Building in Public: Critical Reconstruction and the Rebuilding of Berlin after 1990

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BUILDING IN PUBLIC:
CRITICAL RECONSTRUCTION AND THE REBUILDING OF BERLIN AFTER 1990

by

Naraelle Kristin Hohensee

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
ABSTRACT

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Advisor: Kevin D. Murphy

Reconstructing Berlin’s ruined contours after 1990 was one of the most important ways that reunified Germany made a public display of its relationship to the violence wrought by both the Nazis and East Germany during the twentieth century. By integrating historical forms into new buildings in the city’s commercial center, Berlin’s urban planners hoped to show the world that the nation had transcended totalitarianism and was worthy of a prominent place in the new global order. In order to achieve this vision, they adopted an approach called “Critical Reconstruction,” which required architects to follow rigid design standards based on traditional building typologies. In doing so, they also sought to rein in a flood of eager international investors who threatened to turn central Berlin into a landscape of flashy, corporate experiments.

However, because of its strict insistence on historical styles, its ambivalence towards – if not affinity for – Nazi architecture, as well as its rejection of contemporary movements such as Deconstructivism, Critical Reconstruction was interpreted by many observers as reactionary and dangerously conservative. Historians and social scientists commonly refer to it as a controversial, backward-looking representation of German national identity. In this dissertation, I fundamentally reassess the discourse of Critical Reconstruction and argue that this so-called “conservative” turn in Berlin city planning practice was in actuality driven by socially
progressive planners making a failed attempt to shape a new democratic society through the regulation of built form. My research thus casts doubt on one of the most central post-Enlightenment claims about architecture: that its aesthetic qualities can both directly represent and influence people and politics.

Critical Reconstruction is mentioned often in recent histories of Berlin, and a handful of architectural historians have also examined isolated aspects of its deployment in terms of its relationship to trends in architecture and urban planning. However, without considering how it functioned discursively on multiple levels and in diverse arenas (professional, economic, and political), scholarly portrayals of Critical Reconstruction are reductive at best; at worst, these accounts risk reinscribing the same rigid and simplistic view of Berlin’s planning culture that they seek to critique. My project offers the first detailed examination of Critical Reconstruction as both a public discourse and a planning methodology, showing how planners’ endeavors to revive Berlin’s landscape in a socially responsible way ultimately gave rise to the opposite: a landscape of homogenous commercial buildings whose construction mainly served corporate interests, while simultaneously bolstering Berlin’s connections with the worst facets of its own history. Additionally, as discussions in the national media revealed Critical Reconstruction’s formal affinities with fascist architecture, suspicions grew amongst the general public that both this theory’s aesthetics and its authors also harbored authoritarian tendencies. The city that resulted from Critical Reconstruction’s intervention was thus, ultimately, a hyper-capitalist landscape that harkened back stylistically to the very moment in its violent history that Berlin desperately wanted to symbolically supersede.

This research goes beyond one-dimensional depictions of Critical Reconstruction as a unilateral statement about German identity, revealing its status as a set of planning tactics
situated within a network of conflicting institutional and political formations. As such, it also addresses two fundamental problems faced by architects and planners in the global age: how to productively contend with the forces of capital while advocating for sustainable local growth, and how to make buildings into legible signifiers of politically acceptable narratives about a nation’s history and identity without risking public and professional misinterpretation. The case of Critical Reconstruction, I demonstrate, illustrates just how difficult such a contradictory set of tasks can be; indeed, the means of architecture and urban planning may be wholly inadequate for such a monumental undertaking.
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To Chance and Miri: may Berlin always be our happy place.
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INTRODUCTION

Critical Reconstruction: A Progressive Theory Turned Conservative

It is rare to find a text on Berlin’s post-Wall reconstruction that does not reference the famous statement by the early Modernist art historian Karl Scheffler: “Berlin is doomed always to become, and never actually to be.” It is a line from his book *Berlin: Ein Stadtgeschicksal* (*Berlin: The Fate of a City*), published in 1910, wherein Scheffler portrayed Germany’s capital city as a fundamentally unique and modern space, as opposed to other, older European capitals, which were more “harmoniously developed organisms of history.” Berlin, he wrote, arose “artificially, under all kinds of difficulties, and had to adapt to unfavorable circumstances.”¹ To be sure, Berlin’s urban history in the nineteenth century was a story of tumultuous growth and difficult adjustment, but Scheffler’s statement is infinitely more fitting for the century that followed. He could not have known, in 1910, how prescient his words would be: multiple waves of social, political, and physical destruction characterized Berlin as a space of both utopian possibility and tragic failure from World War I until the fall of the Wall in 1989. The dramatic end of the Cold War, and with it, forty years of division for the city and the nation, presented yet another opportunity for Berlin to “become” something, and the stakes of this transformation were high. Not only did the city desperately need to recraft its image in order to attract global businesses and residents who could shore up its weak economy, but, as the nation’s new capital, its reconstruction was also one of the most important ways that reunified Germany made a public display of its relationship to its violent past.

The urban planning philosophy of Critical Reconstruction was one of the most visible forces at work in Berlin’s new landscape following the country’s reunification in 1990. Developed by the architect Josef Paul Kleihues beginning in the 1970s and deployed in the post-Wall era by one of Berlin’s most powerful city planners, Hans Stimmann, Critical Reconstruction encouraged a return to “traditional” architectural styles and typologies, and sought to recreate the pedestrian-centered urban street life of the early twentieth-century European metropolis through the restoration of the inner city’s original baroque-era street plan. By integrating historical forms into the city’s refashioned commercial center, Stimmann and other planners in Berlin hoped to show the world that the nation – in spite of, or perhaps even because of, its particular history – had a unique character and was worthy of its own prominent place in the new global order. However, because of Critical Reconstruction’s strict insistence on historical styles, as well as the often ill-considered statements of its proponents, it was seen by many observers as a reactionary attempt to whitewash Berlin’s traumatic history by rehabilitating Nazi aesthetics and by selectively excluding important contemporary architectural movements such as Deconstructivism. Furthermore, planners’ attempts to “remedy” mid-century planning meant that many East German buildings in the city center, constructed in the 1960s and 1970s, became the targets of demolition, making it look as if the Critical Reconstructionists were also purposely erasing significant touchstones for the “collective urban memory” of East Berlin residents. By analyzing the discourse of Critical Reconstruction from its roots in the 1970s to its final form in Berlin’s Planwerk Innenstadt (“Inner City Plan”) of 1999, this study demonstrates that this “conservative” turn in Berlin city planning practice was in actuality driven by socially progressive planners who hoped to shape a new, more unified democratic society in the formerly divided city, using the regulation of built form as their tool. Their ultimate failure to achieve
these ends casts doubt on one of the most central post-Enlightenment claims about architecture: that buildings and other urban configurations can send clear messages that will directly influence people and politics for the better.

**Literature Review**

A number of studies have alluded to the signifying practices at work in the architecture of the new Berlin, but they have refrained from tackling the thorny question of adequately defining Critical Reconstruction’s role in the city’s rebuilding. Historian Brian Ladd’s *Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape* (1997) and journalist Michael Z. Wise’s *Capital Dilemma: Germany’s Search for a New Architecture of Democracy* (1998), both written with popular audiences in mind, were some of the first to introduce the topic to a general English-speaking audience, and Ladd’s book in particular has become a classic.\(^2\) Both examine the extent to which the scars of history are still visible in Berlin’s urban landscape and look at how Germany’s identity as a democratic nation was expressed in new buildings and memorials after 1990.\(^3\) Written for a popular audience, however, both works are somewhat general in their treatment of the city’s recent history, of which Critical Reconstruction is only one facet. Thus Ladd and Wise do not even satisfactorily define Critical Reconstruction as a theory, much less


unpack the problematic ways in which it was applied to the built environment; rather, they provide a point of departure for the research questions that I confront in this dissertation.

My analysis of Critical Reconstruction builds on the groundbreaking work of a handful of scholars across various disciplines. Political scientist Elizabeth Strom’s *Building the New Berlin: The Politics of Urban Development in Germany’s Capital City* (2001) is an invaluable resource for understanding the city’s complex political and administrative structures – and the challenges their leaders faced – in the immediate post-Wall era.⁴ *Renaissance der Mitte: Zentrumsumbau in London und Berlin* (2005) by architectural historians Harald Bodenschatz and Uwe Altrock is an encyclopedic account of new construction in Berlin since the fall of the Wall, which provided a foundation for many of the case studies that I discuss.⁵ Architectural historian Florian Hertweck’s *Der Berliner Architekturstreit: Architektur, Stadtbau, Geschichte und Identität in der Berliner Republik 1989-1999* (2010) supplies a thoughtful set of close textual readings of the so-called “Berlin Architecture Debates,” a series of critical exchanges which were very influential on Critical Reconstruction’s reception in the mid-1990s.⁶ *Berlin Alexanderplatz: Transforming Place in a Unified Germany* (2010), by anthropologist Gisa Weszkalnys, allows a first-hand view of the ways in which everyday residents were marginalized in the planning process at that particular site, and urban historian Stefanie Hennecke’s *Die Kritische Rekonstruktion als

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Leitbild: Stadtentwicklungspolitik in Berlin zwischen 1991 und 1999 (2010) offers a thorough documentation of the creation and approval of the Planwerk Innenstadt.7

Two other architectural history studies parallel mine most closely: Karin Lenhart’s *Berliner Metropoly: Stadtentwicklungspolitik Im Berliner Bezirk Mitte Nach Der Wende* (2001) investigates post-Wall city planning in central Berlin in general, and Christina Brichetti’s *Die Paradoxe des postmodernen Historismus: Stadtumbau und städtebauliche Denkmalpflege vom 19. bis zum 21. Jahrhundert am Beispiel von Berlin und Beirut* (2009) contextualizes Berlin’s reconstruction within larger, international discussions and debates about post-modern historicism.8 *Post-Wall Berlin: Borders, Space and Identity* (2011) by historian Janet Ward, is a wider-ranging and more sociological take on post-Wall Berlin and has influenced my thinking about the city’s global status, as well as its relationship to ideas in the fields of sociology and geography.9 Despite this relatively large body of literature on Berlin’s reconstruction, however, none of these authors has looked at Critical Reconstruction’s full historical arc, charting its many changes and its deployment over time, nor do they successfully relate it to the larger questions of...

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German history and identity. My dissertation thus remedies a key missing link among the various existing works on Berlin’s post-1990 rebuilding.

**Research Questions and Methodology**

This work offers an account of Critical Reconstruction’s development amidst the shifting social and political landscape of reunified Berlin and Germany. Beginning with an investigation of Critical Reconstruction’s creation by Josef Paul Kleihues in the 1970s, I track its transformations under the city planner Hans Stimmann in the early 1990s, as well as the various public discussions and debates that figured in its reception, and I conclude by exploring its final flowering in Stimmann’s comprehensive Planwerk Innenstadt (“Inner City Plan”) of 1999. My study pairs a discourse analysis of primary texts of Critical Reconstruction and its reception, gathered from architecture journals, government publications, newspapers, and collections of essays by architects, planners, and critics, with stylistic and formal explications of the key architectural sites, competitions, plans, images, and construction projects to which this approach was applied. Images and buildings offer both illustrations of and, at times, telling counterpoints to, the statements of Critical Reconstruction’s proponents.

Critical Reconstruction’s preservation and rehabilitation of Nazi buildings, the demolition of mid-century East German structures, and its use of “traditional” aesthetics to construct high-end commercial and residential infrastructure explicitly for bourgeois users, appeared to many as

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11. It should be noted that many state archival documents from this period are still under a thirty-year embargo and will not be accessible until after 2020.
a reactionary take on this new national identity. However, Critical Reconstruction itself was not an essentially conservative theory. Both Kleihues and Stimmann inhabited positions on the political and intellectual Left. More specifically, then, my research presents a detailed explanation of how Critical Reconstruction came to be read as a definitively conservative approach, despite these progressive origins.

**Defining “Identity”**

The term “identity” appears throughout this dissertation, and thus it is important to define my use of the term at the outset. During the late 1980s and 1990s, academic discourse blossomed in multiple ways around the notion of “identity.” This growth included important conversations about aspects of personal identity such as gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, and their relationship to larger societal norms and issues; it also encompassed questions of nationalism and cultural hegemony. Sociologist Anthony Smith and political historian Benedict Anderson, to name two of the most notable scholars, contributed specific theorizations of how people come to identify with the construct of a “nation.”12 Alongside these conversations, work was also being done by philosophers and literary and cultural scholars, many from France, on the ways that signs and symbols relate to our lived social realities (including our relationship to nations or nationalities): thinkers like Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Jean-François Lyotard, Fredric Jameson, and Jacques Derrida.13 At this time there was also a growing interest in the relationship between what was termed “collective memory” and national or community identities, spurred partly by the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II and the “commemorative fever” that

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13 The work of such thinkers is often summarized under the term “post-structuralist,” though individually they often resisted this categorization.
surrounded it.\textsuperscript{14} Many looked back to the work of Maurice Halbwachs, whose seminal \textit{Le mémoire collective} (1950) had introduced the term into academic discourse; in the realm of architecture studies, Pierre Nora’s \textit{Les lieux de mémoire} (1984) also became an important touchstone for thinking about how space and place related to memory and national identity.\textsuperscript{15}

In reunited Germany after 1989, these many facets of “identity” intersected in a highly public set of conversations and debates – appearing everywhere from the federal parliament floor to tabloid newspapers – over questions of what the country’s official history and dominant cultural outlook should entail. How should the Nazi and East German pasts be remembered, memorialized, talked about, and theorized? How did this issue relate to Germany’s future as part of the larger EU and the global West? How should “Germanness” be defined – was it ethnic, religious, linguistic, cultural, legal, or a combination of some or all of these? These tricky issues resurface continually throughout the dissertation. Thus, when I invoke the term “identity,” I am referring to public perceptions about what it meant to be German and to official accounts or attempts to mold that perception. This perceived identity was often simultaneously cultural, social, and political, including morals and values, tastes, party affiliations, ethnicity, religion, and economic class.\textsuperscript{16}

\textit{Other Theoretical Frameworks}

Critical Reconstruction’s trajectory, as a theory and as a set of built results, must be understood in the larger context of other discursive realms: the above-mentioned discussions


\textsuperscript{16} The often unspoken side to this identity is that it is still largely presumed to be ethnic and religious in its basis; this is still being hotly negotiated today. Critical Reconstruction’s conservatism does in some ways echo the ethnocentric (even sometimes racist) viewpoints of many Germans, who nevertheless often see themselves as progressive because of their admonition of guilt with regard to the Holocaust. This strange and troubling dialectic deserves further attention, but is outside the scope of my study here.
about German history and identity; marketing efforts to shore up Berlin’s status as a global metropolis; debates over the relationship of architectural aesthetics to particular political regimes; and the global theorization of post-modern architecture as an answer to Modernism’s failed projects. I address these various issues throughout, arguing that, for the most part, Critical Reconstruction’s proponents failed to successfully negotiate questions of how Berlin’s past should relate to its present and future. In addition, my analysis of Critical Reconstruction’s various texts, images, and themes is underpinned at key moments by concepts drawn from cultural studies and geography. I rely particularly on the work of the geographer David Harvey, who offers a theorization of public-private partnership in late-twentieth-century city-building, as well as his work on mapping as a tool of colonialism. These and other ideas from the transdisciplinary field of post-colonial studies, especially those of Edward Said, also help to explain how the application of Critical Reconstruction to East Berlin can be read as a colonial move on the part of Stimmann and others. In tandem with this analysis, I refer to work on the concept and mechanisms of gentrification by Neil Smith and Sharon Zukin. But while these theoretical ideas are illuminating, my dissertation is definitively not a reading of Critical Reconstruction through the lens of Critical Theory, urban theory, or post-colonial studies. Rather, these concepts are deployed as theoretical models that help to explain my findings, which are based directly on a close analysis of the discourse and built results of Critical Reconstruction itself. In other words, the examples of architecture and urban planning that I discuss are not selected on the basis of their ability to illustrate or conform to a particular critical framework; on the contrary, Harvey and others provide a useful set of terms and concepts for discussing and analyzing what actually took place in Berlin under Critical Reconstruction.
Outline of the Dissertation

Chapter 1, “Josef Paul Kleihues and the Genesis of the Theory of Critical Reconstruction,” elucidates the fundamentally progressive roots of this method, which was created and applied by Kleihues during the state-sponsored International Building Exhibition in West Berlin between 1978 and 1987. Kleihues’s work was responding to the post-modern turn in professional trans-Atlantic architectural discourse, especially the work of architects such as Aldo Rossi, who encouraged a return to the dense urban forms of the pre-modern European cityscape, but in a highly personal and formally reductive manner. Kleihues was also attempting to remedy the lack of an existing architectural “school” in Germany in the post-war era. His ambitious aim was to create a strand of post-modernist architectural style and theory that would be appropriate to the socio-political climate of West Germany, where architects and other intellectuals were wary of both North American populism and European neo-historicism. As part of the so-called “skeptical generation” of West Germans who came of age during the 1950s, Kleihues was highly suspicious of direct statements or overt ideologies.

The specifics of Kleihues’s aesthetics drew heavily on Germany’s classical tradition – specifically, the work of Karl Friedrich Schinkel and the early Modernists – as well as traditional nineteenth-century Berlin forms such as the six-story apartment block with an inner courtyard. However, this return to “traditional” forms in Kleihues’s work risked problematic associations with Nazi architecture. In order to sidestep this affiliation, he incorporated two other key factors into his design theory: the use of new materials and technologies that had been eschewed by the Nazi regime; and the highly personal “poetry” of the individual architect, which injected a strand of the irrational or romantic into his work and unseated any suspicions that he was resorting to dogma.
In contrast to Stimmann’s application of the theory in the post-Wall period, during the International Building Exhibition, in particular, this early version of Critical Reconstruction promoted dialogue, disagreement, and diversity amongst architects. By attracting international designers and allowing them to publicly debate urban issues, Kleihues aimed to reestablish a welcoming and open architectural culture for West Germany that displayed its firm emplacement within the larger, democratic West. Though it was not regarded as the most experimental of architectural styles, both the West German and the larger Western architectural community lauded Critical Reconstruction in the 1980s as a forward-thinking way to restore a traditional European city.

Chapter 2, “International Investment and Berlin Planning in the Immediate Post-Wende Era,” looks at the failures of two of Berlin’s first big post-Wall projects, which provided the impetus for the adoption of Critical Reconstruction as a city planning method: the retail and entertainment center at Potsdamer Platz, and the Friedrichstadt Passagen shopping mall. I situate these examples within a discussion of the fraught conditions of post-1989 planning in Berlin, where intense pressure from investors – combined with bureaucratic incompetence, archaic and divided institutions, and a dizzying array of conflicting property claims – created an overwhelming situation for city planners. The first projects undertaken with investors in this new climate resulted in both professional rifts and sadly mediocre designs. Though Potsdamer Platz and the Friedrichstadt Passagen garnered worldwide attention and are still tourist attractions today, these projects were seen by planners and architects in Berlin as distinct failures because of their showy aesthetics and overt links to corporations. This difficult political and administrative situation led Hans Stimmann, who took office as the city’s Senate Construction Director in April of 1991 (well after the deals on Potsdamer Platz and the Friedrichstadt Passagen had been made),
to adopt Critical Reconstruction as his guiding method for planning, despite the fact that he had
formerly been a vehement critic of Kleihues.

Chapter 3, “Critical Reconstruction’s Transformation under Hans Stimmann,” examines
this theory’s discursive transformation and deployment by Hans Stimmann, as head city planner,
between 1991 and 1995. A left-leaning social democrat, Stimmann was dedicated to the idea that
city planning could promote the resurgence of small-scale, middle-class property ownership and
thus give rise to a community of engaged citizens. Though he had previously criticized what he
called Kleihues’s “aesthetic” approach to city planning, Stimmann nevertheless adopted Critical
Reconstruction’s guidelines. Doing so allowed him to regulate buildings’ formal attributes, like
heights, massing, façades, and materials, providing at least a superficial mechanism of control
over eager multinational investors who seemed to want to turn Berlin into the next Las Vegas.
The result was a restrictive and rigid version of Critical Reconstruction that allowed for little of
the open dialogue or stylistic diversity that had occurred under Kleihues in the 1980s.
Unfortunately, because of the limits of his own political and administrative power, Stimmann
was not able to curb large-scale investment, and corporations, rather than middle-class
individuals, quickly became the main property owners in central Berlin. This phenomenon is
exemplified by three large-scale developments in the city center: the Hofgarten am
Gendarmenmarkt and the Kontorhaus Mitte, both overseen by Kleihues, and the Quartier
Schützenstrasse, designed by Aldo Rossi. These designs demonstrate why Critical
Reconstruction quickly garnered a reputation as a tool of capitalist development that was
dangerously reductive in its aesthetics and looked to shut out more experimental approaches to
architecture, especially Deconstructivism.
Chapter 4, “Critical Reconstruction and the Berlin Architecture Debates,” examines how the growing negative public perception of Stimmann’s method was also strongly influenced by discussions in the press. Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani, then director of the German Architecture Museum in Frankfurt, began the so-called “Architecture Debates” by publishing an architectural manifesto in the popular national magazine Der Spiegel.\textsuperscript{17} He called for a “New Simplicity” (Neue Einfachheit) in architectural design that would reference German history and even allow Nazi buildings to be appreciated for their calm, rational forms. Though it did not mention Critical Reconstruction directly, Lampugnani’s declaration was nevertheless interpreted by many as a direct statement of Stimmann’s goals, and figures such as the Deconstructivist architect Daniel Libeskind responded with outspoken criticisms of both the New Simplicity and Berlin’s city planning politics in general. Lampagnuni’s statements were defended by, among others, the prominent Berlin architect Hans Kollhoff, who was at the time in the midst of two construction projects that underscored critics’ reading of Critical Reconstruction as highly conservative: the master plan for Alexanderplatz, for which Kollhoff had just recently beat out Libeskind in a competition, and the renovation of the Nazi Reichsbank building as the new home of the German Foreign Ministry. Despite their attempts to justify their return to “traditional” aesthetics by referencing early Modernist architecture, none of the New Simplicity’s or Critical Reconstruction’s supporters were able to successfully rebuff the accusation that they looked to “normalize” or even revive fascist aesthetics, rather than contextualizing or problematizing them.

Yet another dissenting voice in the Architecture Debates was supplied by the critic and urban theorist Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm, one of Stimmann’s main collaborators and the originator of the idea that Critical Reconstruction could enable a return to small-scale property

ownership. He vehemently opposed Lampugnani and Kollhoff, accusing them of plagiarizing his own ideas, and, despite the fact that he regularly worked for Stimmann as a contractor, he also charged Stimmann and Kleihues with leading and architectural “cartel” that was single-handedly reshaping the city. Thus, this chapter demonstrates not only how critical and theoretical positions can be subject to misrepresentation and misinterpretation; it also shows how an exchange between professionals, when undertaken on such a public stage, as the Architecture Debates were, could fuel the larger negative perception of something like Stimmann’s Critical Reconstruction. In the public’s eye, Critical Reconstruction came across in these exchanges as aesthetically conservative, backward-looking, authoritarian, and pro-big business, despite the fact that it was deployed by a politician who had long been part of the political left and a vocal critic of capitalist development.

Chapter 5, “Gentrifying the GDR,” looks at the relationship of Critical Reconstruction to greater East Berlin, which became Stimmann’s focus after 1996. Although it looked very similar to parts of West Berlin, Stimmann and others routinely relied on a rhetoric of “emptiness” to describe the landscape of the former East. In this chapter I argue that by proposing infill and small-scale land ownership as remedies for what were portrayed as spatial, political, and social “voids,” Stimmann’s plans became tantamount to a colonial move that purported to “educate” the supposedly helpless residents of the former East about democratic self-governance. In this context, I examine Kleihues’s renovation of the famous Centrum department store on Alexanderplatz, which entailed the removal of its memorable aluminum honeycomb façade, as well as various demolitions of GDR buildings undertaken in tandem with Stimmann’s Planwerk Innenstadt, or “Inner City Plan,” adopted into law in 1999. This chapter concludes by demonstrating that, as in his earlier projects in the city center, Stimmann’s policies were unable
to achieve the small-scale investment that he wanted, and instead resulted in the corporate-driven
displacement of grassroots communities and businesses. Critical Reconstruction failed to achieve
its aims of supporting small democratic communities in greater East Berlin, and it also erased
important touchstones of East Berliners’ “collective urban memory” and marginalized residents’
voices in the process. Given Stimmann’s earlier commitment to participatory planning methods
in the 1970s and 1980s, it is apparent that, over the course of his work as Critical
Reconstruction’s main proponent, he became more and more attached to the idea that only an
elite group could or should be responsible for such decisions. In essence, he became a
conservative in practice, even if his larger aims seemed, to him, to remain progressive. Critical
Reconstruction in its reduced and rigidified form became the cornerstone of this effectively
conservative approach.

Conclusion

In his 1997 essay “The Voids of Berlin,” first published in the journal *Critical Inquiry*,
cultural critic Andreas Huyssen observed that

once all this construction is completed, the hope is that Berlin will take its rightful
place as a European capital next to its more glamorous competitors. But will it?
… The fact that the city is caught between the pressures of this new urban image-
politics and the more general crisis of architectural developments in these last
years of our century makes any such hope appear simply misplaced, if not
deluded. Indeed, Berlin may be the place to study how this new emphasis on the
city as cultural sign, combined with its role as capital and the pressures of large-
scale developments, prevents creative alternatives and thus represents a false start
into the twenty-first century. Berlin may be well on the way to squandering a
unique chance.\(^\text{18}\)

Indeed, rather than a global exemplar for the future of architecture, Critical Reconstruction in Berlin became, I argue, a lesson in how to alienate both local constituents and professional colleagues while favoring and benefitting only two groups: global real estate interests and a limited cadre of architects. As such, it reflected poorly not only on the development of German identity vis-à-vis the nation’s troubled history, but also on the status of the profession as a whole.

Critical Reconstruction’s historical trajectory, I demonstrate, reveals a city grappling with architecture’s power, promises, and limits in the post-modern age. Since the Enlightenment, Western architects and theorists have sought various ways of influencing social and political realities through urban design. This effort reached a climax during the Modernist era after World War II, which saw the rise of pre-fabricated, car-friendly communities on a massive scale. Although the “post-modern turn” in the architecture of the 1970s meant a return to traditional urban aesthetics – a preference for pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use communities and historical styles – these aesthetic shifts masked a continued insistence on architecture’s ability to directly influence human relationships. Critical Reconstruction is one example of this tendency in post-modernist design, and its story demonstrates many of the problems with overarching architectural theories that champion the power of built forms to shape society.

Viewed in this context, the case of Critical Reconstruction also points to two larger conclusions about this kind of “building in public”: first, that certain strands of post-modern architecture theory still, in many ways, embodied the Modernist project in terms of its hopes to represent and construct a new and better world; and, second, like Modernism itself, they ultimately failed at this project. Instead of promoting productive dialogue that acknowledged Berlin’s central role in the symbolization of German national identity, or creating an urban landscape that adequately answered the needs existing residents while attracting new ones, this approach became a tool of a
small, paternalistic elite who ultimately caved to corporate interests, while still believing that they were doing the opposite. By offering a foundational investigation of Critical Reconstruction’s complex history as both a theoretical approach and as a collection of built results, my research looks past blanket accusations that would paint this method simply as a dictatorial and conservative attempt to wield power over city planning politics or to favor capitalist interests. Rather, I argue, it must be seen as the outcome of a network of interactions between city planning policies, development pressures, and professional architectural discourse that affect not just Berlin, but also countless other cities in the global age.
CHAPTER 1

Josef Paul Kleihues and the Genesis of the Theory of Critical Reconstruction

Critical Reconstruction was adopted by city officials as the guiding concept for the rebuilding of Berlin in 1991. However, its application to reunified Berlin differed significantly from its original formulation, in the work and writings of the West Berlin architect Josef Paul Kleihues in the sixties, seventies, and eighties. This chapter discusses the genesis of the idea of Critical Reconstruction in Kleihues’s work during the Cold War period, examining how he authored it as a response to both disciplinary and larger socio-political questions. His own designs and writings, as well as the exhibitions and conferences that he organized in the 1970s, culminating in West Berlin’s ambitious International Building Exhibition (1978-1987), all addressed issues central to the practice of architecture in West Germany at the time: namely, how to deal with the legacies of both Modernist planning and the nineteenth-century urban fabric, and how this engagement with the past related to the emerging post-war identity of the nation. If historical forms were to be preserved and revived, then which ones were worthy of such treatment? Were there buildings or styles that were still too tainted by the legacy of Nazism, and if so, how should they be handled?

Kleihues’s ideas sat firmly within the landscape of Western European thought on urbanism and architecture from the 1960s on, constituting what might be called a German neo-rationalism that sought to differentiate itself from both the populist and historicist strains of trans-Atlantic post-modern architecture. Architectural references to the pre-Modernist past were considered taboo in West Germany during the fifties and sixties, when historicism tended to be equated with fascism; by the early 1970s, historicism was also seen as symbolic of a dangerous
and intellectually heedless decadence that was all too easily coopted by capitalism. On the other hand, the vehement critique of International Style Modernism within the architectural community required that young architects take a stand with regards to it as well. Kleihues attempted to cut a path between these various stylistic approaches. At first, on the level of individual buildings, he attempted to reconcile historicism and Modernism with an approach that he called Poetic Rationalism, which combined a highly structured aesthetic and industrial materials with traditional urban typologies and an openness to what he called “poetry” – an acknowledgement of the inherent and necessary subjectivity of the architect. Later, as head of the International Building Exhibition, Kleihues further developed these precepts into the urban theory of Critical Reconstruction, which rested on the idea that the “historical” (i.e. nineteenth-century) ground plan of the city should be adopted as the basic framework for a complementary and contrasting set of architectural designs that, in a manner similar to Poetic Rationalism, took tradition and context into account, but utilized contemporary materials and methods in sometimes playful or experimental ways.

Kleihues’s approach was perfectly suited to this mid-twentieth-century moment in his professional, political, and social context in West Germany. He managed to create an architectural theory that was historically oriented, but remained comfortably distanced from direct statements about German history, which would have been too controversial and explosive at the time. Furthermore, rather than propounding his theories as the only possible solution, Kleihues promoted dialogue within the architectural community about the relationship between design and history, and he supported a diversity of approaches to architecture that often diverged from his own. Because he believed that architects should be sensitive to historical and geographical context, rigorous and purposeful in their response to the requirements for a design,
and yet add something formally “poetic” to it as well, Kleiheus managed to offer solutions that could be simultaneously read as regionalist and global, personal and general, exacting and accepting, potentially value-laden and yet, when needed, comfortably apolitical. Most importantly for this study, he saw himself as reestablishing an architectural tradition within West Germany that drew on the best moments of its history: the Enlightenment and the Weimar years (1919-1933) – times, in other words, before the violence and destruction wrought by the Nazis.

**A Brief History of Berlin City Planning and Architectural Traditions**

As political scientist Elizabeth Strom notes, there is no true “zero hour” in Berlin planning history.¹ Since its earliest beginnings, the city’s landscape has been in continual flux. The original kernel of the city comprised two medieval fishing villages, Cölln and Alt-Berlin. It became the capital of the surrounding territory of Brandenburg when the Hohenzollern family was appointed to rule by the Holy Roman Emperor in the fifteenth century, and it grew into a garrison town in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as successive rulers conquered and acquired more lands, notably the kingdom of Prussia, which stretched into present-day Poland.²

In Prussia’s capital city of Berlin, successive city walls were built and then exceeded, often before they were completed, and a massive Baroque palace was constructed at the eastern end of what became the city’s *via triumphalis*, the avenue of Unter den Linden.³ Especially important

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² Brandenburg is now its own state, or Bundesland; Berlin itself is also a city-state, so the two are actually separate political entities today, though their politics often intertwine. Brandenburg’s capital is the former Prussian royal seat of Potsdam, which lies just outside of Berlin to the southwest.

for Critical Reconstruction was the gridded street layout introduced in the city center in the late seventeenth century as part of a plan to house Prussia’s rapidly growing army. This new method of urban organization presented an ordered contrast to the winding streets and jagged walls of the medieval town (fig. 1.1), and this “original” traffic plan is often referred to by Kleihues and other twentieth-century city planners as the “baroque street plan” of the central inner city.⁴

**Enlightenment and Industrial Berlin**

Following the occupation of the city by Napoleon’s army in the early nineteenth century, the Hohenzollern ruler Friedrich Wilhelm III commissioned the architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel with a number of projects that effectively reimagined the central area surrounding Berlin’s royal palace as an urban expression of particular political and philosophical ideals. Though the ruler himself was somewhat conservative, even repressive, Schinkel’s public architecture emphasized the liberal, reformist ideals of figures like his contemporary Wilhelm von Humboldt, who believed in a society of free, educated individuals. Most famously, Schinkel created a royal art museum (now called the *Altes* [“Old”] Museum because several more such structures have subsequently been added to the area) that was open to the public: a true innovation and a radical statement concerning the role of public aesthetic education at the time. With its impressively long, horizontal façade of fluted columns and its seemingly endless iconographic allusions to various classical figures and narratives in the decoration, Schinkel’s museum constituted a radical reinvention of the language of classicism, drawing on influences from French Enlightenment architects and putting these in conversation with the most current philosophical and aesthetic movements in Prussia (fig. 1.2).⁵ The museum was part of a larger urban ensemble

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⁵ For a detailed account of how Schinkel’s architecture developed in tandem with contemporary academic thought, see John Toews, *Becoming Historical: Cultural Reformation and Public Memory in Early Nineteenth-Century Berlin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
around the palace’s pleasure garden (the *Lustgarten*) that included a new cathedral (demolished and replaced in the late nineteenth century), a guardhouse, a church, a theater, and the famous Bauakademie (fig. 1.3). Together, these structures symbolized the importance of the education and involvement of the individual in the making of society, and they are still often invoked today as a touchstone – if not a blueprint – for the planning of the city center.

However, Schinkel’s sleepy, low-rise Berlin was very soon subsumed by a burgeoning industrial metropolis. With a population of 150,000 in 1800, the city’s growing railroad and manufacturing businesses soon drew factory workers from the neighboring countryside, and by the 1870s, when it became the capital of Bismarck’s German Empire, it had grown to house over a million people, with many surrounding suburbs. Thus the original royal capital found itself at the booming center, or *Mitte* (the name given this district in 1920), of a gigantic urban agglomeration.¹ Unlike those in other cities, such as Paris, where such growth was aesthetically – and often ruthlessly – controlled, officials in Berlin never sufficiently wielded their power over the nineteenth-century city.⁷ Minimal zoning in the form of *Fluchlinien* (building alignments, including height limits) allowed property owners to build almost anything they wished, with limited safety restrictions, and as a result, high-density buildings quickly arose as close to one another as possible, with up to 90% site coverage.⁸ To appeal to residents and maximize rent, developers tended to adopt the popular Parisian building type that arose from Baron von Haussmann’s replanning measures, with commercial space on the ground floor and elaborate stucco decoration. Typically the best, most spacious and expensive apartments were located in

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⁷ James Hobrecht and his “Hobrecht-Plan” is often cited as the one attempt to guide this development, but it is also faulted for containing too few restrictions and for its classist approach of encouraging builders to locate the nicer apartments in the front of the building, where they would have more access to light and air (crucial for health concerns in a city where coal was the main source of heat). In any case, Hobrecht’s plan was only ever partially put through. See Klaus Strohmeyer, *James Hobrecht (1825-1902) und die Modernisierung der Stadt* (Potsdam: Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg, 2000).

the front, and behind these were successive “Hinterhöfe” (“back courtyards”), populated by the working class (figs. 1.4-1.5) The use of coal stoves for cooking and heating meant that the interiors of these courtyards quickly turned black with soot, and the stifling, overcrowded rear apartments received little light or ventilation. These spaces soon became associated with a declining birth rate, repugnant social mores, and epidemics like tuberculosis. They were so notorious for their bad conditions that they earned the name “Mietskaserne” (“rental barracks”) – a name still used for them today, though they are now considered Berlin’s most desirable dwellings.⁹

**Berlin and Weimar Modernism**

The city’s population continued to grow through World War I and the following era of the Weimar Republic (1919-1933), reaching a high point of four million after the annexation of the city’s surrounding suburban districts in 1920.¹⁰ At the same time, Germany saw the birth of a range of new approaches to architecture and planning.¹¹ One of the most influential of these movements was *Neue Sachlichkeit* (“New Objectivity”), expressed specifically in the profession of architecture by the term “Neues Bauen” or “New Building.” “New” with a capital “N” signified the jettisoning of all the trappings of the decorative, aesthetically decadent nineteenth century: a new focus on simplicity, practicality, usefulness, and efficiency. The members of Germany’s preeminent Modernist design school, the Bauhaus, are undoubtedly the best-known proponents of the *Neues Bauen*. Though it began in 1919 as a handicraft-oriented school, by 1925, its leader, Walter Gropius, had turned the school from a medieval guild model toward a

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⁹ Werner Hegemann’s 1930 treatise *Das Steinerne Berlin* is still commonly cited as the most scathing critique of the Mietskaserne. Werner Hegemann, *Das Steinerne Berlin: Geschichte Der Größten Mietskasernenstadt Der Welt* (Berlin: Kiepenheuer, 1930).


