

The 7 Most Endangered 2014

Project Fact Sheet

<u>Project Title</u>	Colour Row Settlement
<u>Location</u>	Chernyakhovsk, Kaliningrad, Russia
<u>Initial input date</u>	13.09.2017
<u>Current status</u>	
<u>Latest update</u>	17.07.2018

Summary, status, prognosis

The Colour Row Settlement is located in the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad. It comprises a series of houses and apartments designed by the then young German architect Hans Scharoun and built between 1921 and 1924 to house rail and postal workers. It is a prime example of an early worker's settlement including vegetable gardens and recreation areas. The buildings were painted in bright colours leading to the name "Colour Row".

The buildings are currently occupied by owner families plus some municipally let house/apartment units. Externally the buildings are in an advanced state of dilapidation. Internally the houses are primitive by modern standards, having no thermal insulation and the main means of heating being coal fired ovens.

While most of the owners would like their premises restored and brought up to modern standards of comfort, not all are convinced and scepticism remains with regard to the outcome of the project.

With no major repair work in the past 90 years, it is a unique preserve of functioning originals: doors, ovens, plasters, clinkers, tiles, paints. This shared heritage of Germany and Russia is an inter-national rescue challenge.

On a positive note the first apartment has been acquired, which is the first step in preparing a model Colour Row renovation and the project has been granted the unexpectedly high status of a "Monument of Federal Significance".

Classification: **C Poor progress**

Basic data

Nominator:

Mr. Nikolay Fenogenov – EN Council Member
International Centre of the Roerichs Museum, Moscow

Brief description:

Early example of urban layout and colour in construction.

Owner:

17 buildings with 83 private apartments occupied by owner families and some municipally let house/apartment units.

13 houses make up a House Owners Association.

Mrs. Olga Sidorenko is Chairwoman of the "Colour Row" House Owners Association

Administrator:

None indicated.

Context, description

The appraisal of the project is based on information provided at a meeting with the promoter in The Hague on 29th May 2015 as there was no site visit.

The Colour Row Settlement is located in the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad known from 1255 to 1945 as East Prussia. It is situated some 4 km to the east of the town centre of Chernyakhovsk, previously known as Insterburg.

The Colour Row settlement currently comprises 17 buildings with 83 private apartments with owner families and some municipally let house/apartment units.

An expertise has been carried out and submitted to the Heritage Authority for approval and heritage listing. In February 2017 the Colour Row settlement was listed as of “National Importance” – the highest level under Russian Law. It also includes general proposals on the restoration works. Under the current municipal cadastral areas, the gardens do not form part of the Colour Row settlement, however now that they are listed the gardens become an integral part of the Colour Row settlement protected area.

While most of the owners would like their premises restored and brought up to modern standards of comfort, not all are convinced and scepticism remains. As a first step to increasing the level of support, it is intended to restore some rooms of house No. 17 and use them as a meeting room and model to convince the owners that the buildings can be restored and brought up to modern levels of comfort.

The initial aim, therefore, is to show how the Colour Row Settlement could be restored and the interiors of the buildings brought up to modern standards of thermal insulation and economic heating for the comfort of the inhabitants. The promoter has acquired a first apartment in house No.17 to serve as a model after renovation and is in the process of acquiring a second one next to the first.

The longer term aim, once the cooperation of the owners/occupiers is assured, is to repair and restore the external facades to the original Scharoun design, to insulate the interiors and to install wiring and plumbing for modern household amenities. Also in the longer term, the restoration of the façade of Gagarin Street 38 is foreseen to recreate the original entrance to the Colour Row settlement.

Issues, problems, threats

The project is likely to proceed in small steps to overcome the scepticism of the owners/occupiers. The first step is to provide an assembly hall in house No. 17 where owners/occupiers can observe the improvements for themselves and discuss the improvements planned for their own properties.

As a first step it would be preferable if all the apartments of No. 17, which now include the old assembly hall, could be bought out and taken over for the proposed restoration. This would however necessitate municipal support.

The path proposed in the last update failed to lead to usable results, as one of the neighbours refused to sign into it. (100% approval is required by law). Hence a different path was taken by the promoter. It has since collected some donations and acquired one apartment, app 40m². Fund are being now found to take over another one, app 50m². Then internal repair works may start as well as exhibition activities, etc. without neighbours being concerned. As a third step, the attic, presently out of use, will be addressed, as each co-owner is entitled to

his share of common property. The attic is to be converted into usable space, under a design already existing, donated by a licensed architectural company.

Subsequent development of the project depends on the support of the owners/occupiers. Obviously it would be preferable if all could agree and restoration of all the houses executed as one project, however this may not happen and a piece meal approach may be necessary.

The municipality may continue to own and manage the restored house No. 17. It is planned to let it out for community activities and, for example, for educational workshops. It is envisaged that there will be a permanent manager/housekeeper on site.

