putrefaction seen from outside and inside.



Detail of the door cladding.



Decorative element next to the entrance.

Sandstone Fountain next to the Breites Tor



Part of the fountain broken out since 2021.



Left side of the fountain with parts of the sandstone having flaked.



Gravestone monument in the garden Of the Werderhof. Due to its wrong positioning, the gravestone exhibits beginning damages of the sandstone.



Visible points of fracture and damages in the sandstone.

Breites Tor and Werderhof

On the city wall next to the Werderhof, for years a willow could grow out of the wall up to 3 meters high. It was removed only in 2022. What remained was the damage to the masonry, which was not repaired.



Damage to the masonry.

Unkept place at the roundel tower.

Knochenhauerstraße 3

Knochenhauerstraße 3, rear building opposite of the Abzucht Creek. Ivy has been growing on and in the building for many years with no apparent conservation measures ordered.



Ullrich's Garden at the Breite Straße



The Pigeon Tower.



Ullrich's Garden seen from the Breite Straße.



Damaged truss at the archway over the entrance.



Left gatepost with major breakout.



Damaged truss at the swellwood next to the entrance.



Right gatepost with clear decay of the sandstone post.



Backside of the Pigeon Tower, 2021.



Basement window of a subterranean basement vault under the garden.

Jewish Cemetery of Goslar at the Glockengießerstraße

The photos were taken in 2021 und 2022. The cemetery shows clear signs of neglect. The natural stone wall facing Glockengießerstraße has been heavily overgrown with ivy for years. Likewise, many gravesites along the wall, and the rest of the grounds have been overgrown with ivy. Next to the entrance, an ash tree, which has already been cut back several times, grows directly on the wall. The ivy growth has probably already caused significant damage to the wall. Despite the recent cutting back of ivy, the entire cemetery is in need of a basic horticultural overhaul.



Centraler memorial stone in a clearly unkept environment.



Abzucht Creek with Bridges and Supporting Walls



View of the Abzucht, painted by Albert Hertel 1879.



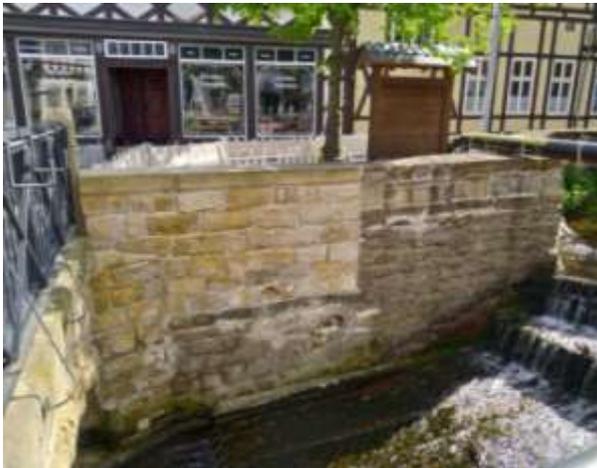
The view in 2021.



Photo of May 2022.



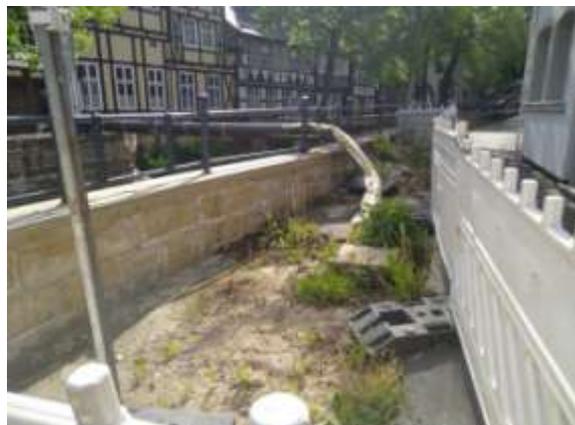
Inappropriate masonry not produced in line with monument conservation rules on the second side of the bridge.



Reconstruction of a wall with inappropriate stone forms. The works were approved by the municipality but faulted by the Agency for Monument Protection of the State of Lower Saxony.



Repair works at the bridge over the Abzucht have never been completed since the flood event of 2017.



The works were started only in 2021 and then aborted. The construction site is fenced off and growing over with weeds.



Increment of a wall constructed with inappropriate natural stones.



Condition of the pavement at the “Gerenne“, another wooden run-off system, in 2021.



Newly-laid pavement of natural stones in 2021 on the bridge with too wide spacing between the joints.