¹¹ This period of innovation included many different movements, from the Expressionist work of Bruno Taut and others to the neo-historicism of the Stuttgart School under Karl Bonatz, as well as the gradual turn towards *Neue Sachlichkeit* in the work of the Bauhaus under Walter Gropius.
model of cooperation with industry and the use of modern, mass-produced, industrial materials. These design tactics were seen not just as a means to improve the life of modern human beings, but also – at least in part – to educate and mold them into modern subjects, good citizens, and efficient workers.

In already densely-built Berlin, these Modernist precepts were expressed mainly through slum-clearance measures, especially in the old medieval city surrounding the royal palace (figs. 1.6-1.7), rather than extensive new construction. However, the Weimar government’s expropriation of lands formerly held by nobility did allow for the construction of a handful of notable Modernist housing projects on the edges of the city.12 These included the iconic Grosssiedlung Britz (1925-1933), also known as the Hufeisensiedlung because of its horseshoe (“Hufeisen”) shape. Designed by Bruno Taut, it combined the modern approach of Neues Bauen with “traditional” elements, including serious consideration of the existing features of the landscape such as ponds and streams, the inclusion of private garden space for each dwelling, and brightly-colored façades. In 1929, the Siemens corporation also began construction on a housing project called Siemensstadt in northwestern Berlin, involving, among several other designers, Gropius himself. Some of Berlin’s 1920s commercial architecture also reflected the Modernist turn, notably in Erich Mendelssohn’s glass and steel Columbushaus on Potsdamer Platz (fig. 1.8, later destroyed by a fire), and the stone-clad Modernist buildings of Max Taut (figs. 1.9-1.10). As will become clear in Chapter 4, these Modernist precedents supplied the fodder for various arguments made by both Critical Reconstruction’s proponents and its critics in the debates over Berlin’s post-Wall reconstruction. However, in the early 1930s, these

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12 The new laws allowed for government appropriation of lands formerly under the ownership of the nobility, which the state could then lease at low rates, and offer subsidies to developers who were willing to use them to build low-density housing. Ronald V. Wiedenhoeft, Berlin’s Housing Revolution: German Reform in the 1920s (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1985), 11.
developments were overshadowed as the Nazi party took power, followed by wartime
destruction and the country’s division.

Architecture Theory and the Post-Modern Turn in Europe and West Germany

Post-war Global High Modernism and West Germany

As Hitler and Albert Speer began their massively overscaled, neo-classical project of
remaking Berlin into “Germania,” the capital they envisioned for Nazi Germany, architects such
as Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Walter Gropius (both German émigrés to the United States), and
the Swiss-French Le Corbusier were leading what would become a global movement under the
general heading of “Modernist” architecture. Although their individual approaches differed
considerably, their common traits were codified as the “International Style,” a concept
popularized through a 1932 exhibition and catalog of the same name at the Museum of Modern
Art in New York, authored by Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson. This term came to
denote buildings with simple rectangular volumes, flat roofs, planar surfaces with a lack of any
ornament or decoration, and industrial materials like aluminum for finishes. Equally influential
was the idea, put forward most forcefully by Le Corbusier in his book Towards a New
Architecture (Vers une Architecture, 1923) but echoed by Hitchcock and Johnson, that such an
aesthetic had affinities with the functional aspects of the architecture, and was thus – to some
extent – scientifically and technically justified, as well as universally applicable around the
globe.13 Architectural historian Sigfried Giedion took these ideas one step further and attempted

13 Le Corbusier, Towards a New Architecture, trans. Frederick Etchells (New York: Payson & Clarke, 1927); Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, The International Style (New York: Norton, 1932). As Rosemarie Haag Bletter has shown, functionalism was by no means a clearly defined term within Modernist discourse (even Le Corbusier advocated going beyond the utilitarian to include the abstract and creative), and Hitchcock and Johnson were also ambivalent about pure functionalist approaches to design. See Rosemarie Haag Bletter, “Introduction,” in The Modern Functional Building, by Adolf Behne (Santa Monica, CA: Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1996).
to prove that this new architecture expressed not simply a new style, but a fundamentally new relationship between humans and their world: one based on totally new conceptions of space and time, fueled by the availability of advanced technologies and theories such as Einstein’s relativity.\footnote{See Sigfried Giedion, \textit{Space, Time and Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition} (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1941).}

These ideas were promoted and disseminated through the international organization known as CIAM (\textit{Congrès International d’Architecture Moderne}), which, under the leadership of Le Corbusier and Giedion, brought together a diverse group of prominent architects, critics, and historians from around the world in regular meetings between 1928 and 1959. One of the most important outcomes of the meetings was a document known as “The Athens Charter,” formulated at their 1933 session. Based heavily on the ideas of Le Corbusier, the charter expressed many of the precepts that would come to constitute Modernist city planning practice, such as the separation of urban functions, the building of residential tower blocks within park-like green spaces, and the addition of large thoroughfares for traffic. All of this, of course, meant the implied demolition of historical (mostly nineteenth-century) city centers with their densely packed buildings and mixed zoning. The Athens Charter was presented as an antidote to these supposedly unhygienic urban environments, which, in the authors’ view, constituted “the very image of chaos: they do not at all fulfill their purpose, which is to satisfy the primordial biological and psychological needs of their populations.”\footnote{Le Corbusier and International Congress for Modern Architecture, eds., \textit{The Athens Charter} (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1973), point 71.} If buildings were of historical importance, they \textit{might} be protected from demolition, but only

\begin{quote}
if they are the expression of a former culture and if they respond to a universal interest … and if their preservation does not entail the sacrifice of keeping people in unhealthy conditions … and if it is possible to remedy their detrimental
presence by means of radical measures, such as detouring vital elements of the traffic system or even displacing centers hitherto regarded as immutable.\textsuperscript{16}

Modernist architectural and city planning discourse thus essentially saw the existing historical fabric of cities as obsolete, and promoted an approach to design that relied solely on so-called “functional” logic, new industrial materials, and abstract geometry.

As will be discussed further in Chapter 4, the Nazi regime never officially settled on a set of state-sanctioned tenets for design, but it did, for the most part, reject Modernist aesthetics. In the post-war era, the architecture mostly closely associated with the regime was considered that of the “Führerbauten” – buildings in Munich and Berlin commissioned by Hitler himself. The Chancellery, the Haus der Deutschen Kunst, the Air Force Ministry, and the Reichsbank exemplified a form of stiff classicism that related most closely to the Nordic or Romantic Classicism of architects like Gunnar Asplund.\textsuperscript{17} The end of World War II saw the rise of the United States as the world’s political and economic superpower, and therefore also the new epicenter of International Style Modernism. As a supposedly universal style without strong regional connotations, Modernism now became the accepted language of global democracy.

Though Germany had lost almost all of its pre-war Modernist architects to the United States during the war, in West Germany, the formal language of International Style Modernism was embraced wholeheartedly in the late 1940s and early fifties as the antidote to Nazi classicism. High-profile projects like the 1958 German pavilion at the Brussels World’s Fair and Sep Ruf’s Chancellor’s Bungalow in Bonn helped shore up West Germany’s image as committed to the

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid. This was not necessarily just lip service on the part of CIAM’s authors; Le Corbusier’s Plan Voisin actually did incorporate the preservation of the important monuments on the Right Bank. See Kevin D. Murphy, “The Paradox of Urban Conservation in France, 1830-1930,” \textit{Change Over Time} 4, no. 1 (April 1, 2014): 53.

\textsuperscript{17} For a detailed explanation of the Nazi regime’s politics and aesthetics in architecture, see Barbara Miller Lane, \textit{Architecture and Politics in Germany, 1918-1945} (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1985) especially pages 190-191.
project of democracy and integration with the West. Berlin was no exception. As architectural historian Michael Hesse contends, continuing to “destroy” the former Nazi capital after the war through Modernist planning measures “was also a kind of symbolic denazification,” since the International Style stood for “freedom, democracy and the Western way of life.” This style had the added benefit of being easy to differentiate from the Eastern Bloc socialist realism of the 1950s, although, as will be discussed in Chapter 5, by the 1960s “Eastern” and “Western” Modernism became effectively indistinguishable.

As Hesse notes, post-war building in West Berlin was largely opposed to earlier traditions, going “against the remains of the baroque grid plans and the nineteenth century geometrical urban ground plans, against symmetry, axially and hierarchic order, against clearly defined urban spaces with street- and square-forming walls, against block development and traditional building typology.” In fact, many planners began to suggest that the only way to return to Berlin’s true essence was to remove the vestiges of the late-nineteenth-century city, leaving Schinkel’s Berlin intact but removing the ubiquitous Mietskaserne. The “crusade against the nineteenth-century tenement city” even extended to “purifying” the facades of these buildings by hacking off their ornamentation. (fig. 1.11) The 1957 Interbau (short for Internationale Bauausstellung, or International Building Exhibition) (figs. 1.12-1.13), wherein a section of the bombed-out and formerly dense city center was completely rebuilt, also exemplified the tenets of Modernist architecture and planning with its large tower blocks

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20 Ibid., 29–30.

sprinkled throughout a park-like, auto-friendly landscape. This style of construction became the model for mass housing construction in West Germany: until the 1970s, the state sponsored the construction of over 500,000 dwellings per year nationwide.22

Given the precepts of the International Style, which offered a convenient prescription for new construction, there was little impetus to promote a unique, local West German architectural culture in the immediate post-war era. As architectural theorist Ullrich Schwarz notes, the increase in globalization and the advanced technical knowledge of architects elsewhere coupled with a “certain sense of inferiority” that affected West German clients and politicians, leading to the professional and discursive marginalization of German architects in general.23 It would fall to the next generation – that of Josef Paul Kleihues – to reinvent the language of West German architecture in a way that could appropriately and definitively represent their young nation.

The Post-Modern Turn in Europe and Its Influences on Critical Reconstruction

While the International Style was undoubtedly the language of global democracy in the 1950s and 1960s, it was quickly becoming the cipher of global corporate capitalism as well, with glass-and-steel skyscrapers popping up everywhere from Asia to Latin America. By the late fifties, a significant generational shift was also occurring: young architects, especially in Europe, were becoming highly critical of the promises made by Modernist design and theory – not so much because they disagreed with its basic aims, but because, in their eyes, Modernism had failed to meet its stated objectives. The most visible examples of this critique were the vehement clashes at the final two CIAM conferences in Dubrovnik (1956) and Otterlo (1959), between the

22 Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani notes that, in most cases, the emphasis was on efficiency and affordability rather than “committed ideological analysis,” i.e. the quality of such construction was often questionable. Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani, “From Large Housing Estates on the Outskirts to Rebuilding the Inner City: Urban Development Debates in Germany 1960-1980,” in Josef Paul Kleihues: The Art of Urban Architecture, ed. Paul Kahlfeldt, Andres Lepik, and Andreas Schätzke, trans. Michael Robinson (Berlin: Nicolai, 2003), 67.

older generation of architects, including Le Corbusier and Gropius, and a group of young architects who called themselves “Team 10.” This group critiqued the Athens Charter as brittle, technocratic, and insensitive to the actual social needs of users, and their protests ultimately led to the disbanding of the organization.\footnote{24} In their manifesto, Team 10 demanded that urban solutions be based on local context, emphasizing “place and occasion” rather than Giedion’s universal “space and time.”\footnote{25} These conflicts, and others, led to the sea change that has been characterized as the “post-modern turn,” though the term would not become part of common parlance until the late 1970s.\footnote{26} As architectural historian Jorge Otero-Pailos observes,

> To accomplish this change of direction, they had to replace the piloting concepts of Modernism, from the abstract ideas of space and form, toward new notions of history and theory. Out went the conviction that technology drove history, and in came the sense that architectural history was driven by the search for authentic, original human experiences. … They conceived contemporary experience in terms of historical continuity rather than rupture.\footnote{27}

The term “post-modernism,”\footnote{28} despite its ubiquity, is notoriously hard to define. It is alternately used to denote an era, a style, a movement, and a “condition” across many disciplines, including literature, the visual arts, and philosophy, as well as architecture and city planning.\footnote{29} Even within the discipline of architecture itself, there are many different definitions of the term.

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\footnote{24} Team 10 posited a sensitive and context-driven approach to design, which nevertheless preserved many of the aesthetic tenets of Modernist functionalism and technology. It is worth noting that they vehemently opposed the more historicist designs coming out of Italy at the time, even though both groups were critical of High Modernism.

\footnote{25} There has been much recent work on the Smithsons and Team 10. See, for instance, Max Risselada and Dirk van den Heuvel, eds., \textit{Team 10: 1953-81, in Search of a Utopia of the Present} (Rotterdam: NAi, 2005); Mark Crinson and Claire Zimmerman, eds., \textit{Neo-Avant-Garde and Postmodern: Postwar Architecture in Britain and Beyond} (New Haven, CT: Yale Center for British Art, 2010); and Noah Chasin, “Ethics and Aesthetics: New Brutalism, Team 10, and Architectural Change in the 1950s” (CUNY Graduate Center, 2002).


\footnote{27} Jorge Otero-Pailos, \textit{Architecture’s Historical Turn: Phenomenology and the Rise of the Postmodern} (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), xi.

\footnote{28} Following the most common usage, while architectural Modernism will be capitalized in this study to differentiate it from other types of modernisms, I have chosen to leave post-modernism in lower case.

Charles Jencks, who claims to have been the first to utilize the term to denote a style, defines it as the use of “multiple or oppositional codes”; Umberto Eco, who was influential on Jencks, defines it as the “ironic play of real and fake”; others, such as Robert Venturi and Jean-François Lyotard, describe it as embracing a “plurality of truths.” A useful definition for this study is offered by architectural historian Mary McLeod, who asserts that the unifying characteristic of post-modernism is its “search for meaning.” “For most,” she states, “this has meant an attempt to acknowledge architecture’s own history, including the Modern movement, through transformation and selective quotation of earlier designs in their own work.”

This preoccupation with meaning has meant a greater emphasis on context, as well as on the symbolic qualities of architecture. Urban historian Nan Ellin also writes,

> Against the universalism of the Modern movement, these [post-modern] reactions featured a renewed interest in the specificity of regional and historical styles along with a respect for the diversity of urban subcultures. … These reactions have also tended to presuppose many meanings (multivalency) or many “readings,” rather than only one “truth,” and have sought to express this through the symbolic dimension of built form.

As Ellin explains, the European expression of these sentiments differed from the American one, which tended to focus on individual buildings and vernacular landscapes such as the suburbs. Instead, “the European critique proceeded directly to formulate another urban vision,” a tendency which Ellin attributes to “the deeply engrained historical and cultural attachment to cities among Europeans along with the continued desirability of an investment in central cities, as well as political economies which – in contrast to the American one – subsidize large-scale plans.”

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33 Ibid., 10.
Thus, “European urban designers began turning to the pre-industrial past for inspiration and legitimation. The closed book on ancient, medieval, renaissance, baroque, and vernacular townscapes was reopened and closely studied.”

The search for “meaning” in a general sense, and a return to the historical European urban landscape in particular, were major driving forces behind Kleihues’s theoretical formulations. His work also has significant affinities with several other, closely interrelated threads within post-modern architectural thought and design. The first of these is commonly termed “Critical Modernism” or “Critical Regionalism,” a viewpoint supported by Jencks, Kenneth Frampton, Alexander Tzonis, Liane Lefaivre, and others who discuss the architecture of the post-modern movement as constituting a critique or revision, rather than a complete erasure or rejection, of Modernism, as well as an emphasis on regional styles and contexts. This tendency was already visible in Team 10’s work in the late 1950s: while they remained highly critical of the failures of the Modern movement to solve society’s ills, they retained much of its embrace of technology. Similarly, the circle of Italian architects around Ernesto Nathan Rogers and the journal *Casabella-Continuità* in post-war Italy were also opposed to strict, CIAM-based Modernism. They promoted an even more formally varied approach to building than Team 10, one that more explicitly incorporated local forms, materials, and histories, an approach exemplified in BBPR’s Velasca Tower in Milan (1956-8). (fig. 1.14) This Italian group saw the

34 Ibid.
35 Although Kleihues himself saw Critical Reconstruction as being opposed to post-modernism (which he defined narrowly as a style), his approach is nevertheless often included in discussions of post-modern architecture. For the purposes of this study, I will do the same, considering post-modernism broadly, as a loosely connected set of responses to Modernism that began with the breakup of CIAM in the late 1950s, reached fruition in the 1970s and 1980s, and has continued to have significant influence and reverberations through the turn of the twenty-first century.
need, in the words of the Italian architect Giancarlo De Carlo, for “pliant and adjustable plans which must proceed, not from abstract ideological rules, but from a detailed knowledge of historic realities which vary from country to country,” i.e. they identified the need for a regionalist approach to design.38

Along with an attention to local historical styles and typologies came an interest in the phenomenological aspects of architecture. Rogers, especially, emphasized the “experiential” qualities of the urban environment as being of prime importance. As Otero-Pailos explains, Rogers understood the city as representing an accumulation of “historical presents”:

the physical environment produced by a culture’s activity over time … contained all of that culture’s experiences and therefore all of its history. … To be a socially responsible architect meant creating new forms out of existing traditions, to add new experiences harmonious with existing ones. … Rogers argued that the only socially ethical way forward for Modernism was to refound itself in tradition, to return to its historical roots, as a way to participate in the general advancement of culture.39

The notion of historical contextualism gained further and more pointed expression in the so-called “neo-historicism” of, among others, the Luxemburger brothers Rob and Léon Krier. Unlike Team 10 or the Italian Critical Modernists of the immediate post-war period, the Kriers attempted to more directly and literally revive the architectural forms of the industrial nineteenth century and earlier, as well as – problematically – the architecture of the Nazi period.40 Although their approach was much more ideologically conservative than Kleihues’s, they contributed significantly to the idea of Critical Reconstruction in the 1970s by promoting the revival of the urban form of the European perimeter block (fig. 1.15).41

39 Otero-Pailos, Architecture’s Historical Turn, xxiii–xxiv.
Finally, a slightly different, but related, strain of Italian design and theory provides the most visible parallel to, and influence on, Critical Reconstruction: the neo-rationalism of a group of architects, hailing mainly from Italy, who made their entrée onto the global architectural scene in 1973 at the Milan Triennale. Though sometimes classified as a separate movement from post-modernism, neo-rationalism emerged during the 1960s as an approach that attempted to identify the roots of architecture in a set of prototypical forms or “typologies” within the historical urban landscape. Aldo Rossi’s monumentally influential *Architecture of the City* (1966) is a prime example of these sentiments.

In this four-chapter treatise, Rossi presented a “theory of urban artifacts” that defines architecture both synchronically (as “the visible image of the city and the sum of its different architectures”) and diachronically (“the construction of the city over time”). This view allows him to propose two important theses. First, because a given building’s use will change over time, it will accrue various meanings that may or may not directly be expressed through its form. Therefore, he argues, architecture cannot be understood as being simply functional, but must be seen as serving aesthetic, semiotic, or symbolic purposes as well. Rossi calls this “the critique of

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42 This movement was christened “La Tendenza” by designer Massimo Scolari in his essay for the catalog to the 1973 Milan Trienalle. See Mallgrave and Goodman, *An Introduction to Architectural Theory*, 29. It is also called simply “rationalism,” but the term “neo-rationalism” is used in order to differentiate it from the pre-war Rationalism of “Gruppo ?,” whom this group considered their forefathers. I will use the term “neo-rationalism” here.

43 Because it “emphasized compositional principles and morphology rather than decoration and scenographic qualities,” it is sometimes seen as not belonging to the post-modern style aesthetically. See McLeod, “Architecture,” 30. Mallgrave and Goodman, on the other hand, discuss it as one of the main four facets of post-modern thought. See Mallgrave and Goodman, *An Introduction to Architectural Theory*, 37.

44 The Neo-Rationalists were heavily influenced by the structuralism of Levi-Strauss and others, as well as the deconstruction of Jacques Derrida. Emil Kaufman and Alberto Sartoris, rather than Giedion and Pevsner, were their preferred historians of the Modern Movement. See Ellin, *Postmodern Urbanism*, 10–11; Panos Koulermos, *20th Century European Rationalism* (London: Academy, 1995), 15.


 naïve functionalism.” Second, the purposes and significations of structures may indeed transform with time, but because they exist in a specific place, they have the potential to embody the traces of this history, or, in Rossi’s sociologically-based terminology, “collective memory”:

In an urban artifact, certain original values and functions remain, others are totally altered … We contemplate the values that remain – I am also referring to spiritual values – and try to ascertain whether they have some connection with the building’s materiality. … At this point, we might discuss what our idea of the building is, our most general memory of it as a product of the collective, and what relationship it affords us with this collective. … There are people who do not like a place because it is associated with some ominous moment in their lives; others attribute an auspicious character to a place. All these experiences, their sum, constitute the city.

The city, for Rossi, is thus “a great, comprehensive representation of the human condition.”

Based on his understanding of architecture as arising from both functional needs and aesthetic or symbolic ones, Rossi then develops a theory of the “type,” referring to the work of Quatremère de Quincy and relying on the logic of structuralist thinkers such as Claude Lévi-Strauss. The “type,” for Rossi, consists of those elements that cannot be further reduced – structures that underlie, but do not necessarily dictate the precise physical forms of, architecture. Thus, unlike the CIAM Modernists, Rossi’s solution to the problem of urban design is based in architects’ and users’ subjective experience rather than in a set of universal rules. As architectural historian Helmut Geisert observes, a typology in Rossi’s terms should not be understood as something to be imitated, but as a model: an “imaginative process in which the hidden idea has first to be decoded so that it can be transformed aesthetically, making it a construction rather than a

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47 Ibid., 46. It should be noted that, although his writing has been interpreted otherwise, Rossi here is in conversation with urban thinkers and historians such as Malinowski and Chabot, rather than Le Corbusier and CIAM. Certainly, as discussed above, the High Modernists were not committed simply to functionalism per se, but embraced a range of aesthetic approaches that attempted to reconcile the use of new materials and techniques with new ways of life brought about by industrialism. Much of this nuance has been lost in later, post-modern critiques of Modernism, which tend to portray it as a rigidly functionalist approach.

48 Ibid., 29.

49 Ibid., 34.

50 Ibid., 39–41. One of his case studies for typology was, in fact, Berlin housing.
reconstruction, and definitely not a copy.”51 Like the critique of functionalism, typology, too, allows for an understanding of built form as separate from—though possibly linked to—its practical function. Rossi’s theory therefore allowed for a thoughtful historical rehabilitation of the city, without precisely dictating its outward appearance.

By incorporating the idea of collective memory into their work, the neo-rationalists demonstrated an attention to the everyday users of their structures. In trying to speak beyond the insular avant-garde, however, they also risked cooptation by political or economic systems. This generation of architects therefore tended to shy away from directly tackling larger social and political problems, as their predecessors in the Modern movement had done.52 Furthermore, in Europe, both historicism (especially neo-classicism) and Modernism were seen as tainted styles: historicism because of its association with fascism, and Modernism because it represented both a failed set of architectural theories and the rise of global capitalism. Architects in Europe needed to differentiate themselves clearly from these two stances without running afoul of new ideologies, especially the rising Marxist sentiments of the student movement in the late 1960s. Suspicion vis-à-vis the potential assimilation by the market or by political systems was shored up by the important influence during this period of the critical theorist Theodor Adorno, who had emigrated to the United States during the war but returned to West Germany in 1949 and later headed the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research. His theories of the avant-garde gelled perfectly with the anti-capitalist sentiments of many young Continentals: he emphasized the importance of art’s (and architecture’s) aesthetic and conceptual autonomy, while simultaneously recognizing the practical impossibility of such a thing. The result was that architects like Rossi

52 Ellin, Postmodern Urbanism, 158.
adopted an attitude towards both historicism and Modernism that pulled freely from both without relinquishing a critical stance toward either. The justification for such aesthetic and functional decisions was a highly personal – even at times mystical – attitude toward the ways in which architecture was allowed to signify. As McLeod noted, “meaning” in the most general sense became one of the major goals of post-modern architecture, but the specificity of that meaning was left consciously in question.\footnote{See Mary McLeod, “Architecture,” 42, for a discussion of the loss of literacy (following Frampton) of publics vis-à-vis architecture as sign; this focus on meaning, then, she argues became problematic because people had no reference points for signification in architecture, because Modernism had erased them.} However, the unwillingness of the neo-rationalists, as well as Kleihues, to put a finger directly on the nature of that meaning meant that their architecture was easily coopted by the very political and corporate interests that they abhorred.\footnote{For a discussion of the general issues that led to this see Ellin, Postmodern Urbanism, 159.}

**Post-Modernism in West German Architecture and Urbanism**

A turning point for West Germany’s post-war architectural culture was the summer institute at the Technical University of Berlin, headed by the German neo-rationalist Oswald Matthias Ungers between 1963 and 1968. Ungers’s work in Berlin, as well as his time as head of the architecture school at Cornell University in the 1970s, promoted a discussion of contextualism, traditional urbanism, and historicism on both sides of the Atlantic.\footnote{Jencks, The Story of Post-Modernism, 67.} In the words of architectural historian Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani, this marked the discovery of “tradition” as having “progressive potential.”\footnote{Lampugnani, “From Large Housing Estates ... ,” 71.} The founding of the journal *Arch+* in 1968 also opened up the German-language conversation amongst architects about these ideas. Most importantly, Ungers’s seminar took Rossi’s *The Architecture of the City* as one of its primary topics and...
helped introduce its ideas into the German-speaking community (the book was not translated into German until 1973).\textsuperscript{57}

Several other popular books also increased public awareness of the destruction of the historical city fabric by both the bombs of World War II and Modernist planning. Kevin Lynch’s \textit{The Image of the City} (1960), Jane Jacobs’s \textit{The Death and Life of Great American Cities} (1961), and Robert Venturi’s \textit{Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture} (1966) were all widely read by architects in Germany.\textsuperscript{58} In the German-speaking milieu, these sentiments were echoed by Wolf Jobst Siedler and Elisabeth Niggemeyer’s \textit{The Murdered City} (\textit{Die Gemordete Stadt}, 1964). This book dialectically paired images of pre-Modern city fragments with ones of Modernist urban landscapes, as well as essays on the destruction of the historical city. Psychologist Alexander Mitscherlich’s \textit{The Inhospitability of our Cities} (\textit{Die Unwirtlichkeit unserer Städte: Anstiftung zum Unfrieden}, 1965) added to this conversation, followed by Ulrich Conrads’s \textit{Architecture – Space for Life} (\textit{Architektur – Spielraum für Leben}, 1972), which directly pleaded for a renewal of the historical city “from within” and suggested a strategy of “critical re-production” of urban quality.\textsuperscript{59} Importantly, Conrads encouraged a return to thinking about the various constituent elements of the “traditional” urban landscape, such as squares, streets, trees, courtyards, passages, and blocks.\textsuperscript{60} In 1975, the International Design Center (\textit{Internationales Design Zentrum}) in West Berlin staged an exhibition on “Designing the Historic Street,” along with a conference and design competition that took a street in central Berlin as its object. Invited architects included such international figures as Vittorio Gregotti, Alison

\textsuperscript{57} Ungers’s neo-rationalism and urbanism, it should be noted, differs significantly from Rossi’s. See Jasper Cepl, \textit{Oswald Mathias Ungers: Eine Intellektuelle Biographie}, Kunstwissenschaftliche Bibliothek, Bd. 33 (Köln: König, 2007).

\textsuperscript{58} See also Christopher Klemek, \textit{The Transatlantic Collapse of Urban Renewal: Postwar Urbanism from New York to Berlin} (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2011).


\textsuperscript{60} Ibid.
Smithson, and Charles Moore, as well as Unger and Hardt-Waltherr Hämmer, who would later head the 1987 International Building Exhibition with Kleihues.61

The growing student movement in the late 1960s gave new impetus to the renewal of historic city centers as well. In West Berlin, students at the Technical University organized an exhibition, accompanied by a manifesto, titled “Diagnosis of Building in West Berlin” (“Diagnose zum Bauen in West Berlin”) in 1968, as a reaction to the more official “Berlin Building Weeks” (“Berliner Bauwochen”), an exhibition meant to show off new city-sponsored infrastructure projects.62 Staged in the shell of a building designed by Scharoun, the “Diagnosis” exhibition constituted an anti-capitalist critique of the city’s Modernist development policies, and the manifesto was signed not only by students but by many practicing architects, including Kleihues.63 Outside of the discipline of architecture, the occupation of tenements by squatters was becoming another important way that young people showed a renewed interest in the historic city fabric, and along with existing citizens’ groups, these residents began to restore nineteenth-century buildings.64 These activities paralleled and intersected with the growing preservationist movement, which was also taking hold on both sides of the Atlantic.65 Such

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61 Ibid., 63.
64 Hard-Waltherr and Marie-Brigitte Hämmer were involved in an exemplary one: Block 118 in Charlottenburg, where residents were involved in the process and rents were kept stable. 1975-80. See Lampugnani, “From Large Housing Estates ... ,” 73. See also Regine Dölling, The Conservation of Historical Monuments in the Federal Republic of Germany: History, Organisation, Tasks, Case-Histories. A Contribution to European Architectural Heritage Year 1975 (Bonn-Bad Godesberg: Internationes, 1974).
65 In the United States, for instance, the demolition of Penn Station in the early 1960s led to the establishment of an official landmarks preservation act, while in Paris the destruction of Les Halles spurred a similar conversation. In Western Europe, the Council of Europe officially adopted a charter in October 1975 regarding the preservation of important architectural monuments and staged a touring exhibition in support of the initiative titled A Future for Our Past. See “European Charter of the Architectural Heritage - 1975,” ICOMOS: International Council on Monuments and Sites, n.d., http://www.icomos.org/en/support-us/179-articles-en-francais/ressources/charters-and-standards/170-european-charter-of-the-

Thus, by the end of the 1970s, the time was ripe for the large-scale renewal of West Berlin’s historical inner city (which, because of the Berlin Wall, now lay along its eastern border) (fig. 1.16). Though urban renewal programs took place at this time across West Germany, Berlin was an especially appropriate place for large-scale, politically-charged experiments. On the one hand, it was not officially part of West Germany: legally, it remained an exceptional zone. It was also not a capital city for the West and therefore did not carry with it the pressure of officially representing the nation.\footnote{67 This was not the case for East Germany – Berlin remained its capital city throughout the Cold War.} On the other hand, as the site of the Berlin Wall and a tiny island of democracy in the midst of a Communist state, it was also a highly visible space in which to wage the cultural Cold War by demonstrating democratic-capitalist superiority. West Berlin could function, therefore, historian Janet Ward contends, as a “threshold site,” or, in the words of architectural historian Matthias Schirren, as a “nexus point for reimagining lines of architectural-heritage; \textit{Eine Zukunft für unsere Vergangenheit: das europäische Denkmalschutzjahr des Europarat}es. (Bonn: Europa Union, 1975).
Kleihues’s Early Years in West Berlin and His Theory of Poetic Rationalism

West German Identity and the Holocaust: Jürgen Habermas and the Historians’ Quarrel

Born in 1933, Kleihues was part of what has been called the “skeptical generation.” Having grown up under the Nazis, this generation had experienced a total collapse of its world-view at the end of World War II. In West Germany, their resulting disillusionment translated, argues historian Frank Brunssen, into a “deeply skeptical and anti-ideological outlook.” For them, the aporia of the Nazi period, including the crimes of the Holocaust, formed the basis of a “negative form of identification” with being German. As the writer Christa Wolf famously put it, she wished fervently “not to have to be German” (“keine Deutsche sein zu müssen”). Any direct, public discussion of a positive West German national identity was out of the question; instead, the focus was on integration with the larger Western international community, and on the post-war re-founding of the nation based on a democratic constitution.

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70 Frank Brunssen, “The New Self-Understanding of the Berlin Republic: Readings of Contemporary German History,” in Recasting German Identity: Culture, Politics, and Literature in the Berlin Republic, ed. Stuart Taberner and Frank Finlay (Rochester: Camden House, 2002), 20. In East Germany, national identity took a very different path. Under this regime, the population was encouraged to see themselves as victims of the Nazi period, rather than as perpetrators. The lack of collective guilt with regards to the Holocaust in East Germany is part of the reason that the former Eastern states saw a resurgence of right-wing political groups after 1990.

71 Quoted in ibid., 21. It should be noted that Wolf was actually an East German, but the sentiment applies equally well to East and West in this case.
The public attitude of the majority of West Germans toward their history was expressed succinctly by president Richard von Weiszäcker in his speech to parliament on the fortieth anniversary of the Allied victory, in 1985:

All of us, whether guilty or not, whether old or young, must accept the past. We are all affected by its consequences and liable for it. The young and old generations must and can help each other to understand why it is vital to keep alive the memories. It is not a case of coming to terms with the past (Vergangenheitsbewältigung). That is not possible. It cannot be subsequently modified or made not to have happened. However, anyone who closes his eyes to the past is blind to the present. Whoever refuses to remember the inhumanity is prone to new risks of infection.

Weiszäcker’s choice of words here is telling: the collective guilt shouldered by West Germans with regards to Nazi crimes was seen as a necessary prophylactic against future “infections” by such destructive ideologies. In speaking against the idea of “Vergangenheitsbewältigung” (often translated as “coming to terms with the past” but also connoting a “completion” or “mastering” of the past, i.e. its closure and comprehensibility) Weiszäcker was also countering the notion that the history of the Holocaust could be “normalized,” i.e. narrativized and therefore understood as a historical fact, or that a “closing line” (“Schlusstrich”) could be drawn under it. Instead, the incomprehensibility of the Holocaust, Weiszäcker argued, echoing the sentiments of the so-

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72 Despite this outwardly-expressed attitude, the personal opinions and deeds of individuals often remained problematically sympathetic to or ambivalent towards the Nazi legacy, as dramatized in films like Das Schreckliche Mädchen (The Nasty Girl). See Das Schreckliche Mädchen, dir. Michael Verhoeven, (HBO Video, 1992).

called “skeptical generation,” should be constitutive of the German nation: a “negative founding moment” on which the idea of their collective identity and purpose as a nation was based.  

However, there was a move in the 1980s by some public intellectuals and politicians, including Chancellor Helmut Kohl (in office from 1982 to 1998), to create a new national identity for West Germans as both victors (through post-war rebuilding and integration with the West) and victims of the violence and destruction of the Second World War.  

Writing in the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung in 1986, historian Ernst Nolte spurred a vitriolic public debate known as the “Historians’ Quarrel” (“Historikerstreit”), by suggesting that the Holocaust could be relativized as a reaction to the Stalinist gulags, and that Nazism had simply been a natural response to the rise of Bolshevism in the Soviet Union. The philosopher Jürgen Habermas, a student of Adorno and his successor at the Frankfurt Institute, became Nolte’s immediate and aggressive opponent. In a rebuttal in the national newspaper Die Zeit, Habermas voiced the concern that this kind of logic would lead to a problematic “cancelling out of damages” that would absolve Germans of their status as perpetrators under the Nazis and result in the very kind of conception of national identity that would sever their hard-won ties with the West.

