

# VIENNA THE RED CITY

## HERITAGE MATTERS

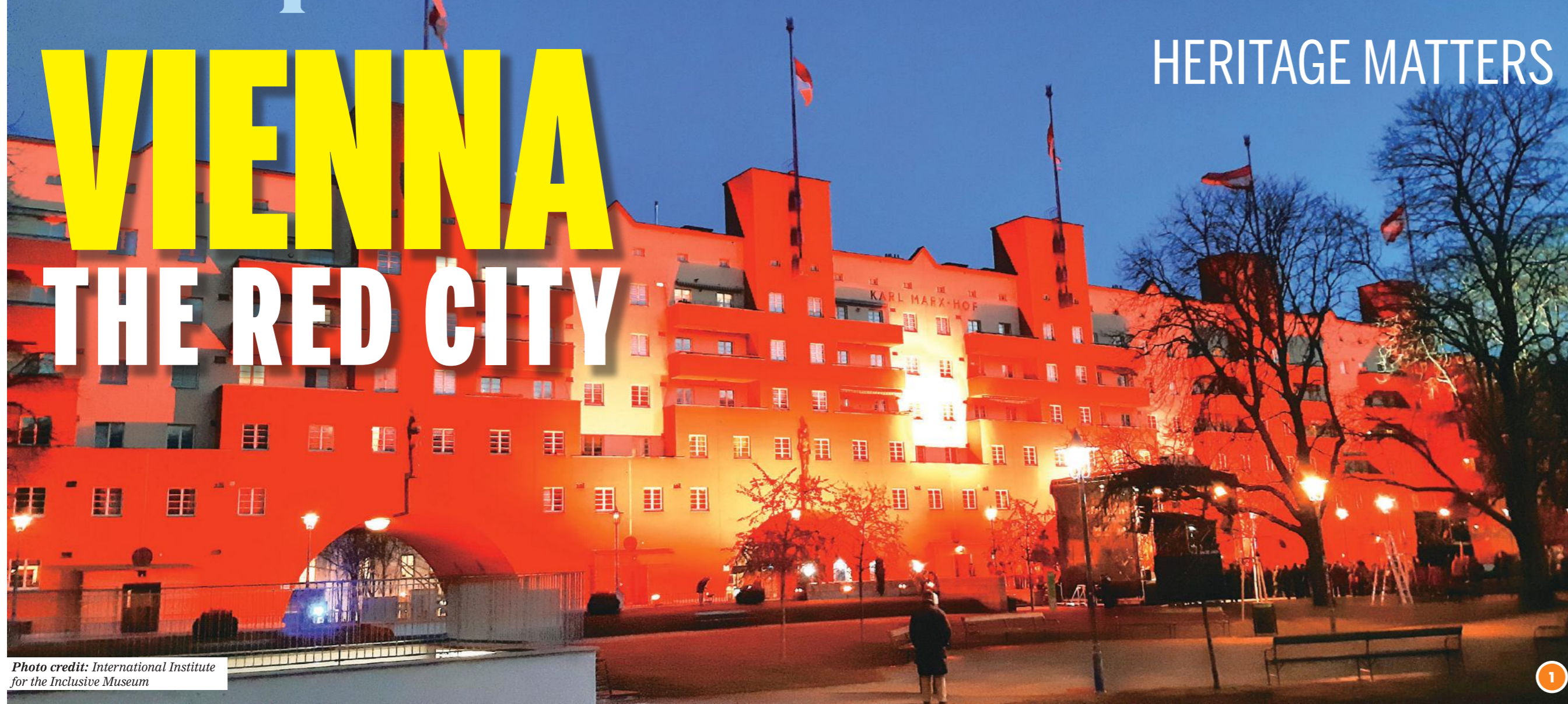


Photo credit: International Institute for the Inclusive Museum

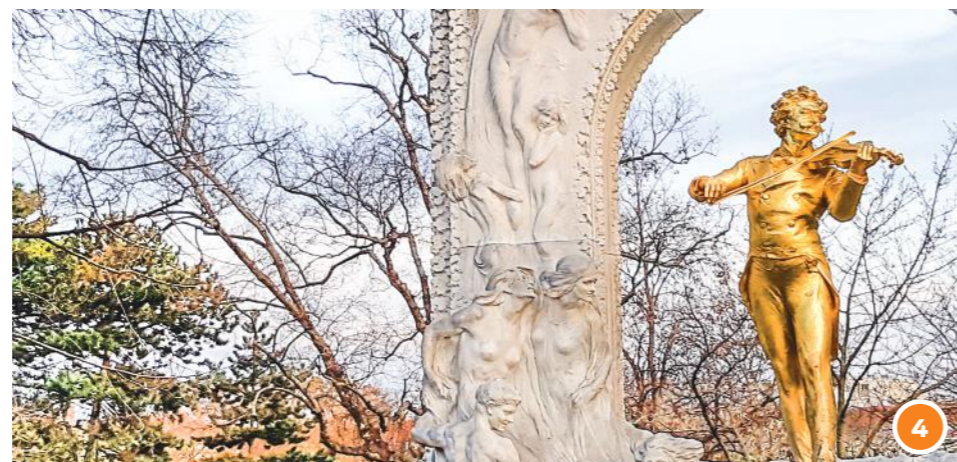


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Pic: PID Alexandra Kromus

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- 1 The 1.2 km long Karl Marx Hof is symbolic of Red Vienna. It includes a museum on the history and memory of the place.
- 2 Ludwig van Beethoven sculpture presents a very different view of one of the greatest composers by German artist Markus Lüpertz in Vienna, 2017. The bronze sculpture is 2.7-metre high. "I tried to portray the artist's problems, his difficulties, his deafness, his problem as a human being in a sense, in a work," Lüpertz said.
- 3 Representatives of World Heritage Cities signed 'The Vienna Declaration - Preservation, Development and Management of World Heritage in Dynamic Cities' on February 15, 2019.
- 4 The gilded bronze monument of Johann Strauss II framed by marble relief made by Edmund Hellmer.
- 5 Vienna is emerging as one of the most vibrant multicultural cities in Europe despite the wider European opposition to refugees and immigrants. Performances by South African and Indian dancers from the very place in Heldenplatz, where Hitler gave his well-known speech on Anschluss, is symbolic of the triumph of democracy and multiculturalism over fascism.

Vienna is celebrated as the World Music City. The surprising aspect of it is the social housing that is used by nearly 62% of the population. It is also called the Red City because of its socialist character over the past century. It is the most humane to residents. Reasonably priced rentals. Maintained by the City Administration. This social consciousness is rare in Europe. Vienna is also the fastest growing city in central Europe. Given its human rights approach and welcoming refugees and migrants the diversification of the population is organic and inclusive. It is also one of the main headquarters of the UN Organisations.