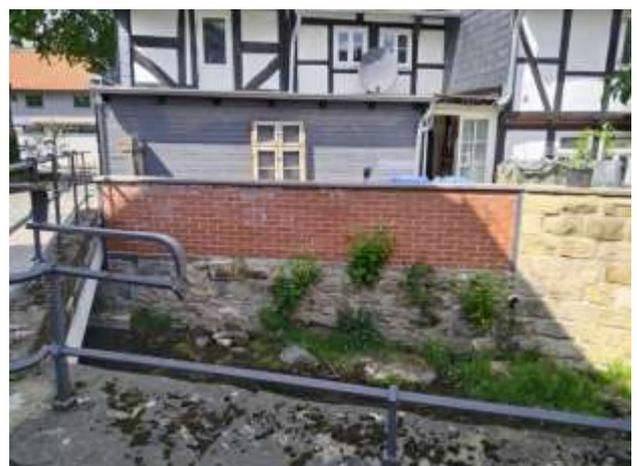
Unsuitable connection to existing covers.



A mix of various materials of concrete and natural stones and tarmac in the area of the historic bridge.



Street and boardwalk pavement in front of the bridge of various materials.



The wall at the bridge over the Abzucht near An der Gose has been constructed with clinkers. This section must be built up with natural stones.

Unteres Wasserloch at the Glockengießerstraße 56

The Untere Wasserloch is part of the medieval fortifications and the outlet of the Abzucht, the town moat flowing through the town of Goslar. In 2017, during a prolonged heavy rainfall, the stream caused a flood in the city leading to about 10 million EUR of damage to the historic fabric and infrastructure.

No less than 6 watercourses cross or flow into each other here (GRIEP 1986). In the flow-through area of the structure there is, for example, a mill race whose state of preservation must be classified as in urgent need of rehabilitation. In the event of a recurrence of flooding, there is a risk that it will collapse. In the event of a partial blockage in the water drainage under the building due to flotsam carried along, the course of the stream would dam up again - as it did in 2017 - in the lower town and would probably lead to very extensive damage again. A complete blockage would completely submerge the lower town within a very short time.



The Unteres Wasserloch – view towards the east.

Feuergraben at the Clausthaler Straße

Created as a fire pond for the water supply of the old town in case of fire. The pond has a length of about 120 meters.



Collapsing supporting wall of natural stone.

Fortification Walls of the Medieval City Fortifications

In 2020, a section of the field wall next to the railroad tracks collapsed. Its dilapidated condition was certainly noticeable over a longer period of time and was not repaired. The field wall is part of the medieval fortification of the city. The renovation section extends over approx. 700 m.



Partial collapse of the field wall in April 2020.



Provisional support in early summer 2020.



Still existing support in May 2022 during the continuing rehabilitation works on the wall.

Boardwalks and Streets



Boardwalk of the Glockengießerstraße at the new Kulturmarktplatz, and other examples.



House Entrances

Throughout the old town, countless different house entrances designed with tiles or artificial stones can be found. Many of these entrances are inappropriate and do not do justice to the historic townscape.



Entrance to Charley-Jakob-Str.1, next to a municipality building. The staircase, directly in front of the office of the Lower (municipal) Monument Protection Authority of Goslar, has been decaying for many years.



Distribution Stations

Throughout the old town there are distribution boxes placed in front of buildings. Many of them are regularly pasted or sprayed with paint. More serious, however, is the small distance from the building's exterior walls, which can create a permanently damp gap and thus increase the risk of building damage. Useful design solutions to prevent water ingress are difficult to identify.



Street Trees in the Entire Old Town

The condition of the root areas of many street trees is deplorable. Over many years, the tree roots have not been adequately protected, so that many of them are either damaged by car traffic or have grown heavily into the adjacent pavement area.



For many years, the roots of the linden tree have grown into the pavement and around the curb. The tree is located on the Abzucht and right next to the City Museum.

This situation is very common throughout the Old Town area. The roots of many trees are clearly damaged by road traffic. This can lead to the death of the trees. Against the background that the old trees are formative for the cityscape and important for climate regulation, the lack of care is incomprehensible.

These examples can be found on more than 100 trees in the Bäckerstraße, the Abzucht, the Schilderstraße, the Königstraße, on parking lots and at the Jakobi church.



Exposed roots at the Market church.



Jakobi church: roots of a chestnut tree damaged since many years.



At the Abzucht, with adjacent concrete pavement.



Untere Schildwache, a tree grown into the pavement.