Habermas was an extremely important public figure for West Germans of Kleihues’s generation. In his first major work, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere (1962), he argued that the Enlightenment had constituted an era of rational and critical discussion of public affairs, and that this sense of civic participation had been gradually undermined in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by the rise of industrial capitalism and the growth of the

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74 Leggewie, Ein Ort, an Den Man Gerne Geht, 33.
75 The memorial at Schinkel’s Neue Wache is a perfect expression of these sentiments. For a discussion, see Ladd, The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape.
welfare state. To combat this tendency, Habermas advocated for a restructuring of the public sphere based on a democratic model where important matters are discussed and debated publicly by engaged citizens. Sometimes called “communicative rationality,” because he located the concept of rationality not in abstract or ideal structures, but in the linguistic communication of human beings, Habermas’s philosophy clearly provided a model for Kleihues to approach the questions of molding a new German architecture through discussion and dialogue during the IBA.

Kleihues’s Early Projects

Kleihues began his training at the Technical University of Stuttgart in 1955, where the faculty was dominated by pre-World War II proponents of German Modernism. Before he could fully assimilate their teachings, however, Kleihues was recruited by the Berlin architect Hans Scharoun, and he transferred to the Technical University of Berlin in order to study with the Expressionist-Modernist master. During the late fifties, in addition to completing his dissertation on Scharoun’s work, Kleihues interned in the office of Peter Poelzig, then professor of hospital-building (Krankenhausbau) at the Technical University. As opposed to the more strictly Modernist legacy of the faculty in Stuttgart, Scharoun and Poelzig both exhibited more willingness to experiment – Scharoun with a biologically inspired Expressionism, and Poelzig with traditional regional forms. These two diversions from the hard line of functionalist

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80 Kleihues worked on Scharoun’s Stuttgart “Romeo and Juliet” drafting floorplans. Following his move to Berlin, he worked as a guide at the Interbau exhibition, spent time at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, and married his wife at Le Corbusier’s church at Ronchamp in 1961. See ibid., 9.

Modernism had a profound effect on the budding Kleihues, who graduated in 1959 and established his own West Berlin firm in 1962 with Hans Heinrich Moldenscharadt. Although Berlin in the late 1950s and early 1960s, as discussed above, was hardly a hotbed of architectural experimentation, it was, by the same token, a space of possibility where Kleihues had the freedom to try out new formal approaches and novel ways of relating to the city’s architectural legacies.  

It was undoubtedly Scharoun, who, having acted as head city planner for Berlin immediately following the war, encouraged Kleihues’s interest in urbanism. Early on, he entered competitions for neighborhood renewal projects, where his penchant for historical forms often shone through. His 1967 design for the neighborhood of Ruhwald in West Berlin incorporated rowhouses, which had, since the end of the war, been rejected as too conservative (fig. 1.17). Similarly, his 1969 design for a building straddling Lewishamstrasse in Charlottenburg, also in West Berlin, demonstrates an attention to the historic shape of the city block. Kleihues was no neo-traditionalist, however. His 1969 competition entry for rebuilding the neighborhood of Perlach in Munich (fig. 1.18) is staunchly Modernist, with separation of functions and linear rows of buildings. One of his first large commissions was for the main workshop of the Berlin Department of Sanitation (1969) (fig. 1.19). This clearly Miesian design demonstrates Kleihues’s early strategy of synthesizing traditional and Modernist forms. His design for Neukölln Hospital (1973) (fig. 1.20) also illustrates a focus on seriality and geometrical abstraction as

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84 This design seems to have been done in conjunction with Kleihues’s commission to do the Berlin-Atlas study (begun officially in 1971). He also collaborated on the design with Leon Krier, who was working in his office at the time. Scheer, Josef Paul Kleihues: Works 1966-1980, 1:60; Lampugnani, “From Large Housing Estates ...,” 75.
85 This approach also connects to his theory of “sequencing” (Reihung), explored later in the Dortmund Architecture Conferences. Scheer, Josef Paul Kleihues: Works 1966-1980, 1:68–69.
means of aesthetic expression, as well as an early interest in the playful, even decorative nature of functional materials that would later become hallmarks of the global High Tech style.

**The First Manifesto and Kleihues’s Theory of Poetic Rationalism**

These early projects demonstrate some of the key facets of Kleihues’s emerging personal theory of architecture, which he called “Poetic Rationalism,” laid down formally for the first time in his “First Manifesto” of May 1976. The text, fittingly, takes the form of a poem:

Unwittingly,
For the most part humorlessly,
Sometimes even angrily,
Architecture is discussed to death and nothingness,
With mediocre consensus the case is made against architecture.
Architecture is seldom:
Architecture as exhortation
Against an increasingly violent world in which builder and architect relieve themselves of responsibility and engagement.
Architecture as protest
Against apolitical technism and instrumental thinking that pervert the act of building into routine.
Architecture as example
Against superficial faith in research and function and a utilitarian rationalism which negates all poetry.
Architecture as poetry
Against the blind order of functional-rational arrogance.
Architecture looking back
Timid and ardent.
Architecture as learning
From classical landscapes, from villages in Nepal and from Las Vegas.
Architecture as renewal
In dialogue with Alberti, Palladio, Schinkel, and all that we hold sacred.
Architecture as a possible category of the new
Acknowledging the eternally constant, under ever-new cladding.
Architecture in search of broader autonomy

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86 Given the Adornian tendencies in Kleihues’s thought, it is ironic that he should choose poetry as the antidote to rationality, although, as Nicolaas Barr Clingan writes, Adorno did not mean to condemn the poet himself who would “write poetry after Auschwitz,” but the system in which all cultural products and processes are coopted and become exchangeable, to the point of devaluing human life. Nicolaas P. Barr Clingan, “Adorno, Celan, and the Dictum against Poetry after Auschwitz,” *CCAR Journal: The Reform Jewish Quarterly* 62, no. 1 (Winter 2015): 8–22. Also note that there is a “Second Manifesto,” written in 1984 and titled “The Seven Pillars of Architecture” (“Die Sieben Säulen der Architektur”), which reworks many of the same themes through a seven-part poem that follows the archetypal character of Archaeus through the discovering of geometry, classical architecture, the crisis of rational thought, and, ultimately, the discovery of “poetry.” See Josef Paul Kleihues, “Die Sieben Säulen Der Architektur,” in *Das Abenteuer Der Ideen: Architektur Und Philosophie Seit Der Industriellen Revolution*, ed. Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani, Claus Baldus, and Josef Paul Kleihues (Berlin: Frölich & Kaufmann, 1984), 11–16.
Lovingly singing out of tune, collecting characteristics
Breaking away from the moral terror of pure reason and empirical realities,
Eluding the market and wastefulness.
Architecture as desire
Boundless.
Architecture
For pleasure on the part of the viewer as well,
Offering tendencies and possibilities up for discussion.\(^{87}\)

As the first lines of the poem suggest, Kleihues’s Poetic Rationalism confronts the
problems articulated by post-war critiques of Modernist architecture. Modernism’s critics,
however, in Kleihues’s view, have not simply argued against a single approach to building, but
have denounced and undermined architecture’s entire political, social, and aesthetic value,
leading to an unhealthy, nihilistic complacency. This was a natural sentiment for a young
architect in West Germany at the time, where most building done quickly and cheaply in the
mode of the globalized International Style, without any philosophical or societal aspirations. As
Ungers later observed, the goal of Kleihues’s generation of West German architects thus became
to revive – and to carefully situate themselves within – the Western humanist tradition, defined
by “reason, openness, variety and freedom,” as well as a reliance on dialectical thinking,
whereby their techniques and strategies could continually evolve.\(^{88}\) In basing his architecture on
the notion of the “rational,” Kleihues inserts himself into a long line of Enlightenment thinkers

\(^{87}\) “Nichtsahnend, / Zumeist humorlos, / Zuweilen wohl auch böse, / Wird Architektur in Nichtigkeit zerredet, / Wird
mediokrem Konsens das Wort geredet gegen Architektur. / Architektur ist selten: / Architektur als Ermuterung / Gegen eine
zunehmend verwaltete Welt, in der Bauherr und Architekt aus Verantwortung und Engagement sich entlassen. / Architektur als
Widerspruch / Gegen unpolitischem Technizismus und eine instrumentelle Art zu denken, die das Planen und Bauen zur Routine
pervertieren. / Architektur als Beispiel / Gegen vordergründige Erfahrungs- und Funktionsgläubigkeit und einen utilitaristischen
Rationalismus, die jede Poesie negieren. / Architektur als Poesie / Gegen die blinde Ordnung zweckrationaler Überheblichkeit. / Architektur
zurückblickend / Scheu und begeistert. / Architektur als Lernende / In den klassischen Landschaften, aus Bergdörfern
des Nepal und von Las Vegas. / Architektur als Erneuernde / In Dialekt mit Alberti, Palladio, Schinkel, und allen Heiligen. / Architektur
als möglichen Kategorie des Neuen / In Erkenntnis des immer gleichen, unter stets neuer Hülle. / Architektur auf der
Suche nach erweiterte Autonomie / Liebevoll distonieren, Attribute sammeln. / Gegen den moralischen Terror reiner Vernunft und
empirischer Realitäten absetzen, / Dem Markt und Verschleiss sich entziehen. / Architektur als Sehnsucht / Grenzenlos. / Architektur
/ Auch zum Vergnügen auf der Seite des Betrachters, / Tendenzen und Chancen stehen zur Diskussion.“ In Josef Paul
Kleihues, “Erstes Manifest,” in *Dortmunder Architekturausstellung, 1976* (Dortmund: Abteilung Bauwesen der Universität
Dortmund, 1976), 3.

\(^{88}\) Oswald Mathias Ungers, “The Question of European Architecture and Its Crisis,” in *Josef Paul Kleihues: The Art of
148.
and architects, beginning with the French theorists of the late eighteenth century (Laugier, Soufflot, and others, especially Durand), as well as the German tradition following Kant. The lineage, Kleihues writes elsewhere, then moves to Gilly and Schinkel, Semper, and finally the early rationalism of Behrens, Taut, Mies van der Rohe, and Hilbersheimer. Reviving the humanist tradition implied not only an Enlightenment worldview based in reason, but also meant shouldering, as these earlier architects did, some kind of obligation toward society at large. However, in order to propose an architecture of political and intellectual engagement, Kleihues had to be careful, for, as Adorno and other thinkers had clearly demonstrated, cultural products and processes are all too easily coopted by economic and political systems, and used to facilitate the exploitation – or, in the case of Germany under the Nazis, the extermination – of human beings.

Kleihues thus proposes, in the next few lines of the manifesto, an architecture of social and political “responsibility” and “protest.” But, the manifesto argues, this cannot be done with “superficial faith” in the capabilities of rational thought to solve human problems; rationalism must be qualified. This demand means rejecting the ideas of pure functionalism and economic determinism that underlay much of the Modernist thinking of the 1920s. Instead, for Kleihues, rational principles are to be applied to the creative process itself as a way to remain self-reflexive. Though he still dedicates himself to function, construction, and economy, Kleihues does this, as he states elsewhere, “in freer ways” (“auf freiere Weise”):

We must attempt to expand rationalism, to interpret it anew ... I wanted to make clear with this concept that I am concerning myself with a contradictory expansion of classical rationalism: with a conception that allows me to involve

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90 Scheer, “Poetic Rationalism,” 17, 19.
experimentation more heavily and to mobilize not only the mind, but also the emotions as a part of the design process.\footnote{Wir müssen versuchen, den Rationalismus zu erweitern, neu zu interpretieren und diesen Begriff poetisch aufzufassen ... Ich wollte mit diesem ... deutlich machen, dass es mir in gewisser Weise um eine kontradiktorische Erweiterung des klassischen Rationalismus geht: um eine Auffassung, die mir erlaubt, das Experiment starker einzubeziehen und nicht nur den Verstand, sondern auch die Gefühle als Teil der Entwurfsarbeit zu mobilisieren.” Jörg Kirchbaum, Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani, and Anna Meseure, eds., “Josef Paul Kleihues im Gespräch mit Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani,” in Baumeister im Profil: Architektur-Forum Dresden (Stuttgart: G. Hatje, 1991), 70. Kleihues stated this during his interview with Lampugnani in 1991.}

The way to achieve this expansion, Kleihues argues, is through the characteristic of the poetic.\footnote{This appears to have been adopted from Heidegger. See his talk on Poetic Rationalism where he takes Heidegger and Wittgenstein and does a structuralist reading (langue/parole) of their use of the term “language” with regards to architectural expression.}

When put in conversation with rationalism, as Kleihues’s biographer Thorsten Scheer explains, both elements become “equally justified components of a tension field they produce, which always includes the possibility of mutual criticism.”\footnote{Scheer, “Poetic Rationalism,” 24.} Kleihues himself calls this the principle of \textit{coincidentia oppositorum} – the coincidence of opposites.\footnote{Kirchbaum, Lampugnani, and Meseure, “Joseph Paul Kleihues im Gespräch,” 71. This was also a concept used by Unger. See Jencks, \textit{The Story of Post-Modernism}, 67. Kleihues’s theories also link back to nineteenth-century discussions of \textit{Kunstform} and \textit{Werkform}. See Geisert, “Eupalinos - Berlin,” 13.}

The fact that Poetic Rationalism incorporates emotions, but does so within the framework of a rational geometry, in turn guarantees architecture’s autonomy. As Kleihues suggests in the manifesto, his architecture thus resists the “moral terror” of both “empirical realities” and the market economy. It cannot be coopted by either politics or capitalism, because it resists any kind of overt symbolism. According to Scheer,

Kleihues’s notion was based on a logic of geometry and dimension...which if it does not prevent, makes a rhetorical and narrative interpretation more difficult, a result that is characterized by restraint and which refrains from obvious assignment of meaning. In this respect Kleihues understood his concept as a guarantee of aesthetic ambiguity instead of the dogmatic limitation of a geometric formula masquerading as a panacea.\footnote{Scheer, “The Necessary Diversity,” 12, 13.}
In other words, as architecture historian Fritz Neumeyer writes, “Modernism’s fascination with seriality is definitely shared, but certainly not as a result of convictions about social and moral superiority of the mechanical over the beautiful, but as a result of architectural insight into the essential necessities and natural laws of architecture as a discipline.”96 The result is a “pragmatic openness” that relies on an emphasis on geometry to achieve a highly abstract appearance, the renunciation of narrative connections and personal expressions,97 and, yet, a strong orientation towards philosophy and history.98 This outlook, Kleihues hopes, allows him to avoid both “fashionable experiments” and rigid functionalism.99

**Poetic Rationalism as Valuing History and Context**

Kleihues’s position differs from that of Greenbergian High Modernism, which claimed autonomy for art based on faithfulness to the medium itself, in that Kleihues’s architecture is not just about architectural form. Such strict formalism would make his work just as susceptible to political or market cooption as an architecture that overtly sells itself to the masses. Kleihues balances his rational, poetic geometry with two other ideas: history and context. In this respect, Kleihues was clearly influenced by Rossi, as well as Christopher Alexander and Robert Venturi, both of whom Kleihues indirectly references in his poem (“Architecture as learning / … from villages in Nepal and from Las Vegas”).100 Kleihues’s designs cannot just be plopped down on any site; they reference their environment, take its memory and history into account, and create

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98 Ibid.


100 Especially palpable in Berlin in the 1970s were ties to Cornell, as Oswald Matthias Ungers and Rem Koolhaas both led summer institutes at the *Deutsche Architektur Zentrum*. (Kleihues was close with Ungers, and later sponsored the latter’s return to Germany – see Cepl, *Oswald Mathias Ungers*, 342.) Internal differences in the work of these various figures later led to sharp splits between them (the “urban archipelago” vs. the “European City”). Kleihues often also mentions Kevin Lynch as influential on his thinking.
the possibility for new histories to be written within them. Architecture must, he argues in the manifesto, be willing to learn from the past: not by simply copying the great architecture of preceding eras, but, in a dialogical manner, presenting “the eternally constant, under ever-new cladding.”

Rather than revivalism, an attention to history or memory can offer architects a way to critique and improve upon past experiments. As Scheer writes, “Kleihues’s call for memory should be defended against the reproach that he is concerned about assuring his aesthetic position by tradition, and thus a return to the principles of tradition. The concept of ‘memory’ should rather be seen as a critical category applied to contemporary architectural practice directed merely at fulfilling function.”

Architecture as poetic geometry arising from an analysis of the site and a confrontation with memory and history, for Kleihues, means that built form should be intimately bound up with the idea of the “genius loci” – the “spirit of the place”:

I believe that every place, in addition to its specific reality, also possesses a unique atmosphere, which can be very different. Paris is not London, New York is not Berlin, Dresden is not Vienna. The atmospheric character of a city opens itself to us only through the agile correspondence of intellect and feeling. Atmosphere itself is a mixture of spirituality … and the utterly concrete rhythm of life.

Clearly Rossi, who also wrote about the genius loci, is a major influence on his thinking about these matters, but Kleihues is careful to distinguish his own approach from the one presented in The Architecture of the City. While Kleihues admits that Rossi ushered in a new era of

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101 Kleihues, “Erstes Manifest.”

102 Scheer, “Poetic Rationalism,” 19.


architectural thought that allowed for a new way of thinking about the relationships between politics, economics, history, and aesthetics, he feels that Rossi’s approach is too formally limited. “The idea of the critical reconstruction of the city, in contrast to the reductive, the traditionally oriented, theory of Rossi, is more open and ready to experiment. In the sense, not of an obviously harmonious, but rather of a diverse totality, we want to and must accept the contradictory and antithetical as goal and method.”

An attention to the *genius loci* surfaced most visibly in Kleihues’s project for the restoration of Vinetaplatz in the neighborhood of Wedding, begun in 1971 and completed in 1977. Here, Kleihues revived the form of the nineteenth-century perimeter block – the first in Berlin since 1945 – leaving the center of the building open as a residential courtyard (figs. 1.21-1.23). The beveled corners of the building, as well as its tripartite façade, also reference the surrounding nineteenth-century buildings. The use of a perimeter block design that alluded to the historical city was a bold move: up until this time, any discussion of so-called “traditional” (i.e. nineteenth-century or neoclassical) forms in West Germany had been viewed with utmost skepticism. Nevertheless, though in plan the building looks traditional, its reductive geometry, abstract seriality, and attention to such functional issues as sunlight (the balconies all face south so that residents can have maximum access to light) also refer directly to the Modernist tradition. In addition, Kleihues openly referenced German Modernists such as Walter Gropius and

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Scharoun in his writings about Vinetaplatz, focusing on their responses to local conditions in various small-scale projects. Thus, with his Vinetaplatz design, Kleihues reintroduces the notion of the traditional to the West Berlin and West German architecture scene, while also reviving a strand of German Modernism that avoided the problematic legacy of International Style megaprojects.

Another design from around the same time demonstrates that Kleihues was dedicated not only to reviving traditional forms, but also to reimagining how West Berlin was planned on a larger scale. His competition entry for an urban design for Wittenbergplatz-Tauentzienstrasse-Breitscheidplatz (in the historic shopping district near Zoostation in West Berlin – the new “heart” of the West) (1975-1977) further illustrates Kleihues’s commitment to both tradition and Modernism. In this six-block “city within a city,” the massing of the buildings and the use of a pedestrian-friendly boulevard with lavish plantings to tie them together, Kleihues revives the nineteenth-century ground plan of the area. However, this plan is then overlaid with structures that, though they reference nineteenth-century massing and utilize contemporary materials and abstract, repetitive geometries. Kleihues thus avoids the reactionary neo-historicism of revivalist architects such as the Kriers or Quinlan Terry; his reference to tradition looks at the deeper structures of the city and overlays these with modern forms and materials, utilizing rational geometries accented with personal touches.

Further impetus and visibility for the renewal of historical city forms was provided by the designation of 1975 as “European Architectural Heritage Year” by the Council of Europe. In

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109 Lampugnani, “From Large Housing Estates ...,” 75.
110 According to Lampugnani, their tunnel roofs reference Godin’s Familistère in Guise. See ibid.
West Berlin, Kleihues became involved in related architectural renewal and preservation projects through the “Berlin-Atlas” project commissioned by the city senate (*Berlin-Atlas für Stadtbild und Stadtraum*, 1973). This work compiled not only zoning and property data on the West Berlin neighborhoods of Charlottenburg and Kreuzberg, but information about the states of structures and facades on each block. As did many of the theoretical texts of the 1970s, the Berlin-Atlas drew on the cartographic conventions of the “Nolli Plan,” a baroque map of Rome that became popular amongst post-modernists as a way to demonstrate “figural voids” in the urban landscape in stark black and white (fig. 1.24). The Berlin-Atlas became the first of many Berlin maps to rely on this visual rhetoric to argue for the renewal of the historic cityscape, and to argue against Modernist planning that proposed to do away with the original street plan.

Thus, with Poetic Rationalism, illustrated through his projects of the 1960s and 70s, Kleihues developed a theory that attempted to reclaim an architectural legacy for Berlin and for West Germany that would avoid the pitfalls of Modernism (with its “naïve functionalism”) and historicism (with its ties to Nazism), while also remaining regionalist – i.e., being *German*. Poetic Rationalism allowed him to knit these needs together under the rubric of intellectualized emotion rather than pure personal expression, with an eye towards distanced social engagement that refused, at the same time, to become overtly politicized or subject to pure economic needs. Unfortunately, the ambitious nature of such a project, and the theoretical gymnastics that such a position necessitated, made it, as will be demonstrated below, very difficult to successfully translate into a set of clear tenets for building.

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The Formalization of the Theory of Critical Reconstruction in the IBA

The Formation of the IBA and the “Kleihues Plan”

Kleihues wrote and talked about the idea of Poetic Rationalism throughout the late 1970s. However, as should be clear from his early work, his ambitions, and his ideas, were larger than individual buildings: he was interested in thinking about the city as a whole, and in influencing the disciplinary conversation about urban issues in a significant way. Beginning in 1973, through his position as head of the newly established architecture faculty at the University of Dortmund, Kleihues directed the organization of a years-long series of symposia, exhibitions, and publications that invited architects from around the globe to contribute to a discussion about the future of architecture. Inclusive in their stylistic scope (the first show, for instance, allowed architects who were otherwise at odds, such as Rossi, Venturi, Moore, and Ungers, to live side by side in the same exhibition), these events allowed for a conversation to begin about how to knit together elements of the traditional with the critique of the Modern, without resorting to dogma. Symposium themes included “The Principle of Sequencing in Architecture” (“Das Prinzip Reihung in der Architektur,” 1975), “Grid and Module in Architecture and City Construction” (“Raster und Modul in Architektur und Städtebau,” 1976), and “Axis and Symmetry in Architecture and City Construction” (“Achse und Symmetrie in Architektur und Städtebau,” 1977). This last conference coincided with another, Kleihues-led show titled Five Classical Architects in Germany (“Fünf Architekten des Klassizismus in Deutschland,” 1977),

116 Neumeyer, “Poetry and Reason,” 34.
117 The German word Städtebau, literally “city-building,” is commonly used to refer to both city planning and the architecture therein. It is indicative of the German city planning culture that planning and construction are not seen as separate endeavors.
featuring the work of Friedrich Weinbrenner, Leo von Klenze, Georg Ludwig Friedrich Laves, Friedrich Gilly, and Karl Friedrich Schinkel.¹¹⁸

Even at this time, such topics were considered controversial, especially in West Germany. In the same year, the jury decision to accept James Stirling’s design for the Neue Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart, a playful post-modern take on a number of neo-classical motifs, was met with public furor; some even called it “fascist.”¹¹⁹ As Siedler wrote in the West German periodical *Die Zeit,*

[Kleihues] took the risk of giving talks and arguing about the still slightly disreputable subject of “symmetry and axis in architecture and town planning”: on the one hand, this courts the danger of coming into disrepute for propagating a fascist system of rule, but it does take the opportunity of at last helping to liberate a terribly neglected and yet natural principle for constructing and ordering from ideological persecution.¹²⁰

Siedler soon became Kleihues’s ally in the reintroduction of the idea of the historical city to the wider German public. Together, in 1977, they launched what became known as the “Morgenpost campaign” (*Morgenpostaktion*). This endeavor consisted of an extended series of articles titled *Models for a City* (*Modelle für eine Stadt*), published in the *Berliner Morgenpost* newspaper by Siedler and Kleihues. Other contributors included a wide-ranging group of international architects, planners, and critics (including Charles Moore, James Stirling, and Heinrich Klotz, who founded the national German Architecture Museum in 1979). Taking two specific areas in West Berlin as examples, the articles demonstrated and debated how these could be restored in a

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way that did justice to both the historical identity of Berlin and to the contemporary state of the architectural discipline.121 Siedler and Kleihues’s ultimate aim was to gather public support for another large-scale building exhibition, along the lines of the 1957 Interbau.

They succeeded. Approved by the Berlin Senate in 1978, the International Building Exhibition (Internationale Bauaustellung, commonly referred to as “the IBA”)122 consisted not only of building competitions, but countless informational sessions, guided tours, exhibitions, and publications. Originally planned to open in 1984, it was delayed for political reasons and was finally officially completed in 1987.123 The exhibition had two main components: a set of urban restoration projects (“Stadterneuerung”), led by Hardt-Waltherr Hämer; and a massive number of new building projects (“Neubau”), headed by Kleihues. (Already geographically separated from one another, the two halves ended up becoming quite isolated in their approaches and rhetoric, due to disagreements amongst the leading figures of the IBA.124) For the new building portion of the exhibition, the senate approved six aims, utilizing clearly Kleihuesian rhetoric: 1) to create an urban center for West Berlin; 2) to develop various neighborhoods and their character as “cities within a city”; 3) to take the historic structure of the city as its basis; 4) to redefine “the relationship between social norms and freedom for the individual” (i.e. “the city as a constant, the building as a variable”); 5) to thematize the inner city as a place to live; and 6) to do all this by creating a “productive state of tension” between social needs and individual artistic responsibility – that is, with public discussion, involvement of local business and

121 See ibid., 60–65.
122 The use of a definite article with the English acronym of “IBA” could be debated; it appears both with and without a “the” in different sources. I have chosen to include the definite article here.
residents, but also following the “individual intuition” of architects and planners.\textsuperscript{125} The senate bill also set out the goal of creating 9,000 dwellings within the 250-hectare exhibition space in West Berlin.\textsuperscript{126}

One of the most lasting images to come out of the IBA was a map, known as the “Kleihues Plan,” which hung in the stairwell of the Martin-Gropius-Bau in 1984 during an IBA-sponsored exhibition titled \textit{Idea, Process, Result (Idee, Prozess, Ergebnis)} (fig. 1.25). Drawn in india ink in Kleihues’s studio, this five-by-six-meter plan shows the designated development areas for the IBA in brilliant color, emphasizing both the “historical” (i.e. nineteenth-century) street grid with planned buildings (in red), emphasizing its proposed (re-)completion through the efforts of the exhibition. Surrounding these color sections are black-and-white renderings of the existing ground plan and buildings in the rest of West Berlin, stressing their incompleteness; East Berlin on Kleihues’s map, though showing the street grid, remains almost ghostly – conspicuously devoid of any buildings at all.\textsuperscript{127} Thus, as the map suggests with its emphasis on the dense, historical inner city, the IBA became yet another platform for Kleihues to promote discussion within the architectural community about the shift towards historically-oriented urban planning and construction. It also gave him a chance to further develop his thinking on architecture and urban design, resulting in the theory he called “Critical Reconstruction.”\textsuperscript{128}

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\textsuperscript{125} Lampugnani, “From Large Housing Estates ...,” 76.
\textsuperscript{126} See ibid. for details on funding, history, and exact locations of the demonstration areas.
\textsuperscript{127} Stimmann, “Town Planning - Urban Development - Architecture,” 96. Michael Hesse asserts that “Kleihues was in favor of not projecting the division forward. On the contrary, traditional urban structures should be kept valid and developed logically with a view to future unification.” See Hesse, “Identity through Critical Reconstruction,” 49.
\textsuperscript{128} Kleihues was not the only one to use this term. Many other similar terms exist, and “critical reconstruction” is sometimes used to describe projects that were not under his direction or even in Germany at all – for instance, Eastern Europe. See Michele Caja, “Critical Reconstruction as Urban Principle,” \textit{Arc 2 Città}, February 21, 2013, http://www.ardecittà.it/world/2013/02/critical-reconstruction-as-urban-principle-michele-caja/.
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Projects in the Southern Friedrichstadt as Examples of Critical Reconstruction

The Friedrichstadt,\(^{129}\) one of the IBA demonstration areas, became the ideal place to experiment with this approach. Originally planned as part of an expansion of the garrison town of Berlin in the eighteenth century and built up into a banking, newspaper, and entertainment district in the nineteenth,\(^{130}\) then slightly reshaped as part of Hitler’s plans for Germania, it was heavily bombed during World War II and was now split along its East-West axis by the Wall, becoming home to the notorious Checkpoint Charlie (fig. 1.26). The approach of Critical Reconstruction meant returning the southern (i.e. West Berlin) section of this neighborhood to its pre-Nazi and pre-Modernist ground plan, retaining and integrating old building stock, promoting a mix of urban functions, and dividing large blocks into smaller units that supported the expression of diverse styles while adhering to a relatively uniform typology.\(^{131}\) Kleihues did not have any interest in enforcing harmony in the sense of a historical stage-set:\(^{132}\)

The city as a living system should be conceptualized as a kind of menotactic\(^{133}\) whole, which under normal circumstances carries with it the guarantee of necessary changes in order to enrich and carry forward its identity. The concept of

\(^{129}\) As illustrated in Kleihues’s map, the IBA involved several demonstration sites within the western part of central Berlin, flanking the Berlin Wall: in addition to the Southern Friedrichstadt, there was the Southern Tiergarten, which contained freestanding apartment buildings grouped along the edge of Berlin’s large central park; Tegel, a rural “getaway” on the edge of the city, included living, leisure, and cultural functions; and Prager Platz, an urban square that was to be rehabilitated as a combined traffic and pedestrian landscape. Josef Paul Kleihues, ed., “Die Neubaugebiete” (Gerd Hatje, 1993), 275. Kleihues had wanted to refashion Mehringplatz (also known as Hallesches Tor) in the Southern Friedrichstadt: this area had been rebuilt in 1962 according to plans by Duttmann and Scharoun. Currently it is a pedestrian-only zone; Kleihues would have restored it with the integration of traffic. Hesse, “Identity through Critical Reconstruction,” 44.

\(^{130}\) See Tilmann Buddensieg, Berliner Labyrinth, neu besichtigt: von Schinkels Unter den Linden bis Fosters Reichstagskuppel (Berlin: Wagenbach, 1999); Eva Schweitzer, Grossbaustelle Berlin: wie die Hauptstadt verplant wird (Berlin: Nicolai, 1996).

\(^{131}\) Hesse, “Identity through Critical Reconstruction,” 43.

\(^{132}\) By contrast, the Nikolaiviertel just across the Wall was a veritable Disneyland of historicism. Kleihues also felt that Rob Krier’s master plan for the Southern Friedrichstadt was too historicist. See Kleihues, “Kritische Rekonstruktion,” 2004, 55.

\(^{133}\) Kleihues explicates this term elsewhere: “This is a kind of urban-construction menotaxi (Gr. ménon = lasting and taxis = order), thus a constant ordering of the city …” (“Dies ist eine Art städtebaulicher menotaxi (gr. ménon = bleibend und taxis = Ordnung), also einer konstanten Ordnung von Stadt …”). Josef Paul Kleihues, “Kritische Rekonstruktion: Auf Dem Wege Zur Metropole Berlin,” Deutsche Bauzeitung 127, no. 5 (May 1993): 78.
a backward-looking, historicizing reconstruction is not only inappropriate, but suggests a totally different goal from that set by the IBA.\textsuperscript{134}

Rather than dictating exactly how everything should look, attention to the idea of the \textit{genius loci} would allow for various forms of new architecture to arise out of the existing layers of history at the site. Kleihues focused on the street plan as the basic city structure, on which all other elements should be based:\textsuperscript{135}

The ground plan in particular bears witness to the spiritual and cultural idea of the founding of a city. The ground plan of the city predetermines the relationship between the requirements of economy, trade, and traffic and defines the “foundational” (grundlegende) character of the place for many years. Finally, it is the fundamental elements of the city that, even after their deterioration, still give clues to their previous development in the form of hidden traces.\textsuperscript{136}

Working from the ground plan, a Critical Reconstruction-based approach would, according to Kleihues, create “possibilities for unfolding” (Entfaltungsmöglichkeiten) for the urban environment through “renewal, enrichment, cultivation,” and also by allowing architects to add “something individual.”\textsuperscript{137} Attention to history also meant seeing it through fresh eyes and making any modifications necessary in order to suit the needs of the contemporary city. So, for

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\item \textsuperscript{135} “Die historische Grundstruktur der Stadt muß als Konstante zur Grundlage der Stadtentwicklung werden.” (“The historical ground-plan of the city must become the constant foundation for city planning.”) Kleihues, “Kritische Rekonstruktion,” 2004, 51.


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example, the renewal of the Southern Friedrichstadt entailed the creation of streets that were not exactly the same as the pre-war plan, but respected its “spirit.”

From this ground plan, the “stereometry,” or construction of buildings, and the “physiognomy,” or design of the facades, which Kleihues referred to as “the image of the city,” would arise. However, architects were not to have too free a hand. Stereometry and physiognomy should be based on the same principles of careful contradiction (“coincidentia oppositorum”) that underlay Poetic Rationalism. With this insistence, Kleihues clearly distinguished himself from the idea of a superficial (American) post-modernism, with its free, often cheeky play of forms and – most importantly – its acceptance, or at times even its wholehearted embrace, of consumerism. In contrast, Kleihues associated his approach with the more sober idea of the “European city,” a catchphrase that had been in use since at least the early 1970s, which, for him, meant an urban environment that was highly planned and ordered – not an “anything goes” approach, in which architects or developers had free rein. Kleihues promoted a thoughtful and careful synthesis of historicism and Modernism, not a bombastic display of either one. The idea of the Critical Reconstruction “seeks a path of dialogue between tradition and Modernism, seeks the contradiction of the Modern not in the sense of a break, but visible development throughout moments of time and place.”

The two sides must be put in conversation and allowed to critique one another without resorting to bold, overly personal or subjective statements.

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138 Ibid.
140 See Hartmut Häussermann and Walter Siebel, Die europäische Stadt (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004).
The “critical” element in Critical Reconstruction was meant to extend past the level of styles. It was a way for architecture to acknowledge and respond to the larger societal problems that arose in modernity. Kleihues wanted the contemporary city to be approached as “immanently dialectical,” not in the sense of Hegel’s dialectics, with its implied faith in teleological progress, but in the Adornian sense of moving forward with the awareness that no one solution will ever solve society’s ills.142 This awareness meant recognizing the “moments of crisis” to which the Modern tried to respond, as well as those to which it ultimately led:

Modernity is the living consciousness of crisis. In no way should the expiration of the classical belief in a universal regulative be interpreted as a temporary political symptom. The Modern has lived out and thought out crisis. We cannot unbind ourselves from the responsibility to interrupt its work and its sorrow. The step that we can attempt to make is conceivably small – and I mean “conceivably” in this case in the literal sense: that the step can even be conceived of. Critical Reconstruction is only trying, not to resignedly flee back towards an ideal world out of the consciousness of crisis, but rather to strengthen, in opposition to the classical Great Unity, the virulent uniqueness of each single part as part of a living whole.143

So, while remaining aware of the pitfalls of both classical and Modernist forms, as well as their status as signifiers and carriers of the history of various crises, Kleihues sought a dialectical relation between the two that would generate a “contradictory and complex grammar.”144 In this way, architects would be encouraged to retain a critical distance toward these strategies, while utilizing the best of both:

This cannot be about a fight wherein one or the other side – tradition or Modernism – is put down – and is put down possibly only as a kind of Phyrric

142 Ibid., 53.

144 Kleihues, “Poetischer Rationalismus,” 36.
victory – but rather, to reveal the possibilities that the reductionism of the previous epoch of the Modern had kept hidden, to open to the Modern an additional decisiveness (*Entschlossenheit*). To freely adapt the last paragraph of Adorno’s *Negative Dialectics*: our attempt is in solidarity with the Modern, even in the moment of its downfall.  

These ideas are borne out in various ways in the competition winners for the Southern Friedrichstadt. One of the most lauded designs was, in fact, one by Aldo Rossi: a residential and office building built along both side of the corner of Wilhelmstrasse and Kochstrasse (figs. 1.27-1.28). It references the history of the neighborhood in two ways. First, in its response to the historical ground plan: flush with the street on two sides, it also integrates a semi-public courtyard on the interior of the block – hallmarks of the “block-edge development” (*Blockrandbebauung*) typical of nineteenth-century Berlin. Second, it also refers to nineteenth-century Berlin typologies in its massing and decoration. Matching, for the most part, the height of the surrounding buildings, Rossi’s design belies its massive character by breaking up the façade into bays of varied heights and materials, a reference to the small individual parcels that formerly existed in the area. However, the building’s forms and materials are clearly modern. Glass curtain walls alternate with soaring, abstracted gables, and a distinctive, overscaled column at the corner references the typical Berlin “corner-house” (*Eckhaus*) in a playful and contemporary manner. Rossi thus fuses nineteenth-century city forms with strikingly up-to-

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145: Es kann nicht um einen Kampf gehen, bei dem die eine oder die andere Seite, die der Tradition oder die der Moderne, schließlich unterliegt – und möglicherweise nur im Sinn eines Pyrrhussiegs unterliegt –, sondern darum, die Möglichkeiten, die sich im Reduktionsismus der zurückliegenden Epoche der Moderne verdreckt gehalten haben, freizugeben, um der Moderne ein Stück zusätzlicher Entschlossenheit zu eröffnen. In freier Verwendung des Schlussatzes aus Adornos Negativer Dialektik: Unser Versuch ist solidarisch mit der Moderne noch im Augenblick ihres Sturzes.” Ibid. Note that in the original text by Adorno, he is referring not to the Modern, but to metaphysics. See Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (Routledge, 2003), 408.

date ones, and uses this tension to produce a welcoming space for both the tenants and passersby.¹⁴⁷

A design by Rem Koolhaas and OMA for the “Haus am Checkpoint Charlie” (fig. 1.29) confronts history in a totally different way: as a story still in the making. While the building does conform to the typical height of the surrounding nineteenth-century structures, and Koolhaas references the fin-de-siècle paintings of Ludwig Kirchner in his description, its materials and details are distinctly Modernist, with rows of ribbon windows topped by a gridded glass curtain wall and a flat, geometric roof cantilevered over the top. For Koolhaas, the most pressing aspects of the genius loci are in its status as a Cold War border. Thus, he integrates “temporary” (in the sense that he hopes the Wall will someday be removed) structures and services for border personnel, and sees the building as a potential future memorial to the division of the Cold War:

From Friedrichstrasse, the semi-permanent pavilion on the ground floor signifies the border-character of the building. One day, when the pavilion is no more and the ground floor is turned into a supermarket, the projecting roof over Friedrichstrasse will remain as a remembrance of the Wall. At present, however, it corresponds with the physical reality of this dividing line between East and West.¹⁴⁸

Critical Reconstruction, in this example, allows Koolhaas to confront contemporary politics in a practical way, by simply providing spaces for history to unfold.

A design by Zaha Hadid on Stresemannstrasse (figs. 1.30-1.31) demonstrates yet another way of understanding Critical Reconstruction as embracing “possibilities for unfolding.” In plan,

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¹⁴⁷ One big problem with the design is the large column, which attracts graffiti and is now used for garish advertising (see fig. 1.27).
the building completes a triangular block by filling in one edge, and it responds to traditional Berlin architecture in its height and in the gridded distribution of the windows. Its massing and materials, however, are hardly traditional: it includes a highly expressive corner element and the whole façade is sheathed in brilliant, anodized sheet metal. Rather than referencing history, Hadid sees her design as responding to the needs of current and future residents:

[My designs] actually react to the new life and work requirements of our time. Behind the flowing and exploding spaces stands the conviction that our environment, our work- and life-forms, are changing ever faster and will continue to do so. All things have a certain dynamic and change their quality with use. In this way architectural spaces can arise that no one has seen before; in these new spaces, people will move in totally new ways…and the perception of the city will be totally different. This newly achieved freedom can also be seen in a greater context: as spiritual freedom.

As illustrations of the theory of Critical Reconstruction, these three examples demonstrate the flexibility inherent in Kleihues’s thinking. Though he had a role in shaping competition briefs, building guidelines, and jury decisions, Kleihues did not use his position in the IBA as a bully pulpit from which to control every detail of the designs. Rather, his ambitious goal was to attract leading architects from all over the world, let them vie with one another in competitions, involve them in discussions about the fundamental problems of architecture and

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151 Critical Reconstruction itself was not the only way Kleihues saw of tackling the problem of the city. Rather, it was presented as one of three different possible strategies, which were to be used in tandem as deemed appropriate for each specific site. One alternative strategy was the idea of renewal or preservation; the other was “conscious contradiction,” where elements or buildings would be retained or inserted in order to create contrasts or, in Hesse’s words, “points of refraction” in the city. See Hesse, “Identity through Critical Reconstruction,” 43; Josef Paul Kleihues, ed., Internationale Bauausstellung Berlin 1984/87: die Neubaugebiete: Dokumente, Projekte (Stuttgart: G. Hatje, 1993).
urban development, and draw conclusions from these discussions that could be implemented as policy. Under his leadership, the IBA became a global forum for a conversation between architects of very different persuasions, all responding to a call for a thoughtful engagement with both the evolving history and the current needs of the neighborhood. And although Kleihues himself did not always agree with the aesthetic choices of the competition winners, he nevertheless allowed their designs to be built.

In combining the threads of neo-rationalism, post-modernism, and his own brand of typological historicism that rested on the idea of the historical city plan as a generative form, Kleihues was also positioning himself, as he had done with Poetic Rationalism, as part of the lineage of the best German Enlightenment and Modernist architects. “What would be more obvious,” he wrote, “than to orient these theoretical claims on examples that stand for the better side of Berlin and Prussia: the time of the Enlightenment and humanism and that of the [nineteen-twenties]?” Between deaths of Frederick the Great (1786) and Karl Friedrich Schinkel (1841), Prussia and Berlin had, in Kleihues’s opinion, been blessed with a special quality that gave rise to intellectual and artistic innovation. Presaging Poetic Rationalism, it was a time when the “tendencies of rationalism were playfully relativized through the dimension of poetry and a metaphysically renewed ideal of nature and world.” In the 1920s, as well, Kleihues claimed that certain architects proved that strongly rationalist architecture and urban design did not have to be diametrically opposed to history. Hilbersheimer, Taut, Behne, and Scharoun (preceded by Behrens and Messel) had all created architecture that, while utilizing modern materials and forms, also took tradition into account. Thus, as a synthesis of these two

154 Ibid.
moments that carried them forward into the present and future, Critical Reconstruction could function as a rehabilitation of the German architectural tradition that avoided directly addressing the problems of more recent German history, and positioned itself strategically with regards to the critique of CIAM. The “democratic” nature of Modernism could be retained and enriched through a global dialogue, and traditional forms could be carefully renewed and updated through the same process.

**Conclusion**

As both a Cold War flashpoint and a local backwater, West Berlin held a special status as a place of experimentation for Kleihues from the 1960s until the end of the 1980s. Because it did not directly represent German identity, and yet had distinct global visibility, it was the perfect setting in which to make the controversial move of reviving a form of traditional German architecture while still making use of the methods and materials of Modernism. His theories and his process, influenced heavily by Rossi, Adorno, and Habermas, connected directly to the architectural and philosophical discourse in West Germany and Western Europe at the time. Because they allowed for a rational approach to design problems, but used this rationality as a tool to incorporate those parts of life – memory and human emotion – that often elude rational analysis, Poetic Rationalism and Critical Reconstruction presented ways of tackling the biggest questions of Kleihues’s generation, without ever presenting direct, dogmatic solutions that might fall prey to cooption by political or economic forces.

The ultimate problem with all this theorizing, however, was that it proved difficult to translate into, and to transmit through, actual built forms. Thus the results of the IBA were often interpreted very differently from what Kleihues intended. He was pegged as a rigid, staunch
traditionalist who was opposed to anything post-modern.\footnote{Because of Kleihues’s ties to rationalism, as well as his critique of the more decorative styles of Venturi and others, some still attempted to paint the IBA as a war between the popular, market-friendly North American and historicist, conservative European factions of post-modernism. (See, for example, Josef Paul Kleihues - der Architekt und seine Stadt, dir. Ralf Lange, Jörg Plenio, and Meyen Wachholz, DVD (Berlin: Nicolai, 2003).) Kleihues worked hard to dispel this notion: “I have strived to increase the number of qualified opinions and engaged combatants. The spectrum of architects involved is one of the signs of this.” Kleihues, “Kritische Rekonstruktion,” 2004, 55. Elsewhere, he contends that “It’s clear that the frequently insinuated “architectural-political” (architekturpolitisch) onesidedness can only be called absurd. Aside from the protagonists (Abraham, Eisenman, Grassi, Hejduk, Rossi, Ungers) from the beginning of the IBA, among others, the names Brenner/Tonon, Bangert/Iansen/Schloz/Schultes, Frowein/Spangenberg, Ganz/Rolfes, Kollhoff/Ovaska stood for a new generation of architects who, with social as well as artistic engagement, set themselves the task of updating the Modern with individual statements.” Kleihues, “Städtebau ist Erinnerung,” 20. Indeed, with over 150 architects involved, he told Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani, it would be impossible to micromanage every project. Kirchbaum, Lampugnani, and Meseure, “Joseph Paul Kleihues im Gespräch,” 74.} And, as will be discussed in the following chapters, Kleihues’s openness to dialogue, diversity, and disagreement was a key component of Critical Reconstruction that unfortunately did not carry over into the post-1990 era. In the hands of his successors in reunited Berlin, Critical Reconstruction, for all Kleihues’s careful positioning with regards to history and philosophy, was ultimately coopted as a cipher of both global capitalism and conservative European historicism – the very things Kleihues had worked so hard to avoid.
CHAPTER 2

International Investment and Berlin Planning in the Immediate Post-Wende Era

The era immediately following the fall of the Berlin Wall set the stage for the application of Critical Reconstruction to the reunited city. This period was characterized by rampant development and investment in Berlin’s city center, driven by astronomical – and, ultimately, erroneous – predictions of economic growth. Berlin’s designation as Germany’s new capital in June of 1991 fueled even more expectations for growth, putting increased pressure on city officials to sell off and develop historically significant sites in the city center and to seek out the most notable global corporate brands as buyers in order to add to the city’s prestige. Planners recognized that attracting such investment entailed the promotion of Berlin as having a “local” identity in the midst of a competitive global market, and they were thus quick to jump at opportunities that they felt would help reinvigorate the city’s economy while adding to its unique flavor.

This situation posed two interlinking problems for Berlin’s leaders: on one hand, they needed to attract multinational investment to the city in order to shore up its reputation as an emerging “global metropolis”; on the other, in the midst of a difficult political and administrative sea change, they needed to guide this investment into channels that would be politically, aesthetically, and practically workable for the future of the city. This challenge meant that new developments should add to Berlin’s distinctive look and feel and embody a “local” character of some kind. But the complexity of Berlin’s administrative structures and the absolute chaos brought about by conflicting property ownership and restitution claims in the former East made it exceedingly difficult to make wise decisions about land sale and use (when, that is, officials
could even discern which administrative department should be responsible for the property in question). Furthermore, early property deals with powerful international firms, some made even before the two Germanys were officially reunited in October of 1990, quickly demonstrated just how much influence corporate interests could wield over city policy. One eventual answer to these issues was found in a rigid and reductive application of the method of Critical Reconstruction under Senate Construction Director Hans Stimmann, beginning in late 1991.

This chapter unpacks the complexities of the city’s administrative situation and examines two key cases in Berlin’s early post-Wall development (1989-1991) that contributed to the perceived need for a more rigid application of Critical Reconstruction as a city planning philosophy after 1991. These sites in the formerly glittering commercial center of Weimar Berlin had, for the previous forty years, been wasting away in the no-man’s-land along the Berlin Wall, and they were now the most sought-after addresses for multinational companies and real estate investors. The first, and most prominent, of these projects was Potsdamer Platz, a massive, multi-use site housing two corporate headquarters as well as retail, residential, and entertainment spaces. The debates that unfolded between 1989 and 1992 over the development of this site garnered international attention, not only because of the multitude of internationally-renowned architects who flocked to take part in the master plan competition, but because of the highly contentious nature of the proceedings, which generated international scandals in the architectural community. Observers in the media were also particularly critical of the idea that real estate investors, rather than planners or designers, were calling the shots. In order to keep the city from becoming a physical catalog of trendy, commercial starchitecture chosen solely by investors, the various constituents involved in Berlin planning temporarily buried many of their disagreements and cooperated. Whatever their other differences, they agreed on the idea that Potsdamer Platz
should retain something of its historical “identity,” however loosely defined, in the face of globally-driven development. The end results, however, were widely recognized as disappointing from both architectural and urban planning perspectives. The second example discussed in this chapter is the less conspicuous Friedrichstadt Passagen project, a set of three block-sized retail developments along the historically important avenue of Friedrichstrasse. While it did not attract the same level of attention as the Potsdamer Platz competition, it also helped shape later development by setting the scale – that of the entire urban block – for new projects in the city center. Officials were unable to adequately steer the mechanisms of planning at either Potsdamer Platz or the Friedrichstadt Passagen in such a way as to prevent the investors from wielding considerable influence over the process, and the results were, in both cases, compromises that were neither architecturally groundbreaking, nor recognizably “historical” in character. Rather, the competitions resulted in trendy, commercial designs that amounted to little more than ostentatious shopping malls.

This chapter thus provides a detailed picture of the conditions affecting city planning in newly reunited Berlin – conditions that subsequently led Stimmann to adopt and adapt Critical Reconstruction as a planning model for the city’s reconstruction, as will be discussed in Chapter 3. Unlike the hermetic world of Josef Paul Kleihues’s IBA, where just a few people planned and adjudicated a series of state-sponsored construction and rehabilitation projects involving the world’s most prominent and talented designers, the contentious, conflict-ridden, and exceedingly public kick-off to the rebuilding of the new Berlin was subject to what historian Janet Ward calls the “Stimmann Effect”: a fraught and failed attempt at fabricating a post-modern, historically-oriented urban landscape, that ended, paradoxically, in the creation of a series of large-scale, consumer-oriented, and ultimately very “American” projects. In fact, however, these outcomes
had nothing at all to do with Stimmann. On the contrary, his late entrance onto the planning scene in April of 1991 allowed him a first-hand view of the outcomes of these first forays into Berlin’s redevelopment, but with very limited power to change them. These experiences convinced Stimmann that the city would have to be as strategic in its dealings with investors as it was about zoning, land prices, or design competitions, leading him to adopt Critical Reconstruction as, among other things, a means to set developers’ expectations.

**Knitting Berlin Back Together**

The world watched as the Berlin Wall fell on November 9th, 1989, ushering in a new era for Germany. Over the next year, the government of East Germany was gradually subsumed legally, financially, and administratively by West Germany, and the two countries officially united on October 3rd, 1990. This period of reunification is referred to in German as the *Wende*, or “turning point”¹: a word that, as opposed to the more triumphant idea of “reunification,” encompasses the many problems the merge entailed – not only bureaucratic ones, but cultural and social ones as well. Scholars often refer to the lasting “Wall in the head” between former citizens of the two countries.² In addition to the pronounced lifestyle differences between the Western European, American-influenced, democratic, and consumerist society of West Germany (the Federal Republic of Germany, or FRG), and those in impoverished, Communist East Germany (the German Democratic Republic, or GDR), the two societies had historicized and memorialized the Nazi period, World War II, and the Holocaust in very different ways. Thus the work of bringing the two halves of the country together took place at multiple levels.

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¹ It is common usage to simply call it “the Wende” in English texts; I will follow this convention here.

² This phrase was coined by author Peter Schneider in his novel *The Wall Jumper*. See Peter Schneider, *Der Mauerspringer: Erzählung* (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1982).
Whereas the post-Wall years were a challenging turning point for the larger nation of Germany, the period between 1990 and 1992 has been dubbed Berlin’s “real estate gold rush.” Major companies and banks flocked to open offices there: 119 businesses with over 8,000 employees relocated to the city in the first half of 1993, including, most prominently, Daimler Benz and Sony. Bolstered by the city’s bid for the 2000 Olympics, on which East and West Berlin began cooperation in late 1989, the message of politicians was “growth, growth, growth.”

Berlin was billed as the new node in the network of the Central European economy, a nexus between East and West, the “gateway to the East” or, as the head of the German national railway put it, the “turntable between East and West.” Exorbitant predictions circulated: Berlin was going to need six million square meters of new office space and would have to house up to two million new residents, necessitating up to 800,000 new dwellings. The engine for this growth was to be the service sector, which would, such was the hope, bloom as companies relocated to Berlin in order to be closer to Europe’s new geographical center. The official designation of Berlin as the new capital of reunited Germany in June of 1991 only added to the fervor.

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4 These characterizations had actually circulated before the Wall fell, as the climate of détente in the 1980s fueled increased cooperation between East and West. In the post-Wall era, Walter Momper and Tino Schwierzina were two main proponents of this discourse of growth. Bodenschatz and Altrtrock, *Renaissance der Mitte*, 198, 214; Ward, *Post-Wall Berlin*, 282.


6 The capital remained in Bonn until a controversial and narrow parliamentary vote in June of 1991 designated Berlin as the new seat of government, and the government did not officially make the physical move until 1999. The decision came as a surprise to many: historian Giles MacDonagh notes how no one in Berlin actually believed, at the time of the vote, that it would become the capital of united Germany. See Giles MacDonogh, *Berlin* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), x–xi; see also Strom, *Building the New Berlin*, 160–163.
Observers predicted 100,000 additional new jobs as a result.\textsuperscript{7} Such dramatic speculative growth, as political scientist Elizabeth Strom notes, is relatively uncommon in Germany, and the situation was made infinitely more complex by the administrative and political structures of the two former halves of Berlin.\textsuperscript{8}

**Government and Administrative Structures and Roles**

Just as they were at the federal level, the laws and governing structures of the western half of the city were expanded into East Berlin upon reunification in October of 1990.\textsuperscript{9} As a city-state, Berlin has its own Parliament (the *Abgeordnetenhaus*) with 149 seats, which functions much like the federal Parliament, with many committees and sub-groups who hash out decisions behind closed doors. With a few small exceptions, the parties represented in the Berlin Parliament tend to mirror those in the federal government: the two largest are the left-centrist Social Democratic Party (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*, or SPD) and the right-centrist Christian Democratic Party (*Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands*, or CDU).\textsuperscript{10} Smaller, but still influential, parties include the Green Party,\textsuperscript{11} the post-communist Left Party (*die Linke* or *die Linkspartei*),\textsuperscript{12} and the classically liberal Free Democratic Party (*Freie Demokratische Partei*, or FDP).\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{7} Strom, *Building the New Berlin*, 122.
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid., 119.
\textsuperscript{9} Ibid., 23.
\textsuperscript{10} The Bavarian CSU (Christian Social Union) party cooperates with the CDU to form one party at the national level, but they are not active in local Berlin politics.
\textsuperscript{11} In Berlin the Greens are referred to as *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen*, in reference to the union of the Green parties from both East and West Berlin at the time of the *Wende*. The western *Alternative Liste* (AL) party was also part of this union for a few years.
\textsuperscript{12} This party was formed in 2007 as a merger of the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), successor to the East German Communist Party, and a left-wing breakaway from the SPD.
\textsuperscript{13} Other smaller parties have played roles over the years as well, notably the Pirate Party, which entered parliament in 2009.
The executive body of the Berlin Parliament is the Senate, whose members are voted in by parliament. With the exception of the mayor, who leads as “first among equals,” the members of the Senate are each responsible for overseeing a particular city administrative department, such as finance, employment, education, and, of course, city planning. This structure means that with each new election or change in government, the heads of these departments are also subject to change, creating potential inconsistencies with regards to policy.

Further complicating Berlin’s rebuilding in the early 1990s was the fact that, at the time, two different Senate departments with overlapping aims and jurisdiction oversaw urban development: the Department of Construction and Housing and the Department of Urban Development and Environment. From 1991 to 1996, i.e. the years of the most intense urban development in Berlin, these two planning departments were headed by Senator Wolfgang Nagel (SPD) and Senator Volker Hassemer (CDU), respectively. Though they often cooperated, these two offices had the potential to put roadblocks in each other’s way if politically necessary or advantageous. In addition, from November 1989 until reunification, the governing body of East Berlin, the Magistrat, also took part in decision-making. Despite these various complexities, there has been considerable continuity within the Senate over the years, as is apparent from the following table:

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14 The Berlin mayor actually thus holds the title of “Lord Mayor,” or Regierende Bürgermeister.
15 In the late 1990s the administrative departments were consolidated, reducing the number of senators from 15 to 8. See “Senatsgalerie: Magistrat Und Senate 1945 Bis 2013,” Berlin.de, accessed July 18, 2014, http://www.berlin.de/rbmskzl/regierender-buergermeister/senat/senatsgalerie/.
16 These departments have since been consolidated into one administration, whose current name is the Department of City Development and Environment.
17 At the time of the Wende, the Department of Construction and Housing, the Department of Urban Development and Environment, and the Department of Transportation were separate entities; in 1995 the functions of the Transportation department were absorbed by Construction and Housing, and in 1999 all of these were combined into a “superbureaucracy.” See Strom, Building the New Berlin, 101. Also note that at the time of the Wende Senator Hassemer was not in office; Michael Schreyer and Norbert Meisner headed the Department of Urban Development and Environment until 1990.
Table 2.1: Berlin Governments and Important Senate positions, 1981-2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mayor</th>
<th>Senator for Culture</th>
<th>Senator for Construction and Housing</th>
<th>Senator for Urban Development and Environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eberhard Diepgen (CDU) 1984-1985</td>
<td>Volker Hassemer (CDU)</td>
<td>Klaus Franke (CDU)</td>
<td>Horst Vetter (FDP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eberhard Diepgen (CDU) 1985-1989</td>
<td>Volker Hassemer (CDU)</td>
<td>Klaus Franke (CDU) until April 1986 Georg Wittwer (CDU)</td>
<td>Horst Vetter (FDP) until April 1986 Jürgen Starnick (no party)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eberhard Diepgen (CDU) 1996-1999</td>
<td>n/a (seat no longer existed)</td>
<td>Jürgen Klemann (CDU) (as “Senator for Construction, Housing, and Transportation”)</td>
<td>Peter Strieder (SPD) (as “Senator for Urban Development, Environmental Protection and Technology”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eberhard Diepgen (CDU) 1999-2001</td>
<td>n/a (seat no longer existed)</td>
<td>n/a (seat no longer existed)</td>
<td>Peter Strieder (SPD) (as “Senator for Urban Development”)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the Senate and Parliament, Berlin also has local districts (Bezirke), which are run by elected councils, but which cannot operate autonomously from the larger Berlin government. They rely on funds allocated by the Senate, have no revenue-generating capacities, and any decisions they make are subject to veto by the state. However, the districts do wield a fair amount of power over urban development, because all plans for building or renovation must gain their approval in order to proceed. As Strom explains, especially in the eastern districts where most of the immediate post-Wende development was focused, district building directors tended to become spokespersons for citizens’ movements and other groups who felt their views

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18 Source: “Senatsgalerie: Magistrate Und Senate 1945 Bis 2013.”
19 The Alternative Liste was a West Berlin-based Green party that was later subsumed into Bündnis 90/Die Grünen.
20 From 1990 to 2001, there were 20 districts; they have now been consolidated into 12 districts as a cost-saving measure. Strom, Building the New Berlin, 21, 31.
on city building policy were being ignored by the state. In order to sidestep potential long-term conflicts with such groups, district officials were almost always included in state-sponsored competition juries so that the “public interest” could be said to be duly represented.\(^\text{21}\) In areas such as Potsdamer Platz, which were effectively uninhabited after the Wall fell, there were no residents to form interest groups in the first place.\(^\text{22}\)

Another important force in Berlin politics is comprised by the various administrations themselves. For any given task, Strom explains, there are usually multiple agencies responsible at both the district and state levels: “For example, although the sale of public land is technically the responsibility of the Finance Department, in fact the Urban Development, Construction, and Commerce departments as well as each Bezirk all have sections concerned with public real estate.”\(^\text{23}\) In addition to decisions being spread amongst multiple agencies, the agencies themselves also play multiple and sometimes contradictory roles. For instance, in the immediate post-Wende era, the Department of Construction and Housing under Senator Wolfgang Nagel was responsible for, on the one hand, selling off huge chunks of land to investors (with no public input whatsoever), and then for heading the effort, with public input, to convince these investors to build appropriately.\(^\text{24}\) Adding further confusion to this already complex network of actors and roles was that fact that, in Strom’s words, “the rejoining of the two Berlins (as well as the two Germanys) resembled the takeover of a bankrupt firm more than the formation of a

\(^{21}\) Ibid., 31–32. Mitte’s first building director was Dorothee Dubrau, succeeded by Karin Baumert.

\(^{22}\) Strom contends that, because of the configuration of the Bezirk involvement in planning, what may look like a process without much participation from the general public is actually one that includes consistent mechanisms for public input. However, as will become clear in Chapters 4 and 5 with the examples of Alexanderplatz and the Planwerk Innenstadt, particular sites did give rise to citizen participation and mobilization, but because neighborhoods had few mechanisms for controlling the planning process, developers and city officials were able to direct planning decisions without taking these voices into account.

\(^{23}\) Strom, Building the New Berlin, 26.

\(^{24}\) Ibid.
partnership.\textsuperscript{25} Many East German administrators were laid off or forced to retire because they were not able to fulfill their duties, either due to their political leanings or to a lack of the technical expertise needed for their new positions.\textsuperscript{26} Those who did remain had to learn a whole new set of rules in the midst of an intense speculation bubble. Beginning in 1989, Western “advisers” were placed in East Berlin administrations to help guide them toward reunification, and this had a palpable effect on the ways that land sales and development were handled at such sites as the Friedrichstadt Passagen.\textsuperscript{27} As will become clear from the discussion below, the design, function, and aesthetics of these buildings cannot be understood apart from the complex administrative and governmental apparatuses that guided their development.

\textit{The Problem of Land Sale and Restitution in East Berlin}

The \textit{Wende} brought mass confusion to Berlin’s administration over how to manage the large swathes of unbuilt or uninhabited property in the former East Berlin, which lay largely in the central district of Mitte (fig. 1.16). According to Strom, “district planning offices were inundated with building applications, creating pressures that would be daunting to even the most experienced bureaucrat. To those in the East, who were just mastering German planning laws as well as the principles of the private real estate market, the workload was truly overwhelming.”\textsuperscript{28} Just before reunification, in 1990, the government of the GDR had established an agency called the \textit{Treuhand} (Trust Agency),\textsuperscript{29} which was responsible for holding and selling the properties in Berlin that had formerly belonged to East Germany, including state-run businesses and other government holdings. Meanwhile, the federal government claimed rights over certain areas of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 74.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 58.
\item \textsuperscript{27} Bodenschatz and Altrock, \textit{Renaissance der Mitte}, 198.
\item \textsuperscript{28} Strom, \textit{Building the New Berlin}, 60.
\item \textsuperscript{29} Like the term “Wende,” “Treuhand” is not commonly translated in the English-language literature. Its official name was the \textit{Treuhandanstalt}, often abbreviated as “THA.” See Ibid., 64.
\end{itemize}
former East Berlin, such as the “death strip” ("Todesstreife") that surrounded the Wall, as well as lands that had belonged to the military.\textsuperscript{30} All of these properties, as well as East Berlin properties that stood under private ownership (of which there were many), were subject to West German restitution laws, requiring the return of property to any former owners who laid claim, going back as far as 1933. Multiple claims could be made on any given property, and these could also be bought and sold by other representatives.\textsuperscript{31} For instance, the claims of Jewish property owners whose lands had been seized by the Nazi regime were often represented not by individuals, but by an agency that used the claims money to support Holocaust survivors.\textsuperscript{32} Speculation also occurred, with claims being bought up privately by potential property investors. In all, about 170,000 restitution claims for real estate were made in Berlin, and ninety percent of these were in Mitte.\textsuperscript{33}

Amidst this administrative chaos, agencies did not cooperate well on setting pricing strategies for land sale, nor was any one agency able to clearly articulate development policies or set a guiding plan for the city. Observers have called this “policy schizophrenia”: different agencies worked at odds with one another, each trying achieve its own goals and represent its own particular interest groups. For instance, the Commerce Department wanted to promote industry, and thus looked to develop land quickly and attract investment, while the Finance Department wanted the maximum returns on land. One of the most prominent actors in Berlin planning turned out to be the Department of Transportation, since traffic and public

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 103, 106. The Deutsche Bahn also had rights to any property formerly owned by the East German train company.

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 67, 123.

\textsuperscript{32} Strom notes that “Community activists, especially in the tenement neighborhoods of East Berlin that had been the center of the pre-Holocaust Jewish community, now find themselves in the awkward position of battling Jewish claimants in order to assert the rights of current tenants to remain in affordable apartments. Thus do the ghosts of Germany’s troubled modern history haunt even seemingly arcane discussions of ownership rights.” Ibid., 64–66.

\textsuperscript{33} Only about one third were awarded. Ibid., 67.
transportation issues were of great interest to residents and politicians alike.34 Meanwhile, local officials, especially those in Mitte, were interested in small-scale growth, affordable housing, and the preservation of existing buildings, but were hampered by the inexperience of their administrators and by their limited negotiating power.35 Rather, the larger Berlin city government and large private investors became the main guiding forces of development.

Two administrative-legal means helped the city government grease the wheels of investment. One was a federal act allowing “those willing and able to create economically important development projects to acquire land even if property claims are pending.”36 This came to be known as the “Berlin model,” where investors who could promise to build quickly were given preference over property claimants, who were instead compensated monetarily. Secondly, an institution called the “Coordinating Committee for Inner City Investment” (Koordinierungsausschuss für innerstädtischer Investitionen, or KOAI) was established at the behest of the Senate Construction and Housing department to deal with conflicting claims, guarantee investors a clear title, establish which planning guidelines were applicable to the site, and, ultimately, choose a developer. As a relatively invisible institution (its minutes were not made available, there was no press coverage of meetings, and it was rarely mentioned by the media), the KOAI was able to skirt much of the red tape and steer, to some degree, large-scale development without hindrance by other agencies or by the public.37

34 Although I do not discuss it here, traffic and transportation issues were a significant hold-up in the planning of Potsdamer Platz. This is well documented in Rudolf Stegers, Der Streit um den Potsdamer Platz: Eine Chronik in vier Teilen (Berlin: Deutsche Werkbund, 1990).
36 Ibid., 65.
37 This institution and its function as a “black box” of decision-making for land sales is discussed at length by Karin Lenhart. See Karin Lenhart, Berliner Metropoly: Stadtentwicklungspolitik Im Berliner Bezirk Mitte Nach Der Wende (Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 2001). Especially since Nagel, after leaving in office in 1996, became the director of the Fundus Real Estate Group, who benefitted heavily from these sales, some have accused the KOAI of corruption. His close associate Hanno Klein, the first head of the KOAI, who was described by one observer as “an ambitious Baron von Haussmann wannabe,” seemed to favor large, foreign or West German developers over local builders, claiming that local firms were simply too small to carry out high-
Though the decisions to sell to large-scale investors met with criticism from many fronts, it is important to remember that they were undertaken largely by centrist politicians who were, despite the predictions of growth, concerned with the financial viability of Berlin. Accustomed to its status as a “free-democratic bulwark” against the Communist state, with special status and generous subsidies from the federal government, former West Berlin now had to contend with a global market and, beginning in 1993, a drastically reduced federal support. Now, as Senator for Urban Development Volker Hassemer put it, they had to “ride the tiger”: in other words, try to make the best of the unruly international investors and do their best to guide the city’s rebuilding into channels that would be aesthetically and economically appropriate for the new German capital.38

**Planning and Competition Practices in Berlin**

Land use plans in Berlin are, technically, subject to somewhat extensive review. However, planners and investors in the post-*Wende* years often relied on shortcuts in order to speed up the process. According to Berlin’s planning laws, a land use plan must be approved by the state parliament after being prepared by the Department of Urban Development and Environment.39 Construction plans must then be submitted for all projects, and they are subject to approval by both local districts and, ultimately, the Senate Department of Construction and Housing. At the behest of the Berlin planning departments and the KOAI, many developers ended up utilizing an exception to this rule: the so-called “loophole paragraphs”

profile projects. As architectural Lenhart notes, “The more spectacular the projects, the more famous the architects and more financially strong the investors, the more they were welcomed.” Ibid., 78. Klein was assassinated by letter bomb in 1991, and Eva Schweitzer points to evidence that Klein was killed by someone from the Berlin building industry who was angry that too many foreign companies were receiving contracts. See Eva Schweitzer, *Grossbaustelle Berlin: wie die Hauptstadt verplant wird* (Berlin: Nicolai, 1996), 63. The KOAI was not the only agency responsible for doling out contracts behind closed doors; the Berlin Economic Development Corporation and the Landesentwicklungsgesellschaft or BLEG were also both supposed to link investors with properties. See Strom, *Building the New Berlin*, 102, 107–109; Ward, *Post-Wall Berlin*, 292.

38 Bodenschatz and Altrock, *Renaissance der Mitte*, 199.

39 This department has since been merged with the Department of Construction and Housing.
(Lückenparagraphen) of the construction code (§ 34 and § 36), which state that building done for the purposes of infill can be subject to a much less extensive review.40

Even utilizing these shortcuts, though, does not absolve developers of the requirement for state input regarding what is to be built. Berlin is famous for its culture of architectural competitions. All major public buildings, and many private ones, require competitions as part of the planning process, and the Department of Construction and Housing and Urban Planning can require that private investors hold competitions in exchange for being able to build on public land. Thus competitions are a major way in which Berlin officials have strived to steer development from an architectural standpoint.41 Usually overseen by the Berlin Architects’ Chamber (Architektenkammer), with juries chosen by the sponsoring public authority, these competitions are often limited to a small group of invited architects.42 Developers do not have to accept the winners of these competitions, but it is clear to them that things will go more smoothly if they do so, and this expectation has only rarely led to tensions, most notably, as will be discussed below, at Potsdamer Platz. Partly based on this negative experience, the Berlin government has since learned to pick investors who will be likely to follow their lead architecturally.43 Conversely, investors have recognized that it behooves them to pick architects that are already approved by the Senate departments, and have tended, according to Strom, to invite “the same local notables” to serve as jurors as the public authorities have done.44 As will become clear over the course of the remaining chapters, this elitism became one of the main


41 Investors can choose the invitees and sit on juries for these projects, but they must still consist of a majority of architects. See Strom, Building the New Berlin, 149.

42 Ibid., 148.

43 Ibid., 149.

44 Ibid.
reasons that Stimmann and others came under fire for their planning decisions, and it also helps to explain why so many buildings in Mitte today share a similar look and feel.

Though it may seem laborious, the competition process actually helps to speed decision-making. Where design-by-consensus might take a very long time, competitions offer concrete outcomes that also shift responsibility for these choices away from single elected officials and onto juries (which often, it should be noted, include those same officials). But another reason, Strom surmises, that Berlin planning culture has come to rely so heavily on competitions has to do with the overall reliance on supposedly “neutral” specialists in political decision-making processes in Berlin and Germany generally. Strom calls this the culture of “expertocracy” whereby the “expert public” (Fachöffentlichkeit) (including, in the case of city planning, architects, planners, university professors, critics, civic group leaders, and intellectuals) is utilized in order to legitimize decisions and ensure support from professional organizations and the media. Germans tend to look on capital investment with skepticism, believing that experts should be the only ones entrusted with the job of deciding what should be built, an attitude that stems from a more general attitude, prominent in both East and West German societies, that the state, rather than any private entity, is the most worthy representative of public interest.45 For Germans, “ownership of land,” Strom says, “doesn’t imply the right to build anything you want on it … wealth doesn’t entitle one to leave an indelible mark on the collective built environment without the approval of those experts considered as guardians of the public’s space.”46

The importance of the “expert public” means that another key group of actors in Berlin planning is consultants, who often work under contract with the city. Panels, advisory

46 Ibid., 147.
commissions, and written expert opinions (Gutachten) are common.\textsuperscript{47} This arrangement can be politically advantageous, not only because these individuals and groups contributed much-needed professional expertise, but also because, in this way, as Strom notes, potential critics become paid participants in the political process.\textsuperscript{48} The participation of experts in decision-making processes can be seen in two opposing ways. On the one hand, one can view the experts as “guarantors of the public good,” doing jobs that no layperson could do, or would be interested in doing. On the other hand, in Strom’s words, “These processes grant the illusion of public participation while in fact further insulating decision making.”\textsuperscript{49} While the public is informed about things like architectural competitions, they have no way to participate in them directly. Even the two public forums sponsored by the Senate, the “City Forum” (Stadtforum, sponsored by the Department of Urban Development, which began in 1991 and continues to meet today) and the “Architecture Talks” (Architekturgespräche, 1991-2006, sponsored by Stimmann from within the Department of Construction and later in the Department of Urban planning), which supposedly functioned as spaces of debate and discussion about planning decisions, were, most agree, simply well-crafted, staged events featuring a handful of participants selected from amongst the “expert public.”\textsuperscript{50} Furthermore, such events and competitions focus public attention on the superficial, rather than the political or economic, aspects of planning. While newspapers feature arguments over design decisions, few people, even amongst city officials, actually know how or to whom land has been sold.\textsuperscript{51}

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 27. Strom also notes the importance of “parapublic” institutions such as the Architects’ Chamber (Architektenkammer), which, in addition to its traditional role as a professional organization, is responsible for setting guidelines and issuing approvals for competitions. “Thus,” Strom notes, “do private organizations take on public roles.” Ibid., 28–30.
\textsuperscript{49} Strom, Building the New Berlin, 150.
\textsuperscript{50} Hennecke, Die kritische Rekonstruktion als Leitbild, 70.
\textsuperscript{51} Strom, Building the New Berlin, 150.
Together, these various relationships and roles have the effect of making Berlin planning policy appear inattentive to public input. The case is not quite that simple, though; rather, the German preference for paternalistic governance and reliance on experts constitutes a form of representative democracy that is somewhat removed from everyday voters, but which nonetheless takes their concerns into account through close cooperation with interest groups. However, as will become clear in the examination of Potsdamer Platz, this system, at the time of the Wende, was ill-equipped to deal with large multinational corporations and the quick development of large plots of land.

**Local Identity and Image in a Global Economy**

On a conceptual level, much of what Berlin’s planners were grappling with at the time of the Wende was increased pressure to create a unique, marketable identity for Berlin in the face of global competition. As sociologist Saskia Sassen has argued, growing cities in the so-called “global age” must fulfill a paradoxical double role: on the one hand, they must be networked – physically and virtually – with the rest of the world, presenting themselves as totally interconnected “cities without walls” that will function as key nodes in the flow of global capital. On the other hand, no matter how interconnected they may be in terms of telecommunications, finance, or the shipment of goods, successful metropolises have, from a physical standpoint, tended to recentralize services, with finance, banking, law, and advertising firms clustered within easy reach of multinational headquarters. Thus, in contrast to the capitals of empires in previous centuries, global cities now distinguish themselves through their ability to compete on a worldwide level for business, “branding” themselves in unique ways in order to attract companies and workers.  

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Geographer David Harvey has called this situation the rise of “urban entrepreneurialism.” In an essay published right at the time of the fall of the Wall, in 1989, which no doubt had effects on the ways that cities such as Berlin handled city planning, Harvey identifies several key trends in city planning practices in the global age. His observations help to explain some of the decisions made by Berlin officials, which may now look to us somewhat naïve, hackneyed, or even corrupt. First, Harvey points out, cities are not themselves actors, but *things* arising from a “spatially grounded social process in which a wide range of different actors with quite different objects and agendas interact.” In Berlin, as explained above, a dizzying array of institutions, officials, interest groups, and political forces had to cooperate in order to further development. The centerpiece of this interaction in the global age, according to Harvey, is often public-private partnership, in which in “traditional local boosterism is integrated with the use of local governmental powers to try and attract external sources of funding, new direct investments, or new employment sources.” Always speculative in nature, this type of partnership tends to focus on what Harvey calls the creation of “place,” by which he means the construction of business-centered infrastructure (in the form of, for example, office parks, “civic centers,” or shopping malls) which has little to directly contribute to the welfare of local residents:

The construction of such places may, of course, be viewed as a means to procure benefits for populations within a particular jurisdiction, and indeed this is a

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54 Ibid., 6.

55 Ibid., 7.

56 Harvey’s definition of “place” is somewhat distinct from, though not unrelated to, the definition of “place” most famously put forward by Yi-Fu Tuan a decade earlier (Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977)). Whereas Tuan defines a “place” as something that explicitly elicits human connection and attachment, Harvey seems to use the term in a more cynical way, to denote constructed landscapes that are meant to promote this kind of attachment, but which in actuality serve corporate interests.
primary claim made in the public discourse developed to support them. But for the most part, their form is such as to make all benefits indirect and potentially either wider or smaller in scope than the jurisdiction in which they lie. … City leaders can look upon [such] spectacular development as a "loss leader" to pull in other forms of development.⁵⁷

In other words, while the effects of building a new mall, for instance, might be to bring a few hundred more jobs to a neighborhood, or might benefit local businesses by attracting new customers, such effects are marginal, indirect, and often uncertain, as opposed to public money directly spent on services such as schools, hospitals, or housing. With the promise of bringing jobs to Berlin, as well as acting as magnets for relocation by other attendant service industries, Berlin’s leaders entered into exactly these kinds of public-private partnerships with large companies, with the aim of building precisely such “places.”

Harvey also notes that this type of speculative development relies on the creation of “urban imagery,” both in order to attract investors, and to sell such ideas to the public. The word “imagery” here can mean a number of image-based practices, from exhibitions and publications of plans, maps, and drawings, to descriptive verbal imagery, or the imagery of the constructed built environment itself. All of these tactics were used in Berlin’s planning. Indeed, the discourse on Berlin’s redevelopment is shot through with the concept of “image,” from statements by potential investors who desired “postcard-worthy” buildings, to the rhetoric of planners, who often invoked the terms “Leitbild” (“guiding image”) or “Stadtbild” (“urban image”) when speaking of their plans.⁵⁸ The creation of numerous city-sponsored marketing firms and the construction of tourist attractions aimed at making a spectacle of Berlin’s reconstruction, such as the famous “Info-Box” at Potsdamer Platz (1995-2001), were directed, in part, towards potential

⁵⁷ Harvey, “From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism,” 8, 13–14.
⁵⁸ For an in-depth discussion of the term Leitbild and its use in city planning practice in Germany, see Hennecke, Die kritische Rekonstruktion als Leitbild, 15–54.
investors. But, Harvey points out, this kind of image-based marketing is also meant for a local audience:

The production of an urban image of this sort also has internal political and social consequences. It helps counteract the sense of alienation and anomie that Simmel long ago identified as such a problematic feature of modern city life. It particularly does so when an urban terrain is opened for display, fashion and the “presentation of self” in a surrounding of spectacle and play. The orchestrated production of an urban image can, if successful, also help create a sense of social solidarity, civic pride and loyalty to place and even allow the urban image to provide a mental refuge in a world that capital treats as more and more placeless.

So, although the development itself, from an economic standpoint, may only marginally benefit those who already live in a particular place, urban images are used to appeal to residents on a conceptual level, bolstering feelings of collective belonging and identity and promoting political support for public-private projects. This effect has the added benefit of creating the “branding” that the cities now need in order to attract new business. Berlin officials often relied on image-based language that presented the new city center as the potential intersection of local and global life. For instance, in an editorial in the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Mayor Eberhard Diepgen envisioned Berlin’s new city center thus:

It is a summer’s day on the cusp of the new century, and the new square between the Lustgarten, the foreign ministry and the city library has the character and charm of a cityscape like the ones we know from old black and white photographs. On park benches and the chairs of a street café, casually dressed students from the nearby Humboldt University sit drinking espresso and leafing through books from the library. Well dressed visitors and officials from the foreign ministry stroll by; tourists from all over the world seek free tables in restaurants or buy international newspapers. An ideal resting place after a long walk down Unter den Linden, before one turns off down Berlin’s most delirious

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60 Harvey, “From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism,” 14.
stretch on Oranienburger Strasse, where hip bars, theaters, or the nexus of new Jewish life around the synagogue awaken their curiosity. As Ward points out, an irony of cities’ need to compete on a global level is that they must become ever-more local in their image-making, presenting themselves as unique and desirable places with their own special character. Especially for European cities, such localized marketing tactics often come to rely on historical (some would say “nostalgic”) imagery, a logical choice, given the various layers of centuries-long historical development in typical European urban landscapes. The emphasis on history, furthermore, is not necessarily an overtly superficial marketing strategy, but a key part of the larger post-modern turn towards traditional urban forms in architectural and urban design. By focusing on history as part of Berlin’s identity, then, officials were able to make the most of the intersection between local and global city dynamics by fostering both a sense of local distinctiveness, and becoming part of a larger global trend with regards to urban design and architecture that they hoped would appeal (though it did not always do so) to investors.

As will become clear in the examples below, the focus on the local also made sense in terms of Berlin’s many actors in city development, many of whom felt threatened by the influence of global capital. With large, international firms calling the shots, critics and planners across the spectrum feared that Berlin might turn into a Disneyland of architectural experiments,

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61 "Es ist ein Sommertag an der Grenze des Jahrhunderts, der neue Platz zwischen Lustgarten, Aussenministerium und Stadtbibliothek hat den Charakter und Charme einer Stadtlandschaft, wie wir sie von alten Schwarzweissfotos kennen. Auf Parkbänken und Stühlen eines Strassencafés sitzen salopp gekleidete Studenten der nahe gelegenen Humboldt-Universität, die hier ihren Espresso trinken und in einem Buch aus der Bibliothek blättern. Vornehm gekleidete Besucher und Beamte des Auswärtigen Amtes schlendern vorbei, Besucher aus aller Welt suchen einen freien Platz im Restaurant oder kaufen internationale Zeitungen. Ein idealer Fluchtpunkt nach einem langen Bummel Unter den Linden, ehe man abschwenkt zu Berlins irrer Meile in der Oranienburger Strasse, wo Szenekneipen, Off-Theater oder die Brennpunkte neuen jüdischen Lebens um die Synagoge die Neugier wecken." Eberhard Diepgen, "Gestern Schinkel, Heute Kinkel?" Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, April 16, 1993. Translation mine. Note that the block he describes here is the one that, at the time, was home to the controversial Palast der Republik (see Chapter 4).

which would work against the idea of a unique city identity, and would also potentially take away jobs from Berlin architects and contractors who hoped to profit from the influx of investment. Thus, Harvey’s observation that “the ideology of locality, place and community” can often become central to a “political rhetoric of urban governance which concentrates on the idea of togetherness in defense against a hostile and threatening world of international trade and heightened competition” rings true with regards to Berlin.63 It was just such a defensive mechanism that was triggered by the city’s first large-scale “place-making” project, the redevelopment of Potsdamer Platz.

Learning from Potsdamer Platz

Most of Berlin’s “gold rush” happened in the central district of the city, Mitte (fig. 1.16), which was, until 1989, situated right up against the Berlin Wall on the East Berlin side. Many of the projects for West Berlin’s International Building Exhibition (IBA) in the 1980s were built directly to the south of this area, around the famous Checkpoint Charlie, the most conspicuous border crossing into Mitte. Potsdamer Platz, historically a gateway leading out of Berlin towards the city of Potsdam, lay just a couple of blocks southwest of the checkpoint. Prior to World War II, this area had been a major commercial and entertainment hub, with department stores, theaters, clubs, cafés, and, famously, Europe’s first traffic light. Potsdamer Platz also has a storied architectural history: the adjoining Leipziger Platz, notable for its distinctive octagonal shape, had been the site of Friedrich Gilly’s famous paper monument to Frederick the Great (1797, fig. 2.1). In the nineteenth century, Karl Friedrich Schinkel, as well as the renowned landscape designer Peter Joseph Lenné, had built here, and Erich Mendelsohn’s famous

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63 Harvey, “From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism,” 14.
Modernist Columbus Haus had also once stood on Potsdamer Platz (fig. 1.8). The site is also just a few blocks from Hitler’s Chancellery and the remains of his bunker. In 1989, the square was utterly empty, bisected by the Wall, and cleared of the rubble of World War II, the largest and best-known piece of “no-man’s-land” along the Berlin Wall. (figs. 2.2.-2.3).

Potsdamer Platz had therefore become a potent cultural symbol: films such as Wim Wenders’s Wings of Desire poetically featured this void as a symbol of the tragedies of recent German history and the division of the Cold War. In the film, the character of Homer wanders the outskirts of Potsdamer Platz along the Western side of the Wall, searching in vain for his lost memories: “I cannot find Potsdamer Platz. No, I think right here … Yet it can’t be here.” As cultural historian Jonathan Bordo notes, in 1987, when the film was made, Potsdamer Platz constituted one of Berlin’s most charged landscapes:

If “Platz” means place, public space, commons, even square where people gather … Potsdamer Platz wasn’t such a place. It wasn’t a place, at all. Potsdamer Platz circa 1987 was a wasteland, a ‘zone of exception’ extricated from the everyday circulation of life and the ‘no-man’s-land’ between East and West Berlin in the partition of the city by the Four Powers after World War II. Potsdamer Platz was no-man’s-land, to recall the space between the entrenched armies on the Western Front in World War I, an interdicted space devoid of human presence. … Wenders’s Homer searches in vain for the lost Potsdamer Platz of the era before the rise of National Socialism. His song is of a vanished Potsdamer Platz, Potsdamer Platz perdu.

To planners and investors, after November 1989, the rise of both Potsdamer Platz and Berlin as a kind of phoenix from the ashes – the creation of a “place” amidst what was currently a space connoting loss and emptiness – thus seemed not only fitting, but inevitable. Bordo’s “Potsdamer

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65 Quoted in Jonathan Bordo, “The Homer of Potsdamerplatz: Walter Benjamin in Wim Wenders’s Sky Over Berlin/Wings of Desire, a Critical Topography,” Images 2, no. 1 (2008): 94. The use of “place” here, though likely not overtly intentional, connects to Harvey’s and Tuan’s uses of the same term – a “place” is something inhabited, used, and identified with by people. The quote also connects to the concept of the “void,” discussed in Chapter 5, which was often used in the post-Wall era to describe Berlin’s physical, cultural, and social landscape.

66 Ibid., 91–93.
“Platz perdu” was exactly what they immediately hoped to rebuild, reviving the area as a center of commerce and entertainment, drawing on – some would say, exaggerating – associations with the glittering culture, commerce, and nightlife of Weimar Berlin. In the words of Daimler Benz head Edzard Reuter, the goal was to create an “identity-forming calling card” (identitätsstiftende Visitenkarte) in the form of a recognizable and easily digestible architectural image.

**International Investors and Land Sale**

The development of Potsdamer Platz had already started with negotiations by West Berlin in 1988 to reclaim a small swath of East German land known as the “Lenné-Triangle” along the Wall, in order to build a highway thoroughfare. Though they had managed to get the land, their plans were held up by protests from an environmental citizens’ group. In the summer of 1989, before anyone knew that the country and city would soon be reunited, Daimler Benz became interested in developing the site, and with the fall of the Wall in November of 1989, it quickly became a hotbed of investment, with Daimler Benz as the premier tenant. The land – owned mostly by the city – was quickly sold to the firm at a low price, with the added promise that infrastructure would be subsidized by the government. City officials were so keen on having world-class investors at the site that, as Nagel later stated, “We would have given them the land [for free] if they had said, ‘We will come to Berlin and open our new subsidiary, debis [sic], here.’” Nevertheless, the sale did meet with some criticism, especially from left-leaning parties within the Berlin parliament, who rightly feared that this move signaled a trend toward

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67 See Bodenschatz and Altrock, Renaissance der Mitte, 218.
68 Ibid., 201. Reuter is the son of the famous post-war mayor of Berlin, Ernst Reuter. See Schweitzer, Grossbaustelle Berlin, 97.
69 This area along the Wall had since 1981 been targeted by Senator Hassemer as an area for “inner-city” style redevelopment. He was not in office at the time of the Wende. See Stegers, Der Streit um den Postdamer Platz, Part 1, np.
70 The price was 1,505 DM per square meter; the market price was estimated around 10,000 DM per square meter. Ibid., 4–5.
71 debis [sic] was at the time a new arm of Daimler-Benz, established in the 1990s as a technology service firm. It was later sold to Deutsche Telekom.
investor-driven, rather than state-driven, development. Nevertheless, with the promise of bringing 8,000 new jobs to the area, Daimler Benz was welcomed.72

Sony became the second large-scale investor at the site in early 1991, along with a handful of other companies.73 Meanwhile, parliamentary debates over how to handle traffic in the area, as well as a change in government, held up plans for a public architectural competition (Mayor Walter Momper (SPD) was succeeded by Eberhard Diepgen (CDU) in January of 1991, and Volker Hassemer (CDU) replaced Michaele Schreyer (Greens) as Senator for Urban Development and Environment).74 Finally, just three weeks after a master plan competition for the site was announced in the professional journal Stadtbauwelt in March of 1991, Daimler Benz, Sony, and the other investors, fed up with the slow pace of politics, contracted British architect Richard Rogers with a separate site study. This put increased pressure on the Department of Urban Development, under Senator Hassemer, to use the competition to come up with a design that would please the investors, while also staying true to the history and symbolic importance of the site. Hassemer also faced hefty criticism from the Architects’ Chamber, the Association of Architects and Engineers, and the Association of German Architects, for not allowing an open competition.75

72 The sale was eventually ruled as unfair by the EU, and Daimler was legally required to pay the city of Berlin 33.8 million DM in back sums. Daimler Benz also later edited its numbers, stating that only 3,000 jobs would come directly from them and the rest would be supplied by the various tenants in the development. See Stegers, Der Streit um den Postdamer Platz, Part 3, np.

73 Other investors included the department store chain Hertie, Otto Beishaim/Metro AG Group, owner of a number of retail firms, and the investment partnership A+T, consisting of the Swiss firm Asea Brown Boveri and the German investor Roland Ernst. See Bodenschatz and Altrock, Renaissance der Mitte, 209; Malgorzata Nowobilska and Quazi Mahtab Zaman, Potsdamer Platz: The Reshaping of Berlin, 2014, 15, http://alltitles.ebrary.com/Doc?id=10815045; Stegers, Der Streit um den Postdamer Platz, Part 2, np; Schweitzer, Grossbaustelle Berlin, 95.

74 The Department of Housing and Construction had begun the process of staging a competition for the area, but Hassemer put a stop to it as soon as he came into office. Stegers, Der Streit um den Postdamer Platz, Part 1, np.

75 The Architects’ Chamber refused to grant the city competition a registration number in protest, and the Association of Architects and Engineers staged their own open competition simultaneously. The results, unfortunately, were met with critical condemnation: Gottfried Kanpp, writing in the Süddeutsche Zeitung, said that the competition unfortunately gave credence to the claim that there should be an “elitist” process for city planning, and Falk Jaeger, writing in the Berlin newspaper Der
Berlin Morgen: IBA-style Discourse, Continued

Meanwhile, the first rumblings of the aesthetic conflicts to come were discernible in an architectural exhibition at the German Architectural Museum in Frankfurt in 1990-1991, sponsored by one of the country’s largest national newspapers, the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, titled Berlin Morgen: Ideen für das Herz einer Groszstadt (“Berlin Tomorrow: Ideas for the Heart of a Metropolis”). The show featured designs for the central district of Mitte by seventeen invited architects. As Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani, then director of the German Architectural Museum, stated, the goal of the exhibition was to provide ideas for an overall guiding plan for the development of the district:

It is true that cities, with very few exceptions, are not designed by architects, but build themselves: their motor is land speculation, … and there will be no lack of that. But to guide this dynamism onto the right tracks, and to make it useful to the city, a plan is needed. More specifically: an overarching idea to which the various projects, out of which the new city will coalesce, can be subordinated.

The list of architects was impressive, including Mario Bellini, Coop Himmelb(l)au, Norman Foster, Giorgio Grassi, Vittorio Gregotti, Zaha Hadid, Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron, John Hejduk, Josef Paul Kleihues, Hans Kollhoff, Daniel Libeskind, Jean Nouvel, Manuel de Solà-Morales, Aldo Rossi, Oswald Mathias Ungers, Barnard Tschumi, and Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown. Although this pool was international, all of the invitees had, according to the organizers, palpable ties to Berlin, and represented, in Lampugnani’s view, “all of the

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Tagesspiegel, called it a “cabinet of horrors,” and advised that the association bury the competition as quickly and quietly as possible. Ibid., Part 3, np.

76 Some of the designs were featured in the newspaper itself, demonstrating how the question of rebuilding Berlin went beyond professional and political circles.

77 “Es ist wahr, daß die Städte mit ganz wenigen Ausnahmen nicht von Architekten entworfen werden, sondern sich selbst bauen: Ihr Motor ist die Bodenspekulation, und an der wird es …. Gewiß nicht mangeln. Doch um diese Dynamik in städtebaulich sinnvolle Bahnen zu lenken und der Stadt zunutze zu machen, bedarf es eines Plans.” Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani, Berlin morgen: Ideen für das Herz einer Groszstadt (Stuttgart: G. Hatje, 1991), 8. Note also that Lampugnani mentions Wolf Jobst Siedler, who was Kleihues’s partner in developing the IBA, as an originator of this idea. See page 6.
important currents” in contemporary architecture.\textsuperscript{78} Thus the exhibition could feature Daniel Libeskind’s radical reimagining of Unter den Linden, Berlin’s famous East-West boulevard, as an elevated network of negative spaces (fig. 2.4), alongside Giorgio Grassi’s much more conservative neo-rationalist gridded designs for Leipziger Strasse (fig. 2.5) and Hans Kollhoff’s vision of a downtown clustered with skyscrapers (fig. 2.6-2.7), as a means of fostering visual and verbal dialogue about the future of the city.

Architectural historians Harald Bodenschatz and Uwe Altrock argue that the exhibition was regarded by Berlin architects and planners “as competition with the Berlin Scene – it was presented in the ‘wrong’ place (in Frankfurt), initiated by the ‘wrong’ institution (the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung) and supplied by the ‘wrong’ architects (especially non-Berlin architects).”\textsuperscript{79} This is, I would argue, not at all the case, for two reasons. First, the Berlin Morgen exhibition had palpable connections to Kleihues’s IBA. Not only did many of the same architects participate, but, in much the same manner as the IBA, the exhibition brought together different threads of post-modernism – Deconstructivism, high-tech, and neo-rationalism – in the hopes of fostering a professional conversation about planning and design. Second, several of the same designs were directly submitted to the Potsdamer Platz master plan competition, including those by Kleihues and Kollhoff, and many of the same architects, such as Libeskind and Foster, were also invited to enter. Rather than constituting a threat from outside Berlin, then, the Berlin Morgen organizers represented the “old way” of doing things, imagining that competitions for prominent sites would go forth in much the same manner as they had during the IBA, with the same group of architects and jurors running the show, and with the easy cooperation of the city and investors. What they had not understood was how the complexities of the political and

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 8–9.

\textsuperscript{79} Bodenschatz and Altrock, Renaissance der Mitte, 200.
administrative situation in reunited Berlin, paired with the pressure from investors, could push
development into wholly different channels and utilize forces outside their purview.

**The Master Plan Competition: “Blockrand-bouletten” versus “Hochhaus-spargel”**

Although the term “Critical Reconstruction” was not used, some of its most basic
principles informed the Department of Urban Development’s Potsdamer Platz competition. The
competition brief called for designs that would take into account the “structures of the
nineteenth-century city”: a geometrical street plan, closed blocks, a functional mix, and
“appropriate heights” (though specific limits were not named). Part of the goal was to remedy
the open, Modernist planning of the so-called “Kulturforum” to the south, a cluster of structures
built in West Berlin from the 1960s-80s which included the West Berlin state library and the
philharmonic concert hall by Hans Scharoun, as well as an art gallery by Mies van der Rohe. The new Potsdamer Platz was to represent, in contrast to this open model of the Scharounian
“Stadtlandschaft,” with monumental buildings strewn throughout a park-like landscape, the
model of a dense, “traditional” urban landscape, full of pedestrian-friendly spaces and
commerce. Relying on the same kind of visual rhetoric discussed above, the competition brief
emphasized the relationship between this model of urban design and the new identity of the city:

The urban character will be primarily formed through central plazas and street
spaces for strolling and lingering, which will represent the city as focal points of
metropolitan life, and with which the residents will be able to identify. The
leisure, consumption, and entertainment-oriented society of today needs, for the
staging of public life, spaces of the highest visual and social quality.

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80 It should be noted that work on some IBA buildings continued through the early 1990s, so that IBA-style Critical
Reconstruction was actually still taking place right next door to Potsdamer Platz, as well.

81 Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Umweltschutz Berlin, *Potsdamer und Leipziger Platz, Internationaler

82 These structures were added to with the building of the Painting gallery (*Gemäldegalerie*) and the print collection
archives of the Preussischer Kulturbesitz after a design by Hilmer and Sattler (1992-98).

83 “Der urbane Charakter wird im wesentlichen geprägt durch zentrale Plätze und Straßenräume zum Verweilen und
Flanieren, die als Brennpunkte des großstädtischen Lebens die Stadt repräsentieren und mit denen sich der Bürger indentifizieren
kann. Die Freizeit-, konsum- und unterhaltungsorientierte Gesellschaft heutiger Prägung braucht zur Inszenierung öffentlichen
Ultimately, seventeen firms were invited to take part in the competition, including Foster, Kleihues, Kollhoff, and Libeskind, as well as Günter Behnish, Oswald Matthias Ungers, and Vittorio Gregotti. As the competition proceeded, the concepts of the critique of Modernist planning and the return to the pre-Modernist city that were implicit in the brief were the subject of much critical debate, crystallizing specifically around the issue of skyscrapers. Kollhoff, a protégé of Ungers and a close associate of Rem Koolhaas, wanted to design clusters of towers on each side of the center of Berlin, forming “gateways” to the East at Alexanderplatz and West at Potsdamer Platz (figs. 2.6-2.7). This concept reaches back to the idea of the city as “green archipelago” – an idea stemming from Scharoun and others, and taken up by Ungers and Koolhaas in the 1970s during their Summer Institutes in Berlin and at Cornell. From a land use standpoint, this idea was in direct opposition to Kleihues’s Critical Reconstruction, which demanded a return to the traditional street plan, block-edge development, and, to some degree, height limits (though Kleihues himself was also a proponent of tower blocks in particular contexts), and this had been a subject of debate throughout the IBA as well. But in the Potsdamer Platz competition, critics did not necessarily divide along expected lines: for instance, Wolf Jobst Siedler, who had co-authored The Murdered City, the famous late-1960s polemic supporting the idea of the traditional city, and who had been a strong force for the creation of the IBA as well as a close friend of Kleihues, wrote in favor of Kollhoff’s design for the Potsdamer Platz competition. Other architecture critics in Germany’s major publications tended to favor this


84 The other firms were Alsop/Lyal/Störmer, Baumbach/Breuer, Max and Karl Dudler, Kuhler, Maler/Gumpp/Schuster, Ortner and Ortner, Axel Schultes, Zillich/Engel, Hilmer and Sattler, and Otto Steidle. Gunter Behnish later dropped out of the competition for business reasons. Stegers, Der Streit um den Postdamer Platz, Part 2, np.

85 For more on the archipelago, see Florian Hertweck, Der Berliner Architekturstreit: Architektur, Stadtbau, Geschichte und Identität in der Berliner Republik 1989-1999 (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 2010).

idea as well, and even Kleihues’s own design for Potsdamer Platz included two towers for Daimler Benz. On the other hand, urban critic Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm and new Senate Construction Director Hans Stimmann both strongly supported the idea of height limits, and Hoffmann-Axthelm denounced competition as whole, saying it promoted “cosmetic” planning without first delineating the small-scale plots and careful zoning which he considered to be at the basis of good city planning. As the summer of 1991 progressed, the critical discourse concerning the Potsdamer Platz competition coalesced around these two competing ideas for the image of the city: the low-rise, block-edge development of traditional nineteenth-century Berlin versus a green, ecological landscape strewn with high-density towers. As Michael Mönninger wrote in the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, “one doesn’t yet know if block-edge-meatballs (Blockrandbouletten) or skyscraper-asparagus (Hochhausspargel) are being grown here” – a cheeky play on two typical Berlin foods.

International Pressure and the Turn Towards Conservatism

In late September, the jury, which included Nagel, Hassemer, architectural historian Kurt Forster, architect Rem Koolhaas, and Stimmann, awarded first prize to a design by the Munich firm of Heinz Hilmer and Christoph Sattler. The design (figs. 2.8-2.10) features rows of highly regular, almost cubical six-story blocks radiating out from the central node of Potsdamer Platz, where a cluster of diminutive towers, projecting only slightly from the low-rise blocks, frames the entrances to each of the avenues. The jury highlighted the design’s preservation of the historical street plan, its low building profiles, and block-edge development as its winning

87 Falk Jaeger, “Keine Begeisterung in Berlin,” Deutsche Bauzeitung 125, no. 11 (November 1991): 10. Kleihues had been involved in several disputes throughout the city with regards to towers: his “Kant Triangle” was reduced from 60 to 35 meters.

88 Quoted in Stegers, Der Streit um den Postdamer Platz, Part 2, np. The comment may also refer to a saying from a former Senate Building Director, quoted by Hans Kollhoff a few months previously: “One can put whatever one wants into Berlin – a boulette will always come out.” Quoted in ibid. This issue was also a theme of discussion concerning the designs for Berlin Morgen. See Jaeger, “Investoren spielwiese Berlin, Boom-City,” 319. For a general discussion of the controversies over high-rise construction in Berlin, see Lenhart, Berliner Metropoly, 206–209.
characteristics. “This design,” the architects stated, “is based on the compact, spatially complex European city rather than the American urban model of an accumulation of skyscrapers, which is used all over the world. Urban life should be seen in streets and squares, not hidden away inside huge building complexes.” But while the design does allow for a mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented streetscape, it provides few “postcard-worthy” moments; rather, the height, distribution, and massing of the various structures seem aimed at blending seamlessly in to the existing city fabric of the Friedrichstadt to the north, and at drifting off without fanfare into the park-like landscape of the Kulturforum to the south. In terms of creating a unique, historically oriented architectural identity for Berlin, the design could be seen as moderately successful, but its unremarkable character was a clear disappointment for most critics. As John Welsh observed in the British architectural periodical Building Design, “The city planners have made it clear that the existing centers of the old West and East Berlin are sufficient. The new Potsdamer Platz is not intended to revive its prewar pivotal role in creating a third city center. Hilmer/Sattler’s plan provides this low-key response.”

Besides being almost universally denounced by critics as an unfortunate compromise, the decision also ignited a brief scandal. In a dramatic continuation of the decades-long opposition between the models of Critical Reconstruction and the “urban archipelago,” Rem Koolhaas, who was displeased with the outcome of the competition and had, according to some, stormed out of the proceedings early in protest, penned a letter of complaint to the Department of Urban Development which he then published in the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. His text excoriated Stimmann for his supposedly “tactless” participation in the selection process, and called the

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outcome a “petty bourgeois, old-fashioned, reactionary, unrealistic, banal, provincial and above all dilettantish image of the city.”

As a proponent of experimental, dense urban design that embraced the dissolution of traditional forms, Koolhaas was especially disappointed that the design by Kollhoff had been rejected and that the question of skyscrapers had not been given adequate attention.

While Koolhaas clearly had a deeply personal investment in these debates, especially because of his ties to particular architects, the investors had money on the table, and they, too, rejected the outcome of the competition. In early October of 1991, Daimler Benz’s Berlin representative, Matthias Kleinert, in an interview with the Berlin newspaper Die Tagesspiegel, called the Hilmer and Sattler design “something between Berlin and Podunk.”

Daimler Benz and the other investors were disappointed with the outcome of the competition, not only because it did not provide them with the adequate square footage to establish their respective headquarters, but also because it did not represent the striking image of “bustling urban life” that had been their explicit goal, and which had been promised in the competition brief. They threw their weight, instead, behind the newly finished Rogers plan (figs. 2.11-2.12), which the architect had personally presented to city officials in early October. Rogers’s design centered on the idea of Potsdamer Platz itself as what he called a “people’s place”: a pedestrian-friendly area with bright neon signs, beckoning users into the shopping and entertainment district along the radiating avenues. The building heights, contrary to Hilmer and Sattler’s design, were lower around Potsdamer Platz itself, and were allowed to rise gradually toward the edges of the plot.

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91 “Das Schicksal, das sich … durch die brutale Art und Weise der Auswahl ankündigt, ist ein kleinbürgerliches, altmodisches, reaktionäres, unrealistisches, banales, provinzielles und vor allem dilettantisches Bild der Stadt.” Koolhaas, Rem, “Massakierte Ideen: Offener Brief an Die Jury Vom Potsdamer Platz,” Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, October 16, 1991. In reply, Thomas Sieverts, the chair of the jury, denounced Koolhaas for breaking the rule of confidentiality that was agreed upon for the proceedings, and claimed that the architect had actually left early simply to catch a plane. See Stegers, Der Streit um den Postdamer Platz, Part 3, np.

92 Stegers, Der Streit um den Postdamer Platz, Part 3, np.
allowing for a ring of corporate office towers that create a striking skyline and set off the complex from the neighboring *Kulturforum*.

Quite suddenly, the various factions in Berlin aligned in opposition to the Rogers design, which they saw as a threat from the outside: as Rudolf Stegers notes, an “umbrella coalition” (“*Maxicoalition*”) including everyone from the CDU to the PDS flocked around Volker Hassemer. The Architects and Engineers Association, the Association of German Architects, and the Architects’ Chamber, who had previously heavily criticized the competition process, “now unilaterally defended its "mediocre result." Although they almost universally admitted that the Hilmer and Sattler design was technically and aesthetically inferior to Rogers’s, German critics also affirmed that the city could not give in to this pressure from investors and still save face. In the *Berliner Morgenpost*, for example, the renowned architectural historian and critic Julius Posener wrote: “the fact that the investors allowed in their own architect against the official competition is a travesty, even if I like Rogers’s design better.” Some reacted even more strongly: architect Jürgen Sawade, another student of Ungers who had been on the competition jury, publically suggested banning Rogers from the city. Nagel and Stimmann, whose department would be taking responsibility for the site thereafter, used every chance to express their wholehearted support for the winning design. The main theme of conversation in the media and amongst officials was therefore not the question of skyscrapers, but rather on the pressure of private investment versus the democratic or “public” (i.e. state-driven) planning process.

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93 Ibid., Part 4, np.
94 Ibid., Part 3, np.
95 “Daß die Investoren einen eigenen Architekten gegen den offiziellen Wettbewerb antreten lassen, ist ein Unding, auch wenn Rogers’ Entwurf mir besser gefällt.” Quoted in ibid. Translation mine.
96 Ibid., Part 4, np.
In November, the city had a breakthrough: in a meeting of the Parliamentary Committee for City Planning and Urban Development, in which all the interested parties, including the investors, were present, they agreed to a compromise: they would sit down and hash out a plan based on the Hilmer and Sattler design that would nonetheless satisfy the needs of the investors. A 35 meter height limit for most of the site, with allowances for taller buildings around Potsdamer Platz itself and along the Landwehrkanal to the south, was agreed upon, and in December the Senate officially approved the plans. The “bluster over Potsdamer Platz,” Nagel declared, “is now over.”