Vienna now has a diverse population that brings with it a range of performing arts and musical traditions. These are not just transplanted forms. But emerging hybrids and fusions nurtured by the creativity of the City. A national multicultural festival and a World Music event would be apt during summer months, especially in the 150-year-old ice skating rink near the Konzerthaus. Vienna is a dynamic and living city where a range of arts, culture and heritage traditions have transformed and informed creative Vienna.

One year ago, in Heritage Matters I illustrated the Danish Hygge or cosiness as translatable to happiness. Given the diversity of understandings of happiness in Europe, in Vienna we have Schmah (Schmey) a 'word with many meanings. It could denote a joke, a trick or lie. But also, regional or personal charm, a sense of humour and wit. It is a word that holds an inherent tension between levity and sharpness, high and low culture. Conversationally, it is displayed in banter, the quick back and forth characterised by quintessentially Viennese sense of rhythm' (Courtesy Daniela Enzi) Vienna is a World Heritage City. It evolved on the Danube River in eastern Austria. It developed from early Celtic and Roman settlements into a medieval and Baroque City. It eventually became the capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It was the leading European music centre with outstanding composers and musicians such as Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert. The architectural ensembles of Vienna are outstanding. Baroque mansions and gardens. The late 19th century Ringstrasse ensemble lined with grand buildings, monuments and parks and the Gründerzeit constructions from the beginning of the modern period.

It was inscribed on the World Heritage List for the following: **Criterion (II):** The urban and

architectural qualities of the Historic Centre of Vienna bear outstanding witness to a continuing interchange of values throughout the second millennium.

**Criterion (IV):** Three key periods of European cultural and political development – the Middle Ages, the Baroque period, and the Gründerzeit – are exceptionally well illustrated by the urban and architectural heritage of the Historic Centre of Vienna.

**Criterion (VI):** Since the 16th century Vienna has been universally acknowledged to be the musical capital of Europe.

So how does the city deal with the changing demographics and emerging neighbourhoods in the 21st century? Relevance to contemporary populations is critical for buying in commitment to conservation from the immediate stakeholders. Changes can be challenging. The conflicts between conservation and development are universal. If you look at the history of World Heritage sites in danger, you would be mistaken to think that the situation



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(Professor Dr. Amareswar Galla, an Indo Australian, was the invited expert adviser for the Vienna Declaration adopted on February 15, 2019)

is mainly the concern of countries of the South, so called developing or low economic indicator countries. It may come as a surprise that one of the best preserved World Heritage Cities, Vienna is under focus for the maintenance of its characteristic skyline.

The Mayor of Vienna Dr Michael Ludwig decided to take a constructive way forward – that is to seek the comparative experience of other World Heritage Cities, especially from Europe. The learnings will also inform the long-awaited drafting of the management plan for the historic core city of Vienna.

He emphasised that protecting and managing its cultural heritage are central tasks for Vienna. "The City of Vienna invests heavily in preserving the histor-

ic city centre and protecting its heritage of cultural assets. Vienna is a living city in full development - it is not a museum. We need to focus on combining conservation and development."

Over 50 representatives from 25 World Heritage Cities came together in Vienna last week under the rubric of the Organization of World Heritage Cities (OWHC). Amsterdam, Berlin, Bordeaux, Bruges, Brussels, Budapest, Dubrovnik, Krakow, Prague, Riga and Warsaw, Historical Centre Baku, Moscow, Istanbul, St. Petersburg and Tel Aviv participated. China and Mexico also sent representatives.

They met in the Town Hall sharing the different challenges and approaches for safeguarding heritage elements in their cities.

As President of the Vienna Provincial Parliament, Ernst Woller sums up the challenges facing World Heritage Cities: "Cities are home to more than half of the world's population. Many of these cities also have World Heritage sites that require protection. What is more, almost all cities are undergoing rapid growth and dynamic development, which needs to be reconciled with World Heritage preservation. Cities bear social responsibility and have to remain living, liveable habitats for everyone who lives there."

Maria Vassilakou, Deputy Mayor and Executive City Councillor for Urban Planning in Vienna, explains that "The City of Vienna is aware of its valuable heritage and does its very best to guarantee the protection of the city's priceless cultural and architectural assets. At the same time, more and more people are attracted by the high quality of life Vienna offers and choose to live, work or study here. Reconciling these various tasks is a challenge, but Vienna is not the only city facing this challenge. The high number of participants at the conference shows quite impressively how many cities are committed to finding a way to reconcile growth and preservation."

It is useful to recall how best Vietnam decided to ensure a balance between two non-negotiables – Conservation and Development. It did not see them as either/or options. But decided to build capacity of responsible institutions to upskill and build their ability to promote Sustainable Heritage Development.

As the champion of the Red City Vienna, Mayor Dr Michael Ludwig eloquently argues that no city is a museum frozen in time. Perhaps we need to extend the World Heritage discourse beyond the city as an artefact to the city as a living organism subject to the processes of urbanism.

NEXT WEEK

Heritage Matters will take you to the world of art and mental health in Kolkata