DIY-repairs are a continuous threat, such as cutting in new doors, replacing old fillings, etc. Here, co-operation between the promoter, local association and Heritage Authority has proven effective by reversing such steps more than once. At the moment, all three are engaged in trying to eliminate through traffic from the street in order to prevent vibration damage.

A bigger threat is the provincial repair programme, which already has had the rooves of 5 houses replaced with the wrong roof tiles. The other houses of the settlement are due to receive new roof tiles in the coming years which increases the urgency.

Status pre-mission

Unknown

Summary EN/EIBI recommendations, action programme:

The value and impact of this example of Scharoun's early work will be lost relatively soon if left much longer in its present state. The houses are already in an advanced state of dilapidation which is being aggravated by the efforts of the owners/occupiers to improve their quality of life by inappropriate solutions, from a heritage point of view, such as styro-foaming the facades.

An action programme for the restoration of the Colour Row Settlement requires, as the first stage, the restoration of No. 17 as a model of what can be done. Ideally the scepticism of the owners/occupiers will be overcome and agreement found for the external works to be carried out under one contract to increase efficiency and minimise the cost of the whole operation.

It is recommended that an experienced architect and conservation/restoration experts be engaged to design and plan the works to be carried out. The same specialists should also be engaged to supervise all the works on site.

The continuing support of the Chernyakhovsk Municipal authorities and the Heritage Authority are essential to the successful completion of this project.

Progress on recommendations and latest status

Unknown

Impact of EIBI/EN intervention

Nominator's Comments:

Due to reasons partly outside the EN Nominator's influence, the impact of the nomination has been limited. Subsequently there has been no traceable direct impact from the nomination of German / international sponsors, which has inhibited the action plan of Kamswyker Kreis.

The lack of the personal presence of any EN/EIBI experts to undertake an on-site examination and talks did not impress the municipal authorities of Chernyakhovsk nor the Kaliningrad heritage office and is also true for the inhabitants. EN members would be warmly welcomed should they indicate a wish to come along, make a speech or write a letter to the authorities at any given moment – even a small move counts!

Brick-by-brick destruction of the buildings through inadequate repairs continues – several roofs deteriorated seriously during Christmas 2016 and the front and rear entrances to two houses have dilapidated further this autumn. Efforts are being made to halt the dilapidation and on several occasions as in the case of the Post Office in House 40 and the rear entrance to House 16 these have been successful, however others such as the display window of House 4 were not.

More positively the Russian national chapters of ICOMOS and do.co.mo.mo were greatly impressed by the EN nomination. It surely helped to put the Colour Row settlement on Russian do.co.mo.mo's 2016 list of the 100 Outstanding Monuments of 20th Century in the 2016. Although the German do.co.mo.mo. has not reacted to this move of their fellow society, the German ICOMOS' Heritage@Risk booklet 2011-2013, prepared in 2013 and published in 2015 would hardly have been possible without the EN nomination.

Likewise, the advisory expert boards of Moscow's federal ministry of Culture paid great attention to the EN nomination. When the Nominator submitted a definite heritage listing classification proposal in 2015, the authorities were doubtful as to whether the settlement really deserved the high degree of a Monument of Federal Significance. In fact the board met twice, and voted twice unanimously in favour of the classification. Since February 2017, Colour Row is a „Federal Monument“, thus fulfilling one of our long sought aims.

Thus the fact of EN nomination was definitely beneficial and is being further used in the rescue and acquisition efforts. We would have wished to have been asked to provide EN with follow-up reports more frequently, and have them critically reviewed and published, for continuous international scrutiny of both us and the authorities.

Appraisal Team's Comments:

Given that the EIBI Technical Adviser was unable to travel to the project site, contacts were limited to that with Mr. Dimitri Suchin. Mr. Suchin is a passionate enthusiast and supporter of this heritage project and has made every effort to provide complete and up to date information on it. Lacking contacts with the local players, the impact of the EIBI/EN intervention has been limited to encouraging Mr. Suchin in his endeavours.

Lessons learned:

- The occupants understand very well the need for restoring the buildings and improving their living standards. The scepticism lies in their doubts as to the ultimate implementation and completion of the project.
- Appraisal of a project without seeing it in the local context, nor talking to and understanding the different points of view of the individual stakeholders severely limits the value of judgements and recommendations.

Data on inputs & timing	Dates, Participants
Appraisal:	
Nomination form submitted	28 October 2013
Project selected as 7 ME:	June 2013
Questionnaire from EIBI	18 June 2014
Response to questionnaire	22 April 2014
Appraisal mission	29 May 2015 – Hague meeting with Suchin Dimitri
Participants:- EN EIB Institute	Sneška Quaedvlieg-Mihailović, Elena Bianchi, Adam Wilkinson, Winfried Brenne Richard Deeley
Feedback letter post mission	
Response to further questions	
Technical report issued	

Follow-up:

Request for progress report	
Response on progress	
Follow-up visit	
Participants: EN EIB Institute	
Report on follow-up visit	
Fact sheet prepared by	