Americanization by Mistake

However, it was a Pyrrhic victory. Competitions were soon held for each of the four investors’ particular sites, and the winning designs can only be said to conform to the letter of the Hilmer and Sattler plan, rather than the spirit. The competition for the Daimler Benz property was won by Renzo Piano, including a triangular tower along Potsdamer Platz, backed by a lower-rise shopping mall, movie theaters, and a musical theater, with a tower for Daimler Benz’s new headquarters on the southernmost end (figs. 2.13-2.14). This plan, in turn, was used as an “optimized” master plan for the site, on which competitions for individual buildings were then based. Integrating the small-scale street plan of Hilmer and Sattler, the design was supposedly “European” in flavor and was lauded by critics, as well as by Stimmann, who was on the jury. However, as contracts for the designs of individual buildings on the site were awarded to various architects, including Kollhoff, Rogers, and Arata Isosaki, and compromises were made allowing for one of the streets to be covered over and turned into a shopping arcade, the complex began to

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97 Ibid., Part 3, np.
lose more and more of its supposedly “European” flavor. In Hilmer and Sattler’s original plan, the buildings were supposedly based on the traditional Berlin inner-courtyard or “Hof” typology (fig. 2.10), but the results of the ensuing competitions and adjustments to the Daimler plan rendered this idea ineffective. The massing of the buildings, and the way they are grouped, comes across as monolithic and quasi-private rather than differentiated and lively (fig. 2.15). With the covered, inner retail area as the main focus of the development, the outer spaces along the streets are seemingly relegated to “back sides” of the complex which are uninviting to pedestrians: here, the ground floors are, as Bodenschatz and Altrock observe, “mostly walls that are broken only by garage entrances or air vents.” This deficiency is most noticeable on the southern side of the development, where the much-lauded water feature – harkening back to the Green party’s calls for more park space at Potsdamer Platz around the time of the Wende – combines strangely with parking entrances, the Daimler Benz office tower, and the back side of Scharoun’s state library. The result is a seemingly desolate landscape that does little to remediate the Stadtlandschaft of the Kulturforum.

Helmut Jahn won the competition for the Sony property, with a design regarded by critics as somewhat “American.” Here, a showy, circus-tent roof of steel and glass covers an inner plaza surrounded by retail spaces and restaurants, as well as a movie theater (figs. 2.16-2.17). Although it achieved the aim of preserving several fragments of historical buildings on the site, Mönninger called it a sell-out to “American entertainment architecture,” and Falk Jaeger, in the Berlin paper Der Tagesspiegel, called it a loss for Stimmann. Like the Daimler development, the Sony Center also turns its back to the street, creating an interiorized space which, though

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98 This particular section of the development, called the “Potsdamer Arkaden,” was led by the ECE Group, which has created over 50 similar shopping centers in Germany and Western Europe. Bodenschatz and Altrock, Renaissance der Mitte, 215.

99 Ibid.

100 Stegers, Der Streit um den Postdamer Platz, Part 4, np.
heavily trafficked, feels private and isolated from its context. The Sony Center has been a success, however, in terms of “image”: with its trio of towers and its signature roof lit by colored lights, it has indeed become one of the most recognizable “postcard” images of Berlin, and it is one of the most-visited areas of the city.

Peppered with fast food restaurants and global retail chains, Potsdamer Platz as a whole is, in Bodenschatz and Altrock’s terms, a place where the “mass public is at home,” but where the international architectural community – supported by the educated middle class – missed its chance to build something special. In terms of commercial success, the investors and the notion of “corporate identity” (as opposed to city identity) can be said to have won out here, but actual profits themselves have been marginal. Daimler Benz and Sony have since sold these properties to other firms. As Stimmann observed after the first master plan competition, because the sales were made to investors without any stipulations as to what would be built, the city had to “live with” the mediocre results. It was this backwards approach to city-driven planning – trying to rein in investors, rather than assuring their cooperation from the start – that meant that, despite the Hilmer and Sattler plan and the city’s attachment to the idea of the “European city,” “Americanization” happened anyway through a series of seemingly small compromises. Critic Fritz Neumeyer wrote in *Der Tagesspiegel*:

> Under the protectorship of the traditional European city, which was invoked in defense of the American city, all of a sudden American commercial architecture of the first water is being built: not in the form of skyscrapers, which have something to offer the life of the street, but in the shape of a shopping mall, which

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101 Ward points out the visual ties between Jahn’s Sony Center roof, Jean Nouvel’s glass-covered Galeries Lafayette, and Norman Foster’s Reichstag dome, which create a kind of high-tech triangle of landmarks in Mitte. Ward, *Post-Wall Berlin*, 309.

102 Bodenschatz and Altrock, *Renaissance der Mitte*, 219.


turns the functions of the street inward and thus, as in an aquarium, removes city life into a closed-off, glass-covered space.\textsuperscript{105}

Ward calls this the “Stimmann Effect”: Berlin’s planners, she contends, “let the American bogeyman in by mistake” through the involvement of private investors.\textsuperscript{106} As will be explored further in Chapter 3, Stimmann and other planners were keen to avoid what they saw as “American” urban forms – by which they meant the overly showy, populist commercial architecture of typical American structures like malls. But in fact the “Americanization” of Potsdamer Platz was due not simply to investor involvement, which is perhaps an inevitable and necessary fact of urban development under capitalism, but to the administrative confusion and woefully inadequate urban planning measures in place at the time. In fact, since Stimmann did not even take office until April of 1991, he had little effect on the sale of the land or the original terms – all he could do was try to exert his influence as a jury member in the competitions. As Strom argues, although investors were a key driver of construction in Berlin, the city’s model of planning is significantly more paternalistic than any American city: for Germans, ownership of land does not come with the rights to build whatever the owner wants.\textsuperscript{107} After the experience at Potsdamer Platz, Nagel, Stimmann, and others became much more careful about how they handled planning in tandem with corporate interests.

\textsuperscript{105}“Unter dem Protektorat der traditionellen europäischen Stadt, die zur Abwehr der amerikanischen Stadt ins Feld geführt wurde, wird nun tatsächlich amerikanische Kommzerzarchitektur ersten Wassers gebaut werden: nicht in Gestalt des Hochhauses, das der Straße an Lebendigkeit durchaus etwas zu bieten hat, sondern in Gestalt der Shopping Mall, die ihre Funktionen von der Straße weg nach innen wendet und städtischen Leben somit wie im Aquarium in glasgedeckten, abschließbaren Innenräumen aufnimmt.” Quoted in ibid., Part 4, np. Translation mine.


\textsuperscript{107} Strom, \textit{Building the New Berlin}, 147.
Learning from the Friedrichstadt Passagen

Not far from Potsdamer Platz lies the North-South axis of Friedrichstrasse, which had been bisected by the Berlin Wall and the famous Checkpoint Charlie. The southern (i.e. West Berlin) section of this avenue had been rebuilt as part of the IBA, and the northern (East Berlin) end had also experienced considerable redevelopment during the 1980s. This famous commercial artery, the center of the financial and press industries of Weimar Berlin, was, like Potsdamer Platz, an immediate draw for investors. Officials such as Nagel and Hanno Klein (employed by the Department of Construction and head of the KOAI before his murder in 1991) did what they could to increase this interest by fostering the image of Friedrichstrasse as a future luxury quarter that would include high-end retail, office, and residential space. One key site along this avenue was a row of three large blocks on its eastern side, between Französische Strasse and Mohrenstrasse, which had already been partially built up by the East German government as a retail and entertainment center called the “Friedrichstadt Passagen” (in reference to the nineteenth-century retail typology of the passage) (fig. 2.18). As at Potsdamer Platz, a large international investor showed interest in one of the properties even before the two Germanys reunited: Galeries Lafayette, a French department store chain, was already in talks with the interim East Berlin government in January 1990 with the intention of gaining ownership of the northernmost block in the trio. Unlike at Potsdamer Platz, there was little debate amongst investors and planners as to what the guiding outlines for the development of the Friedrichstadt Passagen should be: historical height limits and block-edge, courtyard-centered development were never in question. Still, this project was yet another learning experience for Stimmann.

108 This development was to have three differentiated facades that directly referenced nineteenth-century architecture, fronted by a pedestrian-friendly plaza including a reproduction of the early 18th-century Villa Kamecke by Andreas Schlüter. Bodenschatz and Altrock, Renaissance der Mitte, 227–228.

109 Ibid., 232.
because of its sheer size, and because of the somewhat showy nature of its architecture. Based on the critical failure of this project, as well as the debacle at Potsdamer Platz, he could, in 1992, propose stricter guidelines for rebuilding the city with the cooperation of investors.

**Land Sale and Architectural competition**

Over one hundred investors flocked to buy the Friedrichstadt Passagen parcels from the Treuhand, and preliminary selections were made in October 1990, right as reunification was officially taking place, helped along by the fact that Klein had been appointed as the East Berlin representative for the property.¹¹⁰ Hardly a diplomat, he was quoted in the national magazine Der Spiegel as saying that Berlin needed a new “Gründerzeit” with “distinction and brutality,” and that city planning was simply “well-organized repression.”¹¹¹ The magnitude of proposals allowed him to wrest power from the over-inundated Bezirk officials, allowing prominent projects to be pushed through and certain investors favored.¹¹² Klein already had close ties to Galeries Lafayette, and rumors circulated that the French President François Mitterrand had even contacted Chancellor Kohl on behalf of the French department store chain. However, Berlin’s tricky property laws won out: German developer Roland Ernst was able to buy up a property claim to a parcel included in the block, and was ultimately awarded the sale, with Galeries Lafayette as a tenant rather than an owner.¹¹³

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¹¹⁰ Ibid., 233.

¹¹¹ The term “Gründerzeit” (“founders’ period) is commonly used to refer to the Wilhelmine era (the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries). Hans Stimmann, *Von der Sozialutopie zum städtischen Haus: Texte und Interviews von Hans Stimmann*, ed. Jörn Düwel and Michael Mönninger (Berlin: DOM, 2011), 34. Schweitzer also notes the Klein had hopes for the Senate Construction Director position, and was upset when Stimmann was appointed in April of 1991. He immediately thereafter began looking for a job with a private investment company and was in negotiations with one at the time of his death in June. See Schweitzer, *Grossbaustelle Berlin*, 61.

¹¹² This included the removal of GDR monuments for the sake of development, something of which the Bezirk planners had disapproved. Strom, *Building the New Berlin*, 60, 102.

¹¹³ Ibid., 204.
However, although Ernst was already all but guaranteed the rights to build, property sales and development were technically made contingent on a city-sponsored design competition wherein investors paired with architects to vie for each parcel. Requirements for the competition were set by the East Berlin Magistrat in late 1990, embodying, like the competition at Potsdamer Platz, many of the principles of Critical Reconstruction: mixed use, adherence to the baroque street plan, height limits of 22 meters with setback attic ridges of 30 meters, and respect for the “historical context.”  

Because they did not yet own the property, the investors could not take issue with the design brief, and, as opposed to those at Potsdamer Platz, they had very different motivations for building on this site, whose main focus was luxury retail spaces. The defining “postcard image” here would not be that of a flashy, new corporate identity, but of “history” as an element of the experience of capitalist consumption. With the help of “loophole” Paragraphs 34 and 36 in the Berlin planning code mentioned above, the development was predicted to go speedily.

By April 1991 – the same month that Stimmann came into office – the Friedrichstadt Passagen jury, headed by Kleihues, announced its decision: the three blocks would each be designed by a separate firm under a separate investor, allowing for a diversity of facades along the street. Jean Nouvel would build for Galeries Lafayette at the northern end (though, it should be noted, because of the earlier dealings with Klein, this was actually a “done deal” before the competition even took place), Pei Cobb Freed and Partners would build the middle

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block, funded by the French firm Bouyges Immobilier, and the American firm Tishman Speyer, with Ungers as architect, would be responsible for the southernmost plot. Because of existing landmarked structures, only Ungers’s building would be able to fill the entire block; the others were limited to the majority of the western sides of their respective plots. However, the very idea of “block-sized” development alludes to the massive size of all three complexes.

Although in their details the three designs differ somewhat, with the high-tech modernism typical of Nouvel, Ungers’s trademark rationalism, and a playfully abstracted, stone-clad take on the Berlin Mietskaserne by Pei, the three buildings are typologically similar, with setback attic stories, street-level retail spaces, and clearly discernable entrances. The original brief had called for an overground passage between the three, in the manner of the famous turn-of-the-century pedestrian malls, but this passage was moved underground in order to preserve the traditional shape of the baroque street plan. Retail is not the only attraction: the middle block features a central piano bar and café, and the lower level of Galeries Lafayette houses a gourmet food court. In a barely-perceptible nod to history, the central, glass-covered “courtyards” of the buildings on their lower, interconnected floors, each take the shape of one of Berlin’s historically-important plazas (the square Pariser Platz, octagonal Leipziger Platz, and circular Belle-Alliance-Platz).

Joined together thematically and physically by the galleries, each building in the Friedrichstadt Passagen nonetheless takes a unique architectural approach to historical forms. Ungers’s design attempts to solve the problem of its massive, block-size footprint with the concept of an eight-story “core building” enclosing two atriums, surrounded by six protruding blocks that project out of it at even intervals and create separate, recessed entrances (figs. 2.19-

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Though its typically Ungersesque matrix of square, symmetrically-organized windows appears monolithic in renderings, the reflectiveness of its windows allow it to blend into the streetscape by mirroring the surrounding structures. As Paula Winter comments in *Bauwelt Berlin Annual*, the building “threatens to disappear as soon as one looks away,” and it is clearly the most conservative of the three.\(^{118}\)

Its neighbor, Pei Cobb Freed and Partners’ Quartier 206, creates a more striking impression by abstractly referencing nineteenth-century façade décor with strong horizontal profiling and a “prism” design on the exterior (fig. 2.21).\(^{119}\) Covered in light limestone with narrow, horizontally oriented windows, up close the façade appears both more conspicuous and more daring than Ungers’s. It is not until one sees the building from a distance that the complex façade resolves itself into a jagged decorative motif that recalls the plaster-adorned buildings of the previous century. The triangular tops of each prism, which from street-level appear to create a sharply delineated and uneven skyline, appear from a distance like dormers in a mansard roof. The interior also recalls the splendor of the previous century with its black-and-white checker motif and atrium, with a piano bar and a sweeping spiral staircase, given a starkly modern touch with the addition of an escalator through the center of the gallery (fig. 2.22).

Jean Nouvel’s Galeries Lafayette building is the most explicitly modern of the Friedrichstadt Passagen trio, with an imposing and modern glass façade that curves around the northwestern corner of its block and originally allowed for ticker-tape-style digital displays, which have in recent years gone unused (figs. 2.23-2.24). The interior “courtyard” area comprises two giant, transparent glass cones, one rising up from the ground floor and one

\(^{117}\) Haberlik and Zohlen, 179.

\(^{118}\) Winter, quoted in Haberlik and Zohlen, 180.

\(^{119}\) Burg, 103.
extending down from the ceiling, shedding colored rays of light into the lower café and gastronomy level, while providing a space for seasonal displays on the main level (figs. 2.25-2.26).  

**Critical Reception**

The result of these designs amounts to three interconnected shopping centers with additional retail space facing the street – in some ways the “luxury quarter” that planners and investors had hoped for. But, as Bodenschatz and Altrock observe, like the developments at Potsdamer Platz, the Passagen are massive and somewhat inward-looking. By the time construction was well underway in 1993, the beginnings of the burst of the Berlin bubble were starting to be felt. Two of the properties had already been partially or totally resold, and there were well-placed fears over the profitability of all three. Because the amount of residential space built into the blocks was in actuality well under the required 20%, the area felt empty for several years. As developers pulled out, there was at first not even enough money to keep Nouvel’s building lit up at night, adding to the sense of vacancy along the street.

Critics were luke-warm about the designs, originally bristling at Nouvel’s high-tech design, and writing off Pei’s contribution as kitschy. However, nothing about the specific, aesthetic qualities of these buildings goes against the idea of Critical Reconstruction; it is their size that ultimately made them negative examples. What Stimmann regretted about these projects was the fact that they “not only vastly exceeded the dimensions of the [individual] historical lots but also … the scale of the blocks of the historical Friedrichstadt district. They set the stage, and

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120 Berliners pejoratively refer to this space as the “Mülleimer” (garbage can), because of the trash that inevitably accumulates at the bottom of the cone.


122 Ibid., 235.

123 Ibid.
unfortunately also the scale, for an entire series of project ideas from private investors for the area of the historical center.”124 Such massive projects went directly against Critical Reconstruction’s call for varied, mixed-use streetscapes, and, as will be discussed in the following chapter, Stimmann spent the next few years campaigning for an overall development plan that would not only reinstate the historical street and building codes, but would require small-scale investment in individual parcels.

**Conclusion: The Conservative Turn in Berlin Planning**

The urban planning process, Harvey contends, is often conflictual, as well as “delicate and difficult” – so much so that a charismatic leader with a clear vision and political skill can often steer this process to his or her own ends.125 Such a leader was found in Senate Construction Director Stimmann, who was appointed under Senator Nagel in April of 1991. Chosen, in the wake of Klein’s inflammatory statements about a new Gründerzeit, as a “soft” diplomat, Stimmann turned out to be anything but. Having learned quickly from Potsdamer Platz and the Friedrichstadt Passagen that investor-driven development needed to be tightly controlled from the outset with clear building guidelines, he began the project of not only expanding his own political and administrative power, but also of establishing a new version of Critical Reconstruction as a guiding image for the city. Stimmann’s adoption – and, perhaps more importantly, his adaptation – of Kleihues’s theory after 1991 cannot be understood apart from these early projects, or from the administrative and political structures that informed their development.

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125 Harvey, “From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism,” 7.
By using Critical Reconstruction as a model, Stimmann hoped to resolve many of the issues that had cropped up in the experiences at these two prominent sites in Mitte. First, based on contemporary perceptions regarding urban competition in the global age, such as those discussed by Harvey and Sassen, Berlin needed, in the face of rampant economic expansion, a way to define itself as a unique place. From a planning standpoint, this meant the need for a distinctive typology that would be marketable and recognizable as “Berlinisch.” Second, Stimmann needed to ensure that local institutions and architects who had long-term relationships with – and investments in – the city going back into the 1980s and earlier would feel included in the planning process. The threat that architects, such as Rogers, could be chosen privately at the whim of large investors helped these various factions band together and created the impetus for the formation of a cartel of architects, planners, critics, and intellectuals in Berlin that some have called “incestuous.” Finally, from a political standpoint, the city had to assert its power over capital, ensuring that the tradition of state-, rather than investor-, controlled planning would be preserved. The “Stimmann Effect,” then, actually constituted not an “Americanization” of Berlin through the participation of large investors, but a highly conservative and autocratic turn in the city’s planning culture. The details of this “effect” will be explored at length in the following chapter.

126 Strom, Building the New Berlin, 150.
CHAPTER 3

Critical Reconstruction’s Transformation under Hans Stimmann

This chapter looks at the changes to, and implementation of, Critical Reconstruction in Berlin’s central district of Mitte between 1991 and 1994. Having been closely involved in the debacle at Potsdamer Platz and witnessed the emerging mediocrity of the Friedrichstadt Passagen project, Berlin’s new Senate Construction Director Hans Stimmann, who took office in April of 1991, decided to adopt Josef Paul Kleihues’s theory of Critical Reconstruction as the guiding concept for the work of his department in Mitte. Though Stimmann’s department (Berlin’s Department of Construction and Housing) was by no means the only planning body with jurisdiction over this neighborhood – Berlin’s Department of Urban Development and Environment and the federal government were also both in charge of large and often overlapping swaths of the city center – Stimmann did his best to expand both his own actual power to influence planning decisions, and the public perception of that power. The result was that Critical Reconstruction was one of the most publicly discussed facets of Berlin city planning in the 1990s.

Critical Reconstruction was in many ways a logical choice as a guiding strategy for Mitte’s redevelopment, having already gained worldwide attention in the 1980s through its deployment in the same neighborhood during the International Building Exhibition (Internationale Bauaustellung, or IBA), led by Kleihues. However, Stimmann’s adoption of Critical Reconstruction was also puzzling, since he had been a vocal critic of Kleihues and the IBA up until 1989. As a long-time, far-left member of Berlin’s Social Democratic Party (SPD), Stimmann wanted to curb large-scale commercial development and car-friendly traffic plans, and
to support the middle class by fostering small-scale property ownership. After seeing what had transpired at Potsdamer Platz and the Friedrichstadt Passagen, he decided that Critical Reconstruction was his best option for achieving these ends. However, he did not adopt Kleihues’s approach wholesale, nor did he enter into the types of heady theoretical rationalizations that characterized Kleihues’s work. Stimmann was both immanently practical and intensely political in his application of Critical Reconstruction. His implementation, for instance, of Kleihues’s plan to restore the original baroque-era street plan in Mitte was not only geared towards the creation of a post-modern, pedestrian-friendly landscape, but, more importantly, aimed to carve out new plots of land that could, Stimmann hoped, be sold off in small parcels, thus creating much-needed revenue for the city and allowing him control over what was built on these new plots. By adopting and codifying Critical Reconstruction’s pared-down, rationalist architectural style, he also hoped to rein in multinational investors whose preferred designs, as had been seen clearly at Potsdamer Platz, only served to bolster corporate identities and threatened to turn Berlin into a landscape of overly showy façades covering mundane shopping malls. Thus, instead of using it as a platform for promoting carefully curated dialogue within the global architectural scene, as Kleihues had, Stimmann reduced Critical Reconstruction to a rigid set of aesthetic guidelines that real estate developers could easily understand.

On the global architecture scene, the early 1990s were, in many ways, the moment when the ideas of post-modern architects and theorists that had been avant-garde in the 1970s and 1980s were gaining widespread adoption. Across the United States, for instance, low-rise shopping centers and big-box stores began to ape some of the strategies of New Urbanism, refashioning themselves aesthetically to capture “local” flavor or to appear as “historic” town
centers, with clock towers, lush landscaping, and pedestrian walkways. However, the large-scale commercial application of such an approach to urbanism inevitably meant that the loss of some of its key theoretical facets, such as the strict regulation of traffic, the careful mix of urban and residential functions, and the consciously post-modern mix of traditional and experimental architectural styles. The same was true for Critical Reconstruction: what had been a smaller-scale, intellectually rigorous endeavor under Kleihues necessarily lost much of this depth when it was applied wholesale to commercial developments across the city.

The notion of “history,” in particular, which, as discussed in Chapter 1, Kleihues had made such an effort to sidestep or reframe as “memory,” became a particularly potent example of how Stimmann’s Critical Reconstruction differed from that of his predecessor. Stimmann attempted to publicly legitimize his aesthetic preferences by tying Critical Reconstruction to the concept of the “European city” and abstract notions of “history,” discussed at length below, as the ideal conceptual bases for Berlin’s development. However, it is my contention that Stimmann actually had very little interest in a theoretical engagement with history, either in terms of an architecture of memory (as Kleihues or other post-modern theorists like Rossi had proposed) or in terms of discussions about national identity and the Historikerstreit. His brash manner and bold statements exemplify a kind of anti-intellectualism that saw every decision as stemming from a supposedly “practical” need or leading to a necessary political end. His reliance on the ideas of “history” and the “European city,” therefore, was a strategic move calculated to take advantage of the larger context of intense international focus on Berlin as a symbol of the reunited country’s relationship to its troubled history, as well as Berlin’s need to differentiate itself as having a “local” character amidst a global market. Stimmann deployed this logic in tandem with Critical Reconstruction’s strictures because, ultimately, he thought it would help
him create the socio-economic and political landscape that, since his time as a member of the radical 1970s SPD, he had long desired: an urban fabric that was tightly-knit, multifunctional, and filled with educated residents who would want to be involved in planning and advocate for themselves.

Unfortunately, Stimmann’s use of Critical Reconstruction failed to help him achieve his various goals, and his attempt to connect it to “history” backfired in an especially unfortunate way. Due to investment pressures and political limitations, land in Mitte was sold off in huge, block-sized plots to large-scale investors, and Stimmann was criticized as a tool of capitalist interests. Meanwhile, his reliance on a set of rigid design standards – discussed at length below – that referenced “history” when convenient, but did away with the nuance and theoretical complexity of Kleihues’s approach, opened him up to critique by critics and architects who saw him as dangerously dictatorial, even fascist, in his aims to control the look of new buildings. As will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 4, Stimmann’s reductive deployment of Kleihues’s ideas dovetailed in calamitous ways with larger conversations about the conservative tendencies in Berlin’s new architecture. The result was that Stimmann’s Critical Reconstruction came to be seen as conservative, backward-looking, authoritarian, and pro-big business, despite the fact that it was authored by a politician who had long been part of the political left and a vocal critic of capitalist development.

Stimmann’s failure to successfully garner positive attention through these efforts points to one of the difficulties with the political dimensions of post-modernism, especially as it entailed historicism: it is difficult to ensure that buildings (let alone an entire urban landscape) will “mean” something to a public that includes constituents from outside the field of architecture. Even if Stimmann had succeeded in fostering the creation of a cityscape that
reflected the city’s history in a meaningful way, it is not clear that the users of the city would interpret it correctly as such. Considered alongside the complications that Stimmann faced with the city’s politics, economics, and institutions (discussed in Chapter 2), as well as the ways that contentious architectural discourse was filtered and re-interpreted through the popular media (discussed in Chapter 4), it is no wonder that Stimmann’s Critical Reconstruction was unable to achieve his ambitious ends.

Stimmann and the Reintroduction of Critical Reconstruction

Stimmann’s Early Years

Born in the northern German town of Lübeck and trained as a professional builder, Stimmann arrived in Berlin in 1970 to study city and regional planning at the Technical University, a program that focused heavily on theory and sociology rather than the raw technical or aesthetic aspects of planning. While there, he became deeply involved with the local SPD, working for SPD Building Senator Harry Ristock and publishing numerous essays on city planning issues. As part of a young, radical far-left movement within the SPD, Stimmann was especially critical of the party’s inability to successfully counteract slum clearance and freeway building measures – planning tactics that represented the then mainstream, post-war Modernist approach to city planning (discussed in Chapter 1).\(^1\) However, although he was deeply engaged in discussions of architecture and planning, Stimmann focused less on the technical or stylistic aspects of architecture and urbanism, and, influenced by his time at the Technical University, he preferred to look at the socio-economic issues that provided the context for that urbanism.

During this period in his education, he had been especially drawn to Marxist, anti-capitalist

theories – to the point of stating, later, that he earned his diploma “without hearing one thing about city planning.”

His days as a student, write Michael Mönninger and Jürgen Düwel, were spent in the contemplation, rather, of “abstract information about planning and politics under capitalism,” and “about all possible thoughts on the transformation of the system.”

Thus Stimmann was not a part of the discussions about post-modernist architecture that were taking place simultaneously at the Technical University under Oswald Matthias Ungers and others.

This major rift between his training and interests and those of European post-modernist architects, historians, and planners who were his contemporaries became especially apparent during the public debates over Critical Reconstruction in the 1990s, which are discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

Stimmann’s eschewal of mainstream architectural discourse continued into the following decade, when, in the mid-1980s, he became involved with the Internationale Bauaustellung (International Building Exhibition, or IBA) through its Altbau (urban renewal) projects, headed by the architect Hardt-Walther Hämer. As opposed to Kleihues’s Neubau (new construction) projects, the IBA-Altbau focused on working directly with communities, most notably in the West Berlin neighborhood of Kreuzberg, to improve and rehabilitate existing buildings and streets. During this time, Stimmann wrote several essays criticizing Critical Reconstruction as applied by Kleihues as head of the Neubau section of the IBA. In his essay of 1985, “Between

2 Quoted in Hans Stimmann, Von der Sozialutopie zum städtischen Haus: Texte und Interviews von Hans Stimmann, ed. Jörn Düwel and Michael Mönninger (Berlin: DOM, 2011), 16. Heinrich Klotz also stated that “Mr. Stimmann, the city’s building director, told me quite frankly, that he never really studied architecture, that he doesn’t understand much about architecture and that when he got in touch with the generation of 1968 they advised him to put away the pencil. He confessed that.” Heinrich Klotz, Nikolaus Kuhnert, and Angelika Schnell, “For God’s Sake, Not This Kind of a Capital: Heinrich Klotz in Conversation with ARCH+,” trans. Tamara Domenrat, Arch +, no. 122 (June 1994): 87.

3 Stimmann, Von der Sozialutopie ..., 16.

4 His split with this other, totally different side of architectural theory was likely accentuated by his training as a mason. Instead of taking the traditional university track through his engineering and doctoral work, as figures such as Kleihues did, Stimmann rose up through the vocational, engineering track of university education. This background, I argue, is probably what gives him much of his anti-intellectual bent. See ibid., 9.
City Planning, Politics, and Architectural Styles: The IBA,” for instance, he delved into the long history of post-war Berlin planning politics to argue that the IBA-Neubau was doomed to failure. Created in the context of an already internally contradictory and broken political and planning culture, he argued, the IBA’s planners did not have the power to put through their overambitious plans. The disappearance of various SPD politicians from the planning leadership of the exhibition also meant that its progressive, socio-political goals had been lost. This issue came to a head with the unveiling of the famous “Kleihues Plan” (fig. 1.25, discussed Chapter 1), a map of Kleihues’s intended reconstruction of the city center, at the 1984 IBA exhibition titled “Idea, Process, Result.” Stimmann wrote,

With this framework … Kleihues set himself over and against all previous legally required building plans, but also other types of planning such as district planning. With the creation of this plan Kleihues instead used an urban design method that, consciously or unconsciously, was closely related to Camillo Sitte’s 1889 artistic-aesthetic ideas about city construction.\(^5\)

Stimmann is referring here to Sitte’s famous treatise, *City Planning According to Artistic Principles*. Sitte viewed late nineteenth-century city planning in his native Vienna as much too focused on issues of engineering, and sought to refocus planners’ attention on the aesthetic and stylistic aspects of city design that would create pleasant spaces for users.\(^6\) Such ideas, in Stimmann’s mind, emphasized the wrong facets of planning, attempting to prettify the urban landscape without paying attention to its social conditions. Kleihues’s designs therefore constituted, Stimmann wrote,


\(^6\) It should be noted that Sitte was much more focused on the psychological rather than stylistic aspects of city planning. His work sought to make urban spaces more comfortable, and thus he pulled together examples from many different places and time periods in order to achieve these ends. Stimmann is therefore quite reductive in his reading of Sitte. See George R. Collins and Christiane Crasemann Collins, *Camillo Sitte: The Birth of Modern City Planning*, Dover ed. (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2006), 48; see also Camillo Sitte, *City Planning according to Artistic Principles* (New York, Random House, 1965).
the aesthetic – but not the social – critique of the results of the capitalist urban development of the late nineteenth century. … In his plans for the Southern Friedrichstadt, Kleihues also ignored questions of the societal requirements for the planned production of city construction and architecture – the land ownership relationships, the land prices, the financing, the legal requirements for participation by citizens, etc. The ambivalence and the non-binding quality of the plans in terms of the social results made them, conversely, into an instrument of completely non-artistic financial and power interests.⁷

As a planning model, Stimmann praised the methods of Hämmer’s IBA-Altbau, where “instead of the traditional planning methods there were one-on-one discussions, building meetings, citizens’ groups, seminars,” and a “working group for renewal” which included IBA representatives, planners, housing associations, and residents.⁸ To Stimmann, this was the antithesis of Kleihues’s “aesthetic” approach: instead of concentrating on how buildings looked, Hämmer worked to support healthy social, economic, and political relationships between residents and the city government, allowing architectural reconstruction (which, in this case, was mostly remodeling or renovation) to arise out of these needs. Stimmann’s critiques were, in many ways, correct, as he would later find out: his desire to emphasize the structural relationships that would give rise to a healthy city fabric became a point of serious tension when he decided to adopt Critical Reconstruction as his own planning method.

**Stimmann as a Leading Figure in Berlin City Planning**

In 1986, Stimmann accepted the post of Construction Director in his hometown of Lübeck, where he spent five years before returning to Berlin.⁹ His appointment as Berlin Senate

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⁸ Ibid., 90.

⁹ There, he worked to refurbish the city center, with an emphasis on traffic quieting measures. See Stimmann, *Von der Sozialutopie …*, 29.
Construction Director under Senator Wolfgang Nagel in 1991 came as a surprise to many observers, first, because the position had been vacant for almost a decade, and second, Senator Nagel’s close associate Hanno Klein had expected the appointment himself.\(^\text{10}\) Nagel may have been nervous about Klein’s well-known tendency toward hyperbolic statements and autocratic dealings: as mentioned earlier, he was infamous for stating that Berlin needed a second Gründerzeit “with prominence and brutality.”\(^\text{11}\) Journalist and critic Rudolf Stegers has suggested that Nagel may have thought he was getting a softer politician in Stimmann – someone who could smooth things over in a way that Klein had been unable or unwilling to.\(^\text{12}\) If this is indeed the case, Nagel was in for a grave disappointment. Though at the time some thought Stimmann a laughable, provincial nobody, from the moment of his taking office, he proved himself to be a brash, autocratic, and controlling figure in Berlin building politics. As illustrated by his heated exchanges with Rem Koolhaas in the jury discussions about the Sony Center designs for Potsdamer Platz (discussed in Chapter 2), which gave rise to a longstanding feud between Koolhaas and the city of Berlin, Stimmann gave no thought to offending either his colleagues or others in the architectural or planning professions.

Upon taking office in April of 1991, Stimmann’s first big move was to restructure the office of Senate Construction Director. Since World War II, this position had functioned chiefly as the “aesthetic arm” of the Construction Senator, a “city architect” who might draw up potential plans or make recommendations about development, but whose aims and suggestions were mainly aesthetic – rather than political – in nature. Stimmann attempted to gain more

\(^{10}\) The position had been vacant due to political upheavals within the Berlin Senate in the early 1980s, partly over the future and management of the IBA, and many thought it should be done away with entirely. See Stimmann, “Zwischen Stadtplanung, Politik Und Architekturmoden. Die IBA,” 81–82.


\(^{12}\) This explanation seems unlikely to me, given that he was acquainted with Stimmann already and would have seen him in action; my suspicion is that Nagel hoped that Stimmann, with his left-leaning ideals, might be able to rein in investors in the right ways.
decision-making power than previous directors by changing his position into one of a State Secretary, which gave him more authority and a stronger political connection to the Senate, and by establishing his own department, “Section III,” with a large team of architects and administrators, as well as its own architecture workshop. Thus he became not just an aesthetically oriented “city architect,” but a planner in the more general sense, and one with much more political sway than previous directors. Though in reality his power to make decisions and influence planning was still somewhat limited, especially since the Construction Department was only one of three major planning powers with jurisdiction over the city center, the public persona he crafted broadcasted the opposite. In an oft-quoted 1991 interview in the national architectural journal *Baumeister*, Stimmann boldly asserted, “I’m a powerful man. … I can tell each of my employees: we’re going to do it this way – as long as my Senator doesn’t throw me out. Then we are simultaneously the state building commission, ministry, and president of the government.” This commanding public persona worked along with his reductive aesthetics and rigid planning rules to earn Stimmann a reputation as a highly conservative planner.

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14 As discussed in Chapter 2, the Department of Urban Planning and the federal government both also had authority over overlapping swathes of Mitte. The Department of Urban Planning, in particular, was equally influential over most planning decisions.

15 In the original text he relates the “powerful man” statement to the position of State Secretary: “Weil ich aber als Staatssekretär ein mächtiger Mann bin, kann ich alle Projekt an mich ziehen. Ich zwinge damit meine eigene Verwaltung, über Gestaltung nachzudenken. Die hat ja sonst keinen Gesprächspartner. Ich kann jedem meiner Mitarbeiter sagen: Jetzt wird das aber so gemacht – so lange mich mein Senator nich rausschmeißt. Dann sind wir gleichzeitig Landesbauamt, Ministerium und Regierungspräsident.” Stimmann and Bachmann, “‘Ich Bin Ein Mächtiger Mann,’” 48. In truth, he didn’t actually see himself as particularly powerful: eighty percent of the new buildings in Berlin, he admitted, were created outside of his control. See ibid., 49.
Stimmann’s Reductive Version of Critical Reconstruction

The Concept of the European City and the Idea of the “Guiding Image”

As noted above, Stimmann had been highly critical of Kleihues’s use of the map format as a publicity tool during the IBA; however, after his adoption of Critical Reconstruction in 1991, he followed suit. Along with his many verbal and written statements, images were a key way in which he disseminated his message and presented arguments about what should be done with the city. The importance of images for Stimmann’s Critical Reconstruction is underscored by his frequent invocation of this method as a Leitbild or “guiding image.” The Leitbild is a concept with a fairly long history in German planning, having come to the fore particularly in the 1980s as a popular instrument of democratic governance. Formed primarily, as the term implies, by images (drawings, plans, and examples of existing buildings), but reinforced rhetorically, a Leitbild acts as a kind of “branding strategy” intended to make complex planning tactics easily comprehensible to the public, and to win their support. Comprised of his many statements and numerous publications that included historical photographs, plans, and maps, Stimmann’s Leitbild for the city center touted the vision of six-story, stone-clad, block-edge commercial developments topped by luxury residences and fronted by cafés and shops that would draw the bourgeois flâneur to stroll along its stately avenues: the very image long touted by continental architects and theorists as the post-modern answer to mid-century, International Style Modernist development. Stimmann regularly referred to this Leitbild as stemming from the model of the “European city.”

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16 Hennecke, Die kritische Rekonstruktion als Leitbild, 21.
17 See ibid., 55 and; Harald Bodenschatz and Uwe Altrock, Renaissance der Mitte: Zentrumsumbau in London und Berlin (Berlin: Verlagshaus Braun, 2005), 8.
Used widely by post-modern theorists and designers from the 1960s on, including other proponents of Critical Reconstruction like Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani, a key figure in the Berlin Architecture Debates (discussed in Chapter 4), the idea of the “European city” is essentially a conservative one which suggests not only the need for the preservation of historically-important architecture, but for a certain “social” (connoting political, economic, but also cultural) way of life. Sociologist Walter Siebel describes the concept in terms of five characteristics: the city as holding the promise of political and economic emancipation in the form of bourgeois, democratic society; social regulation in the form of a welfare state; the city giving rise to special, urban ways of living (*Lebensweise*), formed especially by a unique kind of division of public and private space; the “image of the form of the European city,” inherited from ages past; and the tangible presence of history (architectural, political, and social) in the daily life of citizens.\(^{18}\) Siebel describes the traditional European form of the *Stadtkrone*, with its city hall, market, and church, as the “symbol for the political, economic and cultural centrality of the city.”\(^{19}\) This form is typically embodied in the *Altstadt*, or medieval city core.\(^{20}\) Drawing on the theories of Max Weber to argue for the socio-economic underpinning of urban forms and lifestyles, Siebel claims that the traditional “European city” is today being undermined by the shifting values of contemporary society.\(^{21}\)

The “European city” model can be seen as part of a larger trend towards “historical” forms of one kind or another in post-modern architecture and urbanism. Beginning in the 1970s,

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\(^{18}\) “… das überkommene Bild von der Gestalt der europäischen Stadt.” Hartmut Häusermann and Walter Siebel, *Die europäische Stadt* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004), 18.

\(^{19}\) “… das sinnfällige Abbild der politischen, ökonomischen und kulturellen Zentralität der Stadt.” Ibid., 16.


\(^{21}\) Häusermann and Siebel, *Die europäische Stadt*, 18.
architects and planners all across Western Europe (and some behind the Iron Curtain, as well) began to focus on the notion of the historical city as a planning model. These trends were most notably expressed in events such as the international designation of 1975 as “European Monument Preservation Year,” which popularized the idea of “careful urban renewal” (*behutsame Stadterneuerung*), as well as Kleihues’s various efforts through the Dortmund Architecture Conferences from 1975 on (discussed in Chapter 1), and, famously, the architectural exhibition titled “The Presence of the Past” at the 1980 Venice Biennale, which was widely regarded as the entrée of historically-oriented post-modernism onto the global scene.\(^{22}\)

The ubiquity, by the 1990s, of the “European city” model as a way of updating continental urban landscapes presented a dire problem for Stimmann and other planners in Berlin, however. Not only had Berlin’s *Altstadt* already been subject to slum clearance measures in the late nineteenth century, but the remains of this tiny kernel had later been completely obliterated by World War II bombings, then divided and left empty by the city’s physical Cold War division. Any new *Stadtkrone* would have to virtually be fabricated from scratch (indeed, East Berlin’s planners in particular had already made attempts at this in Mitte during the 1980s with the creation of the *Nikolaiviertel*, a faux-medieval quarter centered around a reconstructed thirteenth-century church).\(^{23}\) Furthermore, Berlin has always been a fundamentally polycentric space, consisting of numerous incorporated towns and villages, and this quality was enhanced by the forty years of division by the Wall, which encouraged the East and West to create their own commercial centers along their respective edges of Mitte. Thus, in reunited Berlin, the recreation


\(^{23}\)For an in-depth discussion, see Emily Pugh, “The Berlin Wall and the Urban Space and Experience of East and West Berlin, 1961-1989” (Ph.D. diss., CUNY Graduate Center, 2008).
of the “European city” type of centralized area in Mitte meant, on a practical level, simply refabricating much of the city center, and positing it as a Stadtkrone or Altstadt that had, in reality, barely, if ever, existed.

I argue that Stimmann’s employment of the term “European city” or “historical city” in conjunction with the Leitbild of Critical Reconstruction was thus strategic on multiple levels. It allowed him not only to draw on a set of easily comprehensible visual tropes, but, in numerous ways, to present his plans as architectural answers to pressing issues of emergent German identity. First, casting Critical Reconstruction, and, by association, Berlin, as fundamentally “European” tacitly implied that Berlin was now fully integrated into the West: that it was embracing its Western rather than its Eastern connections and roots – both in terms of democratic governance and its cultural disposition, thus landing on the “right” side of the end of the Cold War. Second, the idea of the “European city” implied a significant difference from – even opposition to – the populist or high-tech trends in the United States.24 As Stimmann argues,

Catchphrases such as ‘anything goes’ or, in the context of American cities, theories such as ‘Learning from Las Vegas,’ are not only out of place but destructive in a city such as Berlin which is so firmly rooted in the European architectural tradition, and one which has had such a decisive influence on modern town planning at the end of the last [i.e. nineteenth] century and beginning of this. … We need only to look at the catastrophic legacy of the deconstructivist theories of Futurism in European architecture and the [mid-century] Modernist view of the city. In a city such as Berlin, with its history of psychological trauma, architecture must surely revert to norms, to composition and – in the tradition of the one-time solid “stone city” of Berlin – to the physical, the material and the tectonic; only in this way can architecture fulfill its dual role as a factor in the urban image of the city and as a social and working environment.25

As architectural historian Katharina Brichetti observes, the “European city” concept also implies the ideal of a desirable “leisure-urbanity,” a space for the urban pedestrian to enjoy street cafés and public plazas. It is a place where life proceeds at a slower pace, with that slowness acting as “a synonym for heritage, history, and continuity.” Stimmann was thus able to utilize this concept as a bulwark against the potential “mallification” of Mitte:

In general the guiding principle of the “European city,” with its strict division between public streets, squares and parks on one hand and private lots on the other, was a central requirement. This is contradicted by the wish of many investors for semi-public shopping malls. The risk of this building type becoming the basis for new developments was especially great because the urban property, as the smallest operative unit of urban construction, was largely absent in the areas subject to re-organization.

Finally, Stimmann saw the “European city” model as a way for Berliners (and, because it was the capital city, presumably Germans in general) to connect with and experience their “history” as part of the project of finding an identity. Stimmann argued,

In the fifties the Berliners started to search for their [architectural] identity: some in America, some in the Soviet Union, later wherever. In any case it was terribly international. That was the wrong way. Berliners need to take their own themes seriously again. There is not just Schinkel and Messel, but the regular Berlin tenement.

Stimmann’s portrayal of global Modernism as exemplifying the “wrong way” of doing things, and his reliance instead on an indigenous tradition based on not only on work of great German or Berlin architects, but the “everyday” architecture of the nineteenth century, connects directly to Kleihues’s project of building on the best parts of German architecture and reviving “traditional” Berlin typologies. But whereas Kleihues carefully sidestepped direct questions of how

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26 Brichetti, *Die Paradoxie des postmodernen Historismus*, 95.
architecture related to society, Stimmann utilized the notion of the “European city” to make more explicit claims about how architecture would exemplify the identity of the new city and nation, claiming that a “stone Berlin” was what was needed in order to restore to Berliners a sense of normalcy and historical continuity. The underlying assumption in this endeavor, of course, is that architecture itself necessarily represents the social, cultural, or national identity of those who live and work in it. Though Stimmann himself staunchly refused to see this rhetoric of the “European city” as anything other than a means of achieving particular practical, concrete planning goals, the Leitbild of Critical Reconstruction as a return to “European” urban forms meant, in essence, a turn towards the conservative position within the Historikerstreit: an invocation of German history as a thing to be understood, emulated, and normalized in the cityscape.\(^\text{29}\) And Stimmann’s reductive standards for Critical Reconstruction reinforced this problematic position through their reliance on neo-classical materials and styles, which had been shunned in post-war West Germany (and also, as discussed in Chapter 1, carefully avoided by Kleihues) because of their association with the Nazi regime. Now, it seemed, these forms were not only to be revived, but celebrated.\(^\text{30}\)

**Aesthetic Categories: The Façade as Flashpoint**

Stimmann’s formulation of Critical Reconstruction changed what had been a relatively open and dialectical theory of urban design into a particular aesthetic recipe that was relatively rigid in terms of its guidelines and requirements. Stimmann stated that the “diversity” of

\(^{29}\) An emphasis on “Europeanness” also tied to the contemporary formation of the EU in a post-Cold War climate, the creation of a shared currency, and thus to questions of Germany’s integration with the continental “West.”

\(^{30}\) Though I call it “neo-classicism” throughout this and the next chapter, the style supported by the Critical Reconstructionists under Stimmann was more specifically a revival of a particular form of pre-war Modernism that incorporated neo-classical and traditional regionalist elements. It had much in common with the Scandinavian and German Modernism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. For the purpose of clarity, I have chosen to distinguish here between pre-war and mid-century Modernism and Nazi neo-classicism; in reality, these are not at all clearly differentiated – indeed, many German architects practiced all three at one time or another. The tangled roots of these various stylistic tendencies would be a fruitful subject for further research.
architecture supported by his department (he cites 150 architects from 11 countries as active in Berlin between 1994 and 1995)

should not be confused with randomness, and experimentation should not become equivalent to the destruction of the urban planning structure. … New architecture must relate to the city, to the historical and urban planning context and to architectural tradition, in order to reinforce the density of the city. Architectural progress evolves from the continued development, and not from the complete renunciation, of traditions, typologies, and technologies.\(^{31}\)

In order to ensure the continuance of this “tradition,” Stimmann reduced Critical Reconstruction to just a few rules. First, he stated, “the historic street network and the associated historic frontage lines of the streets and squares should be respected or restored.”\(^{32}\) This rule was a direct adoption of Kleihues’s attempt to restore the baroque-era street plan in Mitte, in order to reduce auto traffic, promote pedestrian life along the street, and, in Stimmann’s case, to win back valuable land by reclaiming usable building space from multi-lane boulevards. Second, in terms of zoning, unlike the IBA, where the construction of housing had been the main goal, “under the changed conditions of [national] unity, the main use in the affected areas is … rather typical inner-city uses: office buildings, hotels, department stores, ministries, university buildings.”\(^{33}\) In terms of density and use, then, only twenty percent of the gross floor area in Stimmann’s plan was stipulated for housing. Single buildings were limited to a maximum size of one block, hosting a mix of uses. Third, on the level of individual buildings, heights were restricted to twenty-two meters at the eaves and thirty at the ridges, referring back to the Berlin city building codes of 1897 and 1929.\(^{34}\) This echoes, albeit in a more utilitarian manner, Kleihues’s call for a diverse “physiognomy” of the street and his revival of the traditional Berlin typology of the six-


\(^{32}\) Ibid., 13.

\(^{33}\) Ibid.

\(^{34}\) Ibid., 15.
story courtyard block, though in Stimmann’s case there was much less emphasis on the courtyard itself. Stimmann focused instead on building heights, hoping that by limiting investors in terms of potential square footage, he could keep land values low enough that rents would remain affordable: “Here my love for the engagement with the European city happens to meet with my thoughts about limiting the use of land in terms of height. … The limits of height are an instrument of limiting speculation. There aesthetics and economics meet.”

Stimmann routinely claimed that his rules for Critical Reconstruction did not include stipulations on formal elements like façades and materials. Nonetheless, he often followed up his discussions of general city planning guidelines with statements about what kinds of architecture he felt were stylistically appropriate for Mitte. For instance, in a 1995 essay, employing the grammatical passive voice that is so common in academic German, Stimmann referred vaguely to a contemporary “demand” for “stone” architecture (though who was making this demand is unclear)

based on the conviction that an urban atmosphere derives from the emphasized materiality of the city. High-tech buildings consisting solely of glass or displaying all their structural elements cannot allow the creation of a city in the traditional sense. A European city needs walls and openings that mark the transition between building and city.

Furthermore, “architecture as a social art,” he stated, “needs rules as the expression of society’s ideas of the city.” This objective meant a return to what he characterized as “Berlin architecture”:


36 See, for example, P. Bornhöft and M. Mönninger, “Heimatkunde Für Neuteutonia,” Der Spiegel, October 17, 1994, 117.


38 Ibid., 17.
My idea is the winning back of a Berlin tradition. I am a constituent of three-dimensional architecture, stone Berlin. … Wherever I can influence the architecture, I try to do so under the motto: disciplined, Prussian, conservative in its colors, stone, more straight than curved. That goes naturally also for the choice of architects: rather [Hans] Kollhoff than a big American office.³⁹

With this Stimmann not only implied a dedication to a particular style, based on forms and materials, but to supporting specific architects who met his aesthetic demands – all supposedly in service of creating an appropriate landscape for Berlin.⁴⁰ Stimmann defended this position by claiming that the tradition of stone is intimately linked with the work of early German Modernists such as Peter Behrens, Alfred Messel, Hermann Muthesius, and Max Taut, and thus with the “historical” character of Germany and Berlin. The “architectural expression” of the early Modernists’ commercial buildings was, he stated, “as a rule, that of a building with a clearly readable entrance, with serial window formats and façade materials typical of Berlin, such as yellow-gray sandstone, shell limestone and limestone, as well as travertine or ceramic facing, or, more rarely, fired clinker brick.”⁴¹ These architects, he said, designed commercial architecture for a city “whose modernity they wanted to express in up-to-date architecture,” but they eschewed the “radical alternatives” of expressionist architects like Bruno Taut or Hans Scharoun.⁴² As a result, he admitted,

> There are architects who feel excluded. … The whole Scharoun School is definitely part of that. Or definitely the Deconstructivists. … They feel themselves terribly threatened. Before I came they had a lot more leeway. I believe that there are many people in the architecture scene who don’t like me

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⁴⁰ It is also clear how easily his comments could be construed as a flimsy excuse to favor a small group of preferred architects with lucrative corporate contracts, one of the reasons why, as discussed further in Chapter 4, he so often came under fire for being part of an architectural “cartel.”


⁴² Ibid., 17.
because of that. For the others, who favor my ideas of building continuity and my architectonic positions, it’s going even better than before.”

Stimmann’s clear preference for stone façades is illustrated by two controversies over new buildings in the city center. Planners Rainer Emenlauer and Christine von Strempel relate how Stimmann impertinently lambasted a design by Richard Meier for a new building along the main east-west boulevard of Unter den Linden:

Wrong interpretation of the location, wrong building alignment, wrong distribution of the façade, too much glass, the entrance in the wrong place, etc., etc. Richard Meier listened to all this with perfect calm, stood up, told his assistant to pack up the model, and said to Hans Stimmann, “If you need an architect for the nineteenth century, I’m not your man.” Silence all around and dismay on the part of the developers. For it was clear: there could be no compromise, the positions were diametrically opposed.

The contract for the building was eventually given to the German rationalist Jürgen Sawade.

Another conflict erupted over the design decision for the Academy of Arts (Akademie der Künste) on the southern side of Pariser Platz, perpendicular to the Brandenburg Gate. The Academy’s pre-war home, a baroque palace remodeled around the turn of the century by the early Modernist architect Ernst von Ihne, had been destroyed in the war, and only few exhibition rooms were still extant on the site in 1945. With the division of the country, the institution, too, was split into Eastern and Western components, and each half moved elsewhere in the city until the fall of the Wall, when it reunited and was able to reclaim its former plot on the iconic square. The Academy, which had full jurisdiction over the site, sponsored a competition in 1993,
choosing a striking, glass-fronted design by the well-known West German Modernist Günter Behnisch (figs. 3.1-3.2). Behnisch’s design preserves the extant core of von Ihne’s structure, adding office, archival, and meeting spaces above and below. The façade is a gridded, layered composition of glass panels and metal filigree that echoes the asymmetrical abstraction of earlier Modernist designers like Gerrit Rietveld, and its transparency allows a view into the interior, where multiple angles and layers of original and new construction create an almost Cubist compositional effect. The choice of this transparent, almost Expressionist design, was an intentional reversal of Critical Reconstruction’s call for disciplined stucco or stone façades: as architectural historian Matthias Pabsch observes, the jury found it necessary to do justice to the function of cultural leadership that became incumbent upon the Academy and its members during the public discussion about the rebuilding of the city center. For this reason, it was important for them to find their own position and to represent it convincingly. For the [city’s] efforts to create strictures [requiring] historical reconstruction were targeted at the limitation of artistic freedom and thus also meant an attack on the institution whose duty was to defend this freedom.

The Academy, then, saw itself as a defender of artistic freedom against figures such as Stimmann, who wanted to strictly limit the formal language of new building façades, especially at historically significant sites such as Pariser Platz in Mitte. The choice of Behnisch’s design kicked off several years of vehement debates between various planning constituents, and the cornerstone for the building was not laid until the year 2000. Though Stimmann’s own

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45 The design was completed in collaboration with partner Manfred Sabatke and architect/historian Werner Durth. See Matthias Pabsch, Pariser Platz, Architektur und Technik: vom manuellen zum digitalen Zeitalter (Berlin: Reimer, 2002), 173–179; Bodenschatz and Altrock, Renaissance der Mitte, 238–241.


47 Ibid., 177. Architectural historian Matthias Pabsch argues that “the attempt to guarantee ‘cultural-historical continuity’ for city planning at this important site failed solely because the analysis was based solely on a snapshot, namely one of the state right before its destruction” (149). However, Pabsch’s argument that the square’s historical “contradictions” throughout its past means that planners should embrace the “digital” in the form of Deconstructivism is likewise a misuse of
department did not put up the main opposition to the glass façade (the main disagreements happened after Senator Nagel was replaced),\textsuperscript{48} Stimmann was an outspoken critic of Behnisch and of his strain of Modernism, because of their presumed relationship to expressionism:

I am not a defender of the expressionist line from Scharoun to Behnisch and also not of technoid, structural construction. My architecture must fall into the tradition that reaches from Gilly, Schinkel, Messel, Behrens, Mies van der Rohe, … to Kleihues … I want to connect back to the twenties. And to the time right before that, that is Max Taut, Hoffmann, and Blankenstein.\textsuperscript{49}

The problem with Stimmann’s aesthetics, however, is that it is impossible to see how this preferred formal language links back simply to Weimar Modernism, and not to the restrained neo-classicism of the Nazi architecture that succeeded it. Though he repeatedly tried to connect his preferences to the tradition of 1920s commercial Modernism, his stylistic choices – due in no small part to the influence of the Architecture Debates, as will become clear in Chapter 4 – were most often interpreted by critics not as Modernist, but as “New Teutonic,” i.e. as reviving the conservative, neo-classical strand of Modernism that was adopted as the preferred architectural language of the Nazis. Here Stimmann became trapped by his own logic: if architecture’s formal traits were meant to represent society, then any allusion to neo-classical forms or materials (such as stone or axiality), which in post-war West Germany had been associated directly with the Nazi


\textsuperscript{49} … ich bin kein Verfechter der expressionistischen Traditionslinie von Scharoun bis Behnisch und auch nicht des technoiden, strukturellen Bauens. Meine Architektur muß sich in die Traditionslinie von Gilly, Schinkel, Messel, Behrens, Mies van der Rohe, Taut bis Kleihues einordnen lassen … Ich will damit an die zwanziger Jahre anknüpfen. Und an die Zeit, die noch davor liegt, also Max Taut, Hoffmann und Blankenstein.” Stimmann and Bachmann, “‘Ich Bin Ein Mächtiger Mann,’” 48–49. In “not being a defender of the Scharoun line,” Stimmann reveals one point of extreme divergence from Kleihues’s Critical Reconstruction, whose aesthetics – however traditional in some respects – were also heavily influenced by Scharoun and other expressionists. Stimmann’s turn toward a more conservative and literal interpretation of history was mirrored in the shifts of architects like Kollhoff, a student of Ungers who also, as the 1990s progressed, moved further and further from the neo-rationalist or expressionist model of the “urban archipelago” towards a conservative and historicist position that had more in common with American New Urbanism and the conservative neo-historicism of Leon Krier. Kollhoff’s contributions to Critical Reconstruction will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.
regime, implied a dangerous return to those politics as well. Given his lack of training in traditional architectural discourse, Stimmann was apparently either not couth enough or not interested enough to wield these historical allusions to his advantage, or to shore up his choices with clear examples of how they linked specifically to Weimar Modernism, and this problem was exacerbated by the inability of the popular media to parse the discipline-specific language of architectural theory and style. Instead, Stimmann relied on the power of his personality and position to achieve and justify his planning aims. Thus, despite Stimmann’s claims to the contrary, architecture critic Paul Goldberger could write in the New York Times in 1995 that he was deliberately ignoring the Modernist tradition:

> While Stimmann hesitates to admit it, much of Berlin was shaped by the very Modernist architecture that he is now trying to fight. … He is nothing if not a brilliant rhetorician, taunting architects with antimodernist sloganeering. And they have no choice but to listen. … To be an architect on Stimmann's good side is to get plenty of work in Berlin; otherwise, you might as well be in Helsinki.  

Clearly, if the nuances of Stimmann’s position with regard to Modernism and its legacies were lost on Goldberger, a seasoned architectural critic, then they would also be completely lost on the larger public, who neither knew nor likely cared about the finer points of the Modernist architectural legacy. Again, as mentioned above, Stimmann’s difficulty in clearly positioning Critical Reconstruction in relation to Nazi aesthetics points to the larger problem of architecture’s ability to communicate and “mean” something to a large, diverse audience, especially when it connects to big ideas like “history” and “identity,” which themselves are often unclear.

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The Failed Goal of Small-Parcel Development

Despite this autocratic and stylistically restrictive attitude, Stimmann managed to remain true, in letter, at least, to his social-democratic roots in that his stated goal was to make the inner city accessible to a rising middle class:

The special problem … with the historical center of the city … is unfortunately that we have no more middle class. Right here in Berlin the very important Jewish population was, as is well known, in 1933 and in the following years, forced into emigration and then systematically murdered in the concentration camps. The typical state-centered politics of the GDR gradually forced the remaining shop owners, hoteliers, middle class property owners, and tradesmen to give up. So especially in the former East of the city a hole has been created that is going to be hard to fill.51

But these socially progressive goals were undermined by Stimmann’s stated faith in the power of public-private partnerships to achieve his ends. In distinct contrast to his earlier critiques of capitalism, he now claimed that

a city cannot be a city without private investment. My problem is more in organizing private capital so that it leaves behind a beautiful city. The private investors or architects as the trustees of the builders who come here with abstruse commercial imaginings – high-rises for the Friedrichstadt [neighborhood of Mitte], all kinds of malls – they ruin the foundations of the city. Most of my time is spent trying to convince them to utilize their long-term capital investments as a constitutive building block for Berlin and not for Houston, Texas. … Whoever is against private investment in the city, is against the city. How should these holes be filled? Big investment – department stores, offices – those are the places for new jobs. I’m for the investors. I am trying to rein them in with aesthetic categories.52

51 “Das besondere Problem von Ost-Berlin mit dem historischen Zentrum der Stadt – partiell gilt das natürlich auch für West-Berlin – ist aber leider so, daß wir keinen Mittelstand mehr haben. Der gerade in Berlin sehr bedeutende jüdische Anteil ist bekanntlich 1933 und in den Folgejahren erst in die Emigration getrieben und dann systematisch in den Konzentrationslagern ermordet worden. Die DDR-typische Verstaatlichungspolitik hat die verbliebenen mittelständischen Hausbesitzer, Geschäftsleute, Hoteliers und Gewerbetreibenden nach und nach zur Aufgabe gezwungen. So ist besonders im ehemaligen Osten der Stadt kulturell und ökonomisch eine Brache entstanden, die nur schwer wiederzubeleben ist.” Stimmann and Bachmann, “‘Ich Bin Ein Mächtiger Mann,’” 49–50. As will be discussed in Chapter 5, Stimmann was heavily influenced in this regard by the urban theorist and critic Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm, who was a vocal proponent of the small-scale, privately-owned parcel of land as the basis for democratic city governance.

52 “[Ich bin] der festen Überzeugung, daß eine Stadt ohne privates Investment gar keine Stadt ist. Mein Problem ist eher, das private Kapital so zu organisieren, daß es hinterher eine schöne Stadt gibt. Die privaten Investoren oder Architekten als Treuhänder der Bauherren, die hier mit irgendwelchen abstrusen kommerziellen Vorstellungen ankommen – Hochhäuser für die Friedrichstadt, jede Menge Malls –, die ruinieren die Grundlagen der Stadt. Ich verwende die meiste Zeit darauf, mit denen zu diskutieren, daß sie mit der langfristigen Verwertung ihres eingesetzten Kapitals einen Baustein für Berlin schaffen und nicht für Houston, Texas. … wer gegen privates Investment in der Stadt ist, der ist gegen die Stadt. Wie sollen denn diese Löcher
This approach did, in fact, fail in the very way that he had predicted for Kleihues’s approach in the 1980s: he was unable to use aesthetic categories to change the economic foundations of real estate investment. Pressure from investors and the complexities of coordinating land sales between the dizzying array of agencies involved meant that Mitte ended up with, as Stimmann admitted, “many large, multi-lot buildings with relatively homogenous uses.” To help mitigate this situation, he focused on working with developers to try to diversify block-sized plots in order to artificially recreate the physical, if not the economic or social, conditions of small-scale property ownership. Therefore, I argue, whereas his goal was to achieve small-scale urban development through an awareness of “traditional” approaches to Berlin’s architectural forms and typologies, what Stimmann actually helped produce in central Berlin was simply the outward *image* of such development, backed by international investors. As Düwel and Mönninger note, “This was continually denounced as Berlin’s dilemma: the disciplining of building rather than planning, the confusion of city planning and architecture.”

Viewed in its larger context, Stimmann’s insistence that regulated stone façades represented the ideal form of the “historical” or “European city,” a theoretical position that he was unable – or unwilling – to uncouple from the heritage of Nazi neo-classicism or from the conservative side of the *Historikerstreit*, as well as his outspoken denunciation of anything that deviated from this strict aesthetic norm, ultimately amounted to much more than just a strategy for reining in developers. Whether or not Stimmann himself would openly admit it, his deployment of Critical Reconstruction as a *Leitbild* sought to have it both ways: he wanted

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Berlin’s new architecture to *mean* something for society, to represent Berliners and Germans, and to help them find a new identity in the post-Wall era by helping them recognize – or rewrite – their own history. At the same time, he refused to acknowledge that this history was laden with violence, and that a simple return to pre-World War II forms could be read as a revival of reactionary or fascist political tendencies. Furthermore, the reliance on the idea of the “European city” itself, in the context of Berlin stone architecture, signifies a problematic ethnocentrism that links formal architectural traits with the idea of indigenous “Germanness.” Deeply involved in trying to control land sales and development, however, Stimmann was uninterested in fully tackling such questions; his reliance on a historicist *Leitbild*, it seems, was for him simply a means to a (failed) end.

**Post-Wall Critical Reconstruction in Practice**

*Kleihues’s Role in Post-Wall Critical Reconstruction*

Stimmann’s reliance on Critical Reconstruction as a planning concept would appear to imply that Kleihues was given a central role in the re-planning of Berlin in the post-Wall era. Indeed, as will become clear by the number of examples discussed in this and the following chapter, Kleihues was involved – as either a jury member or as architect – in a staggering number of construction projects in Mitte in the early 1990s, thus allowing him to leave his stamp on almost every famous square and street.\(^{55}\) However, his public, discursive role in the planning process was minimal, and, in comparison to his prolific writing during the IBA in the 1980s, he published relatively few essays or other commentaries on Berlin’s new architecture. Rather, Kleihues chose to step back from the public eye and focus instead on shaping the new Berlin

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through his work as head of a highly successful architecture firm. This retreat from his former position of public visibility, in tandem with the rise of Stimmann as the new figurehead of Critical Reconstruction, also worked to change public perception about this method.

Kleihues’s statements, in the handful of interviews and articles that he did publish in the early 1990s, were in general not about what Berlin should look like, but about the process by which he thought Berlin should be planned. Berlin, he contended, direly needed both a master plan and a master planner to guide its development. He was highly critical of the tactics of Senator Volker Hassemer, head of the Department of Urban Development and Environment, whose Stadtforum meetings brought together the so-called “expert public,” as well as invested local constituents, to discuss and debate planning decisions. For Kleihues, this approach valued the “process in itself” over the result, a kind of “contemporary media-ism” (neuzeitlich Mediumismus) that could only lead to unfortunate compromises. He saw this weakness as one of the main reasons for the failures at Potsdamer Platz:

I have always pleaded that at Potsdamer Platz there would be no public competition, but rather a [semi-private] planning process. Already in January of 1991 I recommended to Senator Hassemer that he might bring together the investors on Potsdamer Platz, certain politicians, and perhaps a maximum of five to eight architects in seminar discussions, where they would discuss the whole problem – maybe two discussions a week for four to six weeks. After that the architects would be sent into private sessions. They would lay their designs on the table; then we would come either to a decision or ask them to work further. I believe that Potsdamer Platz deserves these types of discussions, in other words it deserves an elite process.

56 William J.V. Neill suggests that the idea of a master plan was in general feared to be fascist in itself in Germany, given that the last person to put through a master plan for Berlin was Hitler. William J.V. Neill, “Memory, Spatial Planning, and the Construction of Cultural Identity in Belfast and Berlin - an Overview,” in Urban Planning and Cultural Inclusion: Lessons from Belfast and Berlin, ed. William J.V. Neill and Hanns-Uve Schwedler (Houndmills [England]; New York: Palgrave, 2001), 3–22.


58 „Ich habe immer dafür pladiert, dass am Potsdamer Platz kein offener Wettbewerb, sondern ein Planungsverfahren stattfindet. Ich habe Herrn Senator Dr. Hassemer bereits im Januar 1991 empfohlen, er möchte die Investoren am Potsdamer Platz als Bauherren, einige Politiker und vielleicht maximal fünf bis acht Architekten zu seminaristischen Gesprächen...
As political scientist Elizabeth Strom has shown, Kleihues’s viewpoint represents an attitude, typical in Germany, that the “expertization” of the political process guarantees a better outcome than a referendum. In keeping with this conviction, Kleihues firmly argued for the professionalization of planning decisions. “In my view there is only one … method that can lead to success: namely, that we entrust the necessary decision-making to single, professionally qualified persons.” In this context, he gave his blessing to Stimmann, despite their differences:

Although I, for example, do not agree with the new Senate Construction Director Mr. Stimmann in many areas, he has, for now, earned this leap of faith (Vertrauensvorschuss). Perhaps Mr. Stimmann would be well advised to revise his rigid eschewal of high-rises or his general call for parcel-sized construction a bit. But still, Mr. Stimmann is following a program. That is unfortunately very seldom seen.

Kleihues also stated that the changed conditions of Berlin after the Wall, as a space of rampant economic development, meant that Critical Reconstruction’s former “tolerance toward very different types of architectural directions” during the IBA years might be better left behind in favor of a “more precisely formulated requirements” in order to protect Berlin from too many competing desires. The more strict ordering that is Stimmann’s goal, Kleihues stated, was still sehr oftens

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Critical Reconstruction, “but more restrictive and for a short time and for certain parts of the city more appropriate: for instance, in the Friedrichstadt [in Mitte].”\(^\text{62}\)

On the level of what he called “urban physiognomy,” i.e. the way buildings appear from a stylistic point of view, Kleihues had little to say, except for a brief reference to the same ideas he had been propounding over the previous two decades: “Berlin is the city of the Enlightenment in Europe, Berlin is also the city of the Modern in Europe. We should acknowledge the stiffness (\emph{Sprödigkeit}) and rational clarity which characterized the great building culture of Berlin’s better eras.”\(^\text{63}\) And elsewhere, Kleihues stated that the best Berlin architecture was always “very rational, very economical, very disciplined, ‘Prussian’ in a good sense.”\(^\text{64}\) As will be discussed in Chapter 4, these statements were construed, in tandem with Stimmann’s reductive application of Critical Reconstruction, as a return to a dangerously rigid type of stone-clad neoclassicism that some critics even suspected of fascist tendencies. However, a brief look at two of Kleihues’s own building projects in Mitte and greater Berlin at the time belie such a reductive reading of his statement; clearly “stiffness” and “rational clarity” were, for him, still to be combined with the playful, abstracted poetry that he espoused in his earlier writings.

A good example of this nuance is Kleihues’s “Triangel” building at the southern end of Friedrichstrasse (1994-1997) (figs. 3.3-3.4). Set along a diagonal street profile that arose from the removal of the baroque-era “excise wall” (a city wall created in the eighteenth century to support the enforcement of import-export taxes), the building features two exceedingly different


façades: one clad in tiles of unpolished granite, with strongly contoured bands of windows, and the other constituting a glass curtain wall articulated by bands of metallic vents. From afar, the stone façade strongly echoes the same commercial buildings of the 1920s (such as those by Max Taut) (figs. 1.9-1.10) to which Kleihues and Stimmann commonly refer as stylistic touchstones, but Kleihues allows this impression to dissolve as one draws nearer to the building: the square elements of the stone cladding are each affixed by a decorative steel rivet set directly in the center of the tile. This detail gives even the stone façade of the building a strikingly high-tech look from the perspective of a pedestrian on the sidewalk.

An even more stunning example of how Kleihues’s architecture refuses to confine itself to historicism is the much-discussed “Kant Triangle” building in the West Berlin neighborhood of Charlottenburg (1992-1995) (figs. 3.5-3.6). Built on a triangular plot bordered by the elevated tracks of the S-Bahn (inner-city rail) and Kantstrasse, the building features a cubic tower rising from a stone-clad, low-rise base. Partly in response to zoning decisions that limited the original intended height of the building, the tower is topped by a distinctive metal “coxcomb” – a playfully overscaled wind vane that slightly exceeds the width of the building itself. Kleihues describes the exterior as being divided into three “image fields”: a stone base, a metallic body, and the wind vane, which he also describes as a “shark fin.” Though it almost verges on the playful post-modernism of architects like Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, Kleihues sees his design as falling directly in the Germanic, continental lineage of such designers as Schinkel and Loos. 65 This example serves as a forceful counterpoint to critics’ later accusations (discussed in Chapter 4) of Kleihues as leader of an architectural cartel that espoused a rigid and possibly proto-fascist historicism based around the idea of the Berlin block.

Stimmann’s Differentiated Commercial Blocks

Kleihues was also involved in two of the three developments in Mitte that Stimmann considered to be the best examples of his favored method of differentiated development within a large block. The Hofgarten am Gendarmenmarkt and the Kontorhaus Mitte were both designed according to master plans by Kleihues, with contributions from other architects in the designs of individual buildings. The third example lauded by Stimmann was Aldo Rossi’s Quartier Schützenstrasse which featured differentiated façades stretching over – but not necessarily contiguous with – a handful of separate buildings, all backing onto a central courtyard space. Stimmann saw these three designs as representing the best that he could do with the given situation: economically and politically unable to sell off land in smaller pieces, he was proud of having worked with developers and architects to create designs that at least emulated this approach on the typological and aesthetic levels.

The Hofgarten am Gendarmenmarkt complex (1992-1996), which occupies the block directly north of the Friedrichstadt Passagen, consists of both renewed historic buildings and new construction.66 Each building has a separate entrance and separate usage, but all open in the back onto a shared green courtyard space in the center of the block (fig. 3.7). All of the buildings conform to the typology of the mixed-use commercial and residential building that Stimmann argues is typical of Mitte. Four historic buildings were extant on the block: a red sandstone building along Französische Strasse, on the southern side of the block, was built in 1900 as a wine shop and delicatessen adjoining the well-known Borchardt Restaurant. Müller Riemann Scholz Architects renovated it into a restaurant of the same name, topped by office and

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residential spaces (fig. 3.8). The other three historic buildings are found on the western side of the block, along Friedrichstrasse: one near the corner of Französische Strasse, and the other two adjoining each other on the northern corner of Behrenstrasse. The southernmost of these buildings was structurally unsound and collapsed during construction of Kollhoff’s new buildings that were designed to flank it; its façade was reconstructed to preserve the continuity of the original design.

In addition to creating the overall design for the Hofgarten block, Kleihues designed both the Four Seasons Hotel on the rear side of the block facing Charlottenstrasse, and the narrow “atelier” building that neighbors it on the northern side of the block, along Behrenstrasse. The hotel, faced with light-colored Roman travertine limestone, combines the traditional, stone-clad Berlin block form with typical Kleihuesian abstractions such as geometrically curved window bays (fig. 3.9-3.10). The neighboring atelier building, by contrast, which also houses two shops on the ground level, allows its interiors maximum light by utilizing almost solely glass in its façade, accented by metallic balcony railings and window frames (fig. 3.11). Kleihues’s choice of material for this smaller building can also be read as a commentary on the architectural controversy over stone building that was taking place during its design. This conflict will be examined closely in Chapter 4, but it stemmed from statements by a handful of prominent architects and architectural historians who insisted that the most appropriate building material for Berlin architecture was, because of Berlin’s specific built heritage as well as the current needs of its population, explicitly stone. Architectural historian Gerwin Zohlen contends that Kleihues was annoyed with the reduction of the professional conversation to the conflict between stone and glass, and that “this banalization motivated him to an almost anarchistic revolt against the

67 Burg, Berlin Mitte, 43.
attempt to make stone in itself into the only true way and law of architecture.”

Thus, despite Kleihues’s cooperation with Stimmann, this building could be read as a small, impudent gesture that not only continues Kleihues’s own practice of combining the traditional Berlin building typologies with new building materials and rational, simplified, yet playful forms; it also signals that Kleihues refuses to be implicated in Stimmann’s conflicts. Unfortunately, as will be discussed in Chapter 4, such small aesthetic distinctions were totally lost in the larger Architecture Debates, wherein Kleihues and Stimmann were both construed as belonging to, or even leading, a conservative architectural cartel.

The other buildings in the complex are designed by three students of Ungers: the Swiss architect Max Dudler, and Germans Kollhoff and Jürgen Sawade. Dudler’s residential building echoes canonical Modernist housing designs in its organization of stacked, interlocking maisonettes with “functional rooms” such as baths and kitchens located in the center of the building, allowing the living rooms to face outward toward the street or courtyard, respectively (figs. 3.12-3.13). Kollhoff’s pair of matching buildings along Friedrichstrasse was originally designed to wrap around the existing, landmarked structure; now, due to that building’s collapse during construction, it actually constitutes a single building with varying façades (figs. 3.14-3.15). The façades of Kollhoff’s two newly designed portions are almost identical, both using a grey-green granite in a “flat relief” design drawn from prewar Berlin architectural tradition. This tradition is also echoed in the three-tiered vertical differentiation of the building: the ground-

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68 „Diese Banalisierung motivierte ihn zu einer fast anarchischen Revolt gegen Versuche, den Stein zum allein seligmachenden Atchitekturgesetz machen zu wollen.” Gerwin Zohlen, “Josef Paul Kleihues: Der Regent,” in Die Baumeister des neuen Berlin: Porträts, Gebäude, Konzepte, by Christina Haberlik and Gerwin Zohlen (Berlin: Nicolai, 1997), 91. The conflict over stone and glass, or indeed over the use of particular building materials, reaches back into the CIAM days (echoing Le Corbusier’s conflict with Umdenstock, for instance), and even to earlier debates in Berlin over the use of brick and stucco in the nineteenth century. Jeffry Diefendorf has written extensively on these issues as they relate to post-war rebuilding in West Germany, see Jeffry Diefendorf, *In the Wake of War: The Reconstruction of German Cities after World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); and Jeffry Diefendorf, *Rebuilding Europe’s Bombed Cities* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1990).
level and first floors constitute a “monolithic configuration” of large, tight-fitted masonry, on whose solid base the middle section of four floors use narrower rectangular stone elements to delineate the vertical matrix of windows. Finally, the upper two stories are set back and feature wider window openings. “The buildings,” according to Kollhoff, “aspire to be conventional, in the best sense of the word: along with similar constructions they set out to give form to a street, a city. Only when looked at more closely do they draw attention to themselves.” The opposite could be said of Sawade’s design, which is often cited as “noticeable” because of its almost perfectly-flat, polished grey-black granite façade containing wide window bays framed with narrow metal strips. A self-proclaimed “purist, rationalist, and increasingly also a minimalist,” Sawade designed a “logically precise construction” whose appeal lies in its technical perfection. However, especially on bright days, the building itself is actually hard to see due to its highly reflective surface. Rather, one sees clearly the curving glass lines of Jean Nouvel’s Galeries Lafayette, which stands across the street (fig. 3.16). Thus Sawade’s building achieves, as do the rest of the buildings in the Hofgarten complex, the paradoxical goal of being both daring and conventional, unique but conformist, by letting its simple form reflect the streetscape around it.

Kontorhaus Mitte (1994-1997) takes a similar approach to the Hofgarten complex. Kleihues called the design a set of “building blocks” that found “diversity in unity” through the involvement of four other architects (Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani, Klaus Theo Brenner, Marlene Dörrie, and Walther Stepp), who were each responsible for a separate structure. Rather than “thinking in parcels,” Kleihues stated, diversity was to be achieved through formal

70 Sawade, who was, along with Kleihues, one of the signatories of the “Campaign 507” manifesto, has had his own architectural practice in Berlin since 1970. See Haberlik and Zohlen, Die Baumeister des neuen Berlin, 169.
differentiation and a mix of uses within the block, culminating in a shared covered courtyard or “winter garden” in the center (figs. 3.17-3.20).\(^{71}\) Kleihues’s own comments on the work echo Stimmann’s realization that small-parcel development was an ultimately impractical goal in Mitte:

> The discussion about dividing building plots into smaller units … risks degenerating into a “yearning for an ideal world.” Where small plots no longer exist as individual property or where modern functions demand larger units, an artificial division into small plots cannot be adequately justified, not even with the argument of “obligation to history.” But the justifiable aspiration to architectural variety or, to be more precise, to variety in uniformity is understandable. … That is why we should be talking here about using a philosophy of modular building systems, whose functional and formal set of rules is based on the principle of combining a number of individual building units. … However, Friedrichstrasse needs to be re-established as the very lively place it always was. One factor that can contribute to that is the extraordinary variety of functions within this new kind of commercial building.\(^{72}\)

Kleihues also enthusiastically insists that the building offers Friedrichstrasse “a sense of joie de vivre,” a term that is, however, not at all reflected in the restrained geometries of the buildings by Brenner and Stepp (who designed the buildings on each corner of the block) or the somber sandstone façade of the Berliner Bank building by Lampugnani and Dörrie along the northern side of the block (figs. 3.21-3.23). Their own statements describe the structure as “solid and durable … unpretentious and reticent because there is nothing behind it but a perfectly normal office buildings and we did not want to create anything formally exceptional because that was not matched by the function of the building.”\(^{73}\) The only “joy” to be found in the Kontorhaus design is supplied by Kleihues’s three structures, especially the central building along Friedrichstrasse, whose overtly playful geometry (in the form of a series of prominent oculi at

\(^{71}\) Quoted in Bodenschatz and Altrock, *Renaissance der Mitte*, 236.


\(^{73}\) Ibid., 16.
street level, as well as Kleihues’s signature lozenge shape dividing the entrance), and its light, warm-toned stone facing add, at the very least, some visual interest to the streetscape (fig. 3.24).

Whereas these two blocks overseen by Kleihues blend seamlessly – one might even say monotonously – into the streetscape, Rossi’s colorful Quartier Schützenstrasse (1994-98) fully embodies a joie de vivre, offering an ebullient and striking change of pace in Mitte’s mostly gray and muted environment. The buildings consist of alternating vertical bays of various widths that refer, in the form of playful, colorful abstractions, to both traditional nineteenth-century Berlin architecture as well as Michelangelo’s Palazzo Farnese in Rome and previous buildings by Rossi himself (figs. 3.25-3.28). The design is typical of the architect in that it reflects a deeply personal experience of architecture, and in fact, as discussed in Chapter 1, it was largely Rossi’s own internationally significant book, The Architecture of the City (1966), which had originally inspired Kleihues to develop the theory of Critical Reconstruction. Quartier Schützenstrasse’s overscaled and visibly superficial façade elements, along with its bright primary colors, present a striking counterpoint to the Hofgarten and Kontorhaus blocks, blending more easily with the more daring pre-1990 IBA designs in the neighboring Southern Friedrichstadt by architects like Koolhaas, Eisenman, and Rossi himself.\(^7\)

Still, the fact that Stimmann points to the Schützenstrasse development as a Critical Reconstruction success reveals some of the unexpected points of flexibility in his theory. Clearly a playful post-modernism was considered permissible and even desirable, as long as it remained true to the idea of the “European city” in its use of historical forms and typologies.

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\(^7\) Rossi passed away one day before the official opening of the building, in 1997.
Conclusion: Critical Reconstruction’s Conservative Turn under Stimmann

In his critique of the reconstruction of Mitte’s famous Pariser Platz, architectural historian Matthias Pabsch bemoans the “simplification and standardization (Nivellierung) of architectural history,” blaming Critical Reconstruction, which “tolerated neither breaks nor contradictions.” Indeed, this view seemed to be the general critical and public perception of Stimmann’s method: it came to be regarded as a type of reactionary traditionalism, a rigid, historicist view that preferred harshness and discipline and was vehemently opposed to anything new. This perspective permeated the popular media, as well as professional books and journals. For instance, in an article titled “Local History Studies for New Teutonia,” which featured the transcript of a contentious conversation between Stimmann and the architectural historian and museum director Heinrich Klotz, the editors of the popular national new magazine Der Spiegel published this introductory header:

The Architecture Debates in Berlin began when Senate Construction Director Hans Stimmann said, upon taking office in 1991, “We don’t need to reinvent Berlin” and called for the “return to the tradition of European city building.” … As the “aesthetic conscience” of the Construction Senator, [he] makes sure that the reconstruction of Berlin stays true to the historical ground plan and traditional stone architecture. The Berlin architect Josef Paul Kleihues is also a defender of these conservative construction politics. … He is accused of leading a “power cartel” [of architects]. The art historian Heinrich Klotz … accuses the Berliners of “affectations of power” (Machtallüren), limitation of building diversity and the return to the classicism of the Nazis. The Berlin architecture debate is becoming increasingly politicized and cannot be seen apart from the search for a new national identity for Germany.
In looking at what Stimmann regarded as his “successes,” as well as his statements about the approach of Critical Reconstruction itself, it is clear that some of this critique is warranted. Stimmann’s deployment of Critical Reconstruction was, indeed, a dramatic reduction of the experimental approach taken by Kleihues during the IBA – and, according to both him and Kleihues, such a reduction was necessary.

However, although he may have lauded the Hofgarten, Kontorhaus, and Schützenstrasse projects as “successes,” by his own measures, Stimmann’s deployment of Critical Reconstruction was, for the most part, a dismal failure. He was able to emulate small-scale development within block-sized buildings, but this solution did nothing to satisfy the needs that originally founded Stimmann’s interest in this type of growth: namely, the return of a middle class to central Berlin, based in the economic realities of small-scale property ownership. No amount of physical differentiation amongst various buildings on one block could counteract the economic and social ramifications of their ownership by large, faceless, multinational companies that have little interest in creating or supporting a close-knit network of local interests. Working with limited political, administrative, and economic power to affect decisions about land sales or to create a master plan for Mitte, Stimmann saw himself forced to collaborate with large real estate investors to formally emulate this type of small-scale construction. In order to do so, he also felt compelled to constrain developers aesthetically so that the cityscape that arose out of this public-private partnership did not result in a collection of “fashionable experiments,” but took on the look of a “normal” urban landscape. Seen in the context of the Historikerstreit, this effort at “normalization” itself appeared dangerously conservative to many observers.
Certainly Stimmann himself was not a “fascist,” either in his politics or in his aesthetics. A more banal explanation for Stimmann’s preferences lies in the fact that, like Kleihues, he was aware that the commercialism of American or “Global” high-tech architecture did not offer Berlin the singular aesthetic qualities that it desperately needed in order to differentiate itself as a desirable location. But in trying to both attract and rein in investors on an aesthetic level, Stimmann proved himself supremely incapable of navigating a conversation about the connotations of neo-historicist styles that spanned – as will be discussed at length in the following chapter – public and professional media and which was rooted in the complexities of architectural theory and history. Stimmann’s background in Marxist theory and in the practice of participatory city planning during the 1970s and 1980s could not have prepared him to successfully rebuff accusations that his particular form of traditional Berlin architecture represented something that linked problematically to Nazi forms, or that sought to “normalize” that history in the manner of contemporary conservative politicians and thinkers like Helmut Kohl or Ernst Nolte. Stimmann’s choice of a highly reductive set of rules, based on just a few statements about zoning, density, massing, materials, and façades, reveals a supreme naïveté with regard to the ways in which Berlin architecture would be interpreted, especially in the international community, as a problematic statement about German history with ties to the conservative side of the Historikerstreit. The problems that this naïveté generated in tandem with the Architecture Debates, as well as Stimmann’s continued engagement with planning in East Berlin, shaped, in crucial ways, Critical Reconstruction’s fraught relationship to the discourse of German identity. These issues will be explored at length in the following two chapters.
CHAPTER 4

Critical Reconstruction and the Berlin Architecture Debates

Hans Stimmann’s reductive revisions to Critical Reconstruction, his crafting of a brash and autocratic public persona, his reliance on a problematic and undifferentiated notion of “history,” and his rhetorical allusions to the idea that only a preferred group of architects working in a particular style would be awarded contracts in Berlin’s post-Wall reconstruction did much to shape the general perception of his method as conservative. However, his deployment of Critical Reconstruction also took place within a much larger context of public debate about the relationships between German history, national identity, and the built environment. This chapter documents and analyzes the key facets of the controversy over Berlin architecture and Critical Reconstruction that has come to be known as the “Berlin Architecture Debates” (sometimes also called the “Architects’ Debates”): a series of written exchanges about architecture published in the popular and professional press between 1993 and 1995.1 Appearing alongside Stimmann’s various statements about Berlin’s historical culture of “stone architecture,” the arguments put forth during the Architecture Debates furthered the impression that Critical Reconstruction constituted a dangerously conservative architectural style. As I will show, the fact that some of the protagonists in these debates were also involved in prominent construction projects at the time, including the rehabilitation of former Nazi buildings in the city center, gives unfortunate credence to these critiques. Thus, instead of constituting an approach rooted deeply in the profession, discourse, and history of architecture, or even an attempt to reclaim a politically acceptable architectural heritage for Germany, Critical Reconstruction in the post-Wall era was

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perceived as a hypocritical ally of big business that touted a conservative set of assumptions about history and identity in reunified Germany. Specifically, it came across as being in line with Ernst Nolte’s position in the Historikerstreit in the 1980s, which encouraged the “normalization” of Nazi history as an error that Germans had superseded and could effectively now forget as a thing of the past. For many on the left, including some combatants in the Architecture Debates, this position was unacceptable and represented a dangerous step backward toward the very conditions that had given rise to fascism in the first place.

The Berlin Architecture Debates began in earnest in late 1993 with an essay published by Vittorio Magnano Lampugnani, then director of the German Architecture Museum, in the national magazine Der Spiegel. Involving a large number of architects, theorists, critics, and journalists, neither the disciplinary nor the temporal boundaries of the debates are clear. The contributions were dispersed and wide-ranging, taking place across various journals, magazines, and newspapers, as well as disciplinary and national boundaries, and involving a large number of authors. While the initial set of heated arguments dissipated by 1995, the same issues resurfaced again in the late 1990s in the debate over the rebuilding of the Prussian City Palace or “Schloss,” as well as in the public discussions over Stimmann’s plans for East Berlin embodied in the Planwerk Innenstadt, both of which will be examined in Chapter 5. The conversation reached back in time, as well: Lampugnani’s essay acted as a moment of crystallization for many voices and opinions that had already surfaced in architectural journals and the national press in 1991 and 1992. It also resonated with a similar conflict that had taken place more than a decade earlier, in 1977, with the unveiling of the designs by James Stirling for the Neue Staatsgalerie in

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2 Different historians cite different dates; some date it to 1992, but with no clear origin point. Hertweck cites Lampugnani’s essay as the initial sally.

3 For more lengthy discussions of the debates, see Florian Hertweck, Der Berliner Architekturstreit: Architektur, Stadtbau, Geschichte und Identität in der Berliner Republik 1989-1999 (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 2010); and Kähler, Einfach schwierig.
Stuttgart (the first post-modernist design commissioned in West Germany), which unleashed a storm of criticism concerning its overt classicist references, deemed by some to be too close to fascist forms.\(^4\) The fact that the post-Wall Architecture Debates, couched in the vocabulary and knowledge base of the architectural profession, garnered so much attention from the national, popular media, demonstrates how directly the issue of Critical Reconstruction refracted and related to larger questions of emergent, reunified German identity at this time. As architectural historian Florian Hertweck states, the Architecture Debates can thus be understood as a “corroboration of the societal role of architecture,” revealing its deep imbrication in social, political, moral, and cultural issues for the new nation.\(^5\)

The combatants in the debates fall into two main camps: those who advocated for a prescriptive architectural concept for Berlin, based on a historical image of the “European city” (represented most prominently by Lampugnani and Hans Kollhoff), and thus associated directly to the aesthetics of Stimmann’s Critical Reconstruction; and those who, for one reason or another, strongly opposed Lampugnani and his colleagues (including Daniel Libeskind, Heinrich Klotz, and, counterintuitively, Stimmann’s main collaborator Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm). Many of the battle lines had already been drawn during the Potsdamer Platz competition (see Chapter 2), where the proponents of the traditional “European city” eventually triumphed over representatives of the “urban archipelago” planning model. But whereas the Potsdamer Platz debates had centered around the issues of typology and zoning – specifically skyscrapers, density, and planned green space – the Architecture Debates focused much more on the aesthetics of the buildings themselves, especially their façades and materials, and the extent to


which they referred to specific moments in German history. As the editors of Der Spiegel wrote in the introduction to a November 1995 article titled “New Dictates for Construction”: 

The debate over the future of Berlin architecture has become a national trench war. A strange coalition of the old left and neo-modernists sees a reactionary turn towards Nazi architecture. The fight between modern and traditional architecture has developed into an urban-development Historikerstreit.6

Thus, as this chapter demonstrates, Critical Reconstruction became further implicated in a host of negative public perceptions about how Berlin’s new architecture reflected German identity, from articles and editorials in the German popular press, to critical assessments by architectural critics and historians on both sides of the Atlantic. As architectural historian Barry Bergdoll observed, “anyone with the slightest knowledge of the politics and symbols in modern German … architectural history can scarcely be convinced that reconstruction can avoid playing a role in reintroducing many of the very passions meant to be calmed.”

“New Simplicity” and Critical Reconstruction: Drawing the Battle Lines

Lampugnani’s Manifesto

Most observers agree that the Architecture Debates were kicked off by the publication of two almost identical essays by Lampugnani in late 1993. The first, titled “The New Simplicity: Speculations on the Architecture of the New Millennium,” was published as an accompanying text to a yearbook for the German Architectural Museum.8 He then submitted a slightly edited

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6 “Der Streit um die künftige Berliner Architektur wird bundesweit zum ideologischen Grabenkampf. Eine seltsame Koalition aus Altlinken und Neomodernen sieht eine reaktionäre Kehrtwende zur Nazi-Architektur. Der Kampf um moderne oder traditionelle Architektur entwickelt sich zum baupolitischen Historikerstreit.” “Neue Rechte Am Bau?,” Der Spiegel, November 6, 1995, 244. The article was directly followed by an interview with Hans Kollhoff titled “Stone Mitte.”


8 The yearbook also included two projects by Kollhoff. See Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani and Annette Becker, eds., DAM Architektur Jahrbuch (München/New York, 1993). One assumes that this essay contains much of the same material as the talk in Magdeburg referred to by Libeskind.
version to the national magazine Der Spiegel, where it was published in December of 1993 under
the title “The Challenge of the Everyday: Towards a New Building Convention.”

Even though Lampugnani’s essay never directly mentions Berlin, Critical Reconstruction, Kleihues, or
Stimmann, his suggestion that modern urban life requires an architecture of “calm solidity” was
read by many as a direct statement about Stimmann’s plans. Hertweck even calls it a “manifesto
for Critical Reconstruction.”

Born in Rome in 1951, Lampugnani studied architectural theory and practice in Rome,
Switzerland, and Germany, holding fellowships and professorships at Harvard, Columbia, and
the ETH Zürich. During the 1980s, he also served as editor for the Italian design magazine
Casabella before moving to head the publication of Domus. Because of his expertise in Italian
neo-rationalism, Kleihues called on his help for exhibitions and other projects associated with the
IBA-Neubau (the “new construction” portion of the International Building Exhibition or IBA,
headed by Kleihues during the 1980s), where Lampugnani was able to put his stamp on
numerous publications and shows. In 1990, he succeeded art historian Heinrich Klotz as director
of the national German Architectural Museum in Frankfurt. Whereas Klotz had used this
institutional platform to champion a playful, diverse, and global post-modernism, Lampugnani
immediately took a contrasting approach, sponsoring a series of three exhibitions that looked to
revive an awareness of, and appreciation for, German architects and movements that had been
considered taboo during the post-war years in West Germany. These included the neo-classical
and regionalist strands of pre-war Modernism that were later associated with fascism. “Not since
the war,” wrote architecture critic Falk Jäger, “has the traditional and conservative architecture”

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10 Hertweck, Der Berliner Architekturstreit, 89.
associated with National Socialism “been presented and celebrated so impartially (some would say uncritically).”\textsuperscript{11} With this move, Lampugnani became widely considered as a “conservative architectural historian,” despite the fact that he simultaneously curated an exhibition on German Expressionist architecture, as well the stylistically inclusive “Berlin Tomorrow” exhibition (discussed in Chapter 2).\textsuperscript{12}

Hertweck suggests that Lampugnani’s \textit{Spiegel} manifesto may have been an attempt to respond to the controversies over Potsdamer Platz, which had already brought issues of architecture and city planning in Berlin forcefully into the public eye.\textsuperscript{13} This is certainly the case, but I argue that even more important at this time in 1993 was the master planning competition for Alexanderplatz, for which Lampugnani served as a juror. His manifesto is undoubtedly a commentary on the kind of architecture he sees as fitting for the new capital city. Its implicit connection to the Alexanderplatz competition is borne out by the fact that two of the other most involved participants in the Architecture Debates were the winner and runner-up in this competition, Kollhoff and Libeskind, whose designs and arguments are discussed at length below.

This context for the debates is far from explicit in the writings themselves, however. Lampugnani’s essay remains loftily at the level of theory rather than addressing any particular project, competition, or site. Like Stimmann, Lampugnani links his ideas to German identity by relying on the vague idea of the “European city” (discussed in Chapter 3), beginning his essay with an attack on the two sides of post-modern architecture that he deems inappropriate for the contemporary continental urban landscape: American post-modernism and Deconstructivism. He

\textsuperscript{11}“Noch nie nach den Krieg war die in Deutschland durch den Nationalsozialismus stigmatisierte traditionalistische und konservative Architektur so vorurteilsfrei (viele sagten: unkritisch) präsentiert und gefeiert worden.” Quoted in ibid., 68.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 23.
contends that playful, American post-modernism too easily becomes banal: “A joke, told barely a couple of times, loses its punch and becomes boring. …What should have been architecture parlante soon becomes blithering and fatigued by repetition.”\(^{14}\) Deconstructivism, on the other hand, dangerously reproduces the societal conditions that Lampugnani thinks users of architecture should be trying to escape: “Architecture means, fundamentally, the creation of protected space, and in order to create such spaces … walls and supports should be vertical. If one puts them diagonally,” he claims, then they “tend to do what they suggest: … namely fall down.”\(^{15}\) Furthermore, Deconstructivism’s “philosophical and aesthetic claim to illustrate destruction and fleetingness is lost in our cities,” because, he argues, these are already so full of this same confusion that the style’s aesthetic critique cannot even be heard over the existing noise. “In a world which is actually succumbing to chaos, artificial chaos is more calming than shocking,” he claims.\(^{16}\)

Having painted these two stylistic approaches as totally untenable for the future of European urban design, Lampugnani predictably proposes the Modernism of the Weimar era as a starting point for a new, more appropriate style: “A return to the Modern offers a way, at least, out of the unbearable alternatives between post-modernism and Deconstructivism, between populist wish fulfillment and arrogant ‘epatez le bourgeois,’ between the fuddy-duddy and the


\(^{15}\) “Architektur bedeutet in erster Linie das Schaffen von geschützten Räumen, und um solche Räume zu konstruieren, empfiehlt es sich aus ganz simpfen (und im übrigen unverrückbaren) statischen Gründen, Wände und Stützen sekrrecht zu stellen. Stellt man sie schräg, neigen sie dazu, das zu tun, was si suggerieren, nämlich zusammenzustürzen.” Ibid.

\(^{16}\) “Hinzu kam, daß ihr philosophischer und ästhetischer Anspruch, das Zusammenbrechen und Zerfließen zur Darstellung zu bringen, im Wildwuchs unserer Städte zunichte gemacht wurde. … In einer Welt, die tatsächlich im Chaos untergeht, wirkt artifizielles Chaos eher beruhigend als schockierend.” Ibid., 22–23.
cabinet of horrors. It is the way of neutrality.” Echoing Stimmann and Kleihues, Lampugnani points to pre-war Modernism as the ideal example of good design and construction: “The mass housing projects of the Weimar Republic tried for standardization and rationalization, but still put much stock in aesthetics and handicraft.” But there is danger in this functional Modernist strand of architecture as well, he thinks: the heritage of rational forms and technologically advanced materials of the Weimar Modernists, as expressed today, for example, in the work of contemporary architects like Norman Foster or Jean Nouvel (both of whom had just received highly prominent commissions in Berlin) are, in Lampugnani’s mind, still inadequate to address the needs of society. With their glass facades and high-tech detailing, they are too fleeting, too aesthetically ephemeral. In what almost appears as a response to the observations of such early theorists of modernity as Georg Simmel, who noted the barrage of images and sensations confronting the modern urban dweller, Lampugnani avers that architecture must offer a sense of permanence and tranquility to the viewer:

If one can’t erase a building from the screen as soon as one gets tired of it, then a fresh quality must be sought which does not repeat the tired but also not the simply fashionable. That can only be an aesthetics of simplicity, clarity, and peacefulness. An aesthetic of order, into whose emptiness every individual can project his or her own dreams.

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17 “Immerhin weist die Rückbesinnung auf die Moderne einen Weg aus der unerträglichen Alternative zwischen Postmoderne und Dekonstruktivismus, zwischen populistischer Bedürfniserfüllung und arrogantem ‘épatez le bourgeois,’ zwischen Betulichkeit und Horrorkabinett. Est ist der Weg der Neutralität.” Ibid., 23.


In order to do this, Lampugnani suggests, architecture must provide the “masses” with surroundings that are “comprehensible”: architectural aesthetics grounded in “tradition,” so that they can be easily digested. “That which seamlessly develops out of tradition can also be explained by it. Everyone can ‘read’ an old building, just as everyone understands an old painting: in both there is a naturalized motif that the author individually varies.” He sees this comprehensibility as fulfilling architecture’s “public responsibility” of creating an architecture “appropriate” to its “uninitiated,” everyday audience.21

Thus far, Lampugnani may be read as promoting a potentially nostalgic – or populist – neo-historicism: architecture, he seems to be arguing, must look back to the glory days of pre-war Modernism, but it must also allude to the longer historical traditions of German city-building, becoming recognizably ordinary so that it can soothe today’s harried urban dwellers. But then Lampugnani dares to go further than either Kleihues or Stimmann, to state outright what they have carefully avoided:

The Nazi period, which, of course, in public representational buildings showed a preference for wooden, megalomaniacal classicism … otherwise brought forth an excellently solid and detailed construction. This tradition broke off abruptly in 1945. Along with the Nazi dictatorship, the architecture that had represented it was rejected across the board, and unfortunately also traditional solidity.22

To be clear, Lampugnani is not arguing here for a direct rehabilitation of Nazi aesthetics, but for a lifting of the tacit ban on the neo-classical style of stone building that began in the early twentieth century and eventually became one strand of the monumental classicism that the regime preferred. Lampugnani feels this is unfair:

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21 “Was sich bruchlos aus der Tradition entwickelt, läßt sich auch durch sie erklären. Ein altes Haus ‘liest’ jeder, wie auch jeder ein altes Gemälde versteht: Dort wie hier gibt es ein eingebürgertes Motiv, das der Autor individuell variiert.” Ibid.

22 “… die Architektur in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus, die zwar in den öffentlichen Repräsentationsbauten einem hölzernen, megalomanen Klassizismus huldigte, aber sonst ausgesprochen solide detaillierte Bauten hervorbrachte. Diese Tradition riß 1945 abrupt ab.” Ibid., 143.
The “Nazi”-verdict is still at work today. Whoever builds with older materials like natural stone or wood is seen as reactionary. If he builds something solid and well detailed out of it, he is almost totalitarian. And if the outlines are clearly geometric and the façade uniformly and rigidly distributed, it’s not long before he is denounced as a fascist. On the other hand, anyone can afford to bring together the most diagonal facades into which damage is pre-programmed; if it looks picturesque and cheerful, then it is also democratic and acceptable. Perhaps this is also the nemesis of German architecture: as punishment for the terror that it represented and beautified in the thirties and forties, it is refused the whole tradition.  

What Lampugnani is trying to argue is that architecture itself is essentially without moral or ethical values, i.e. he attempts to employ the rationalist, Adornian argument for aesthetic autonomy (discussed in Chapter 1) in order to justify the use of the same forms as employed in Nazi architecture, stripping them of their negative connotations. However, he immediately commits a logical fallacy, for it becomes apparent that he actually believes strongly in architecture’s ability to signify and to influence human life on multiple levels; in fact, he sees architectural solutions as a necessary part of tackling society’s current ills. He thus very clearly does not buy his own argument that architecture is autonomous or without implicit values; on the contrary, contemporary architecture’s current stylistic tendencies are, in his opinion, failed “attempts to deal with a world that is running off its rails.” Through building a more homogenous architecture, Lampugnani promises “social cohesiveness.”  

“With this,” Hertweck rightly observes, “architecture – specifically, architectural form – is accorded not just a cultural,
but a highly social, even ‘socio-therapeutic,’ role.” 25 Therefore his proposed return to an architecture of solidity – even by his own measures – cannot rightfully be seen apart from its historical connections to fascism. In this framework, as Hertweck notes, Lampugnani’s position essentially constitutes the explicit architectural equivalent to the rhetoric of conservatives like Ernst Nolte during the Historikerstreit, who argued for the normalization of the nation and its violent history, claiming that Germany had done enough penance for its crimes and did not need to do anything further. 26 Whereas Stimmann, as shown in Chapter 3, had only alluded to such a logic, Lampugnani put it directly into print.

**Daniel Libeskind and the Defense of Deconstructivism**

Arguably the most vehement and internationally noted reaction to Lampugnani’s essay came from the Polish-American architect Daniel Libeskind. With construction already underway on his highly-acclaimed design for the Jewish Museum on the southeastern edge of Mitte, Libeskind was a formidable opponent: he represented – not only in the content of his critique, but in his identity as the Jewish architect of the institution that most prominently embodied the memory of Holocaust in Berlin at the time – the international expectation that Germany, as a Western, democratic nation, would continue to publicly do penance for the crimes of the Nazis. 27 In an essay titled “The Banality of Order,” which appeared in German in the architectural journal Arch+ in March of 1994 and was simultaneously published in English in *ANY: Architecture New*

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26 Ibid., 81.

27 The museum design was part of the IBA and had been approved for construction before the fall of the Wall. Paul Jaskot has argued that the building became, in the post-Wall period, a site of discursive negotiation of neo-Nazi sentiments and debates over national identity in reunited Germany. See Chapter 4 of Paul B. Jaskot, *The Nazi Perpetrator Postwar German Art and the Politics of the Right* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).
York,\textsuperscript{28} Libeskind recalls a recent architecture conference in Magdeburg where Lampugnani gave a lecture on the future of architecture:

His proposed set of rules called for a rigid and reactionary order that employs a seductive simplicity in attacking complex problems; in short, he demanded iron discipline during a time of transition. Lampugnani instructed the delegates on the various points of the new order: no new ideas were needed in architecture or urban planning, no dreams, no thoughts, no vision – only silence and conformity. As I sat there amidst the architects and planners of the former DDR, listening with an increasing sense of dismay, I felt a sense of outrage that what was being advocated was a reactionary call to order: be silent, don’t dream, relinquish vision, forget individual creativity, follow the rules of the game if you want to build.\textsuperscript{29}

Libeskind sees in Lampugnani not only “reactionary tendencies” that threaten Berlin’s and Germany’s potential to remain fertile ground for the future of architectural practice as a whole, but, on a more abstract level, “a dangerous and authoritarian political sensibility” in the author’s manifesto.\textsuperscript{30} Libeskind refuses to see design and politics as separate things, as Lampugnani attempts to do; instead, he is committed to the idea that architectural aesthetics are inextricable from the regimes they represent.

Like Stimmann, Kleihues, and Lampugnani, Libeskind, too, tries to claim the lineage of Weimar Modernism for his side of the argument:

The call for “solidity” and the praise that Lampugnani bestows on the architecture from the Third Reich is extremely frightening. It is impossible to separate Nazi ideology from that which it has produced. … German fascist ideology built solidity into its political policy in opposition to the openness and transparency of the short-lived Weimar Republic.\textsuperscript{31}


\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 49. Libeskind also relies on a quote from Behrens to prove one of his points. See Libeskind, “Die Banalität der Ordnung,” 39.
Then, conflating Lampugnani’s position with Berlin city planning policy under Stimmann, Libeskind goes on to paint Critical Reconstruction as another politically authoritarian and reactionary method that is, in essence, proto-fascist:

The current criteria of the Senatsbau [sic] administration of Berlin are not just basic guidelines to guarantee responsible future development but are authoritarian and repressive edicts. … In using stone façades, gable roofs, punched-in windows, invariable grids, unrelenting symmetries, and closed blocks, the buildings and streets conform to one bureaucrat’s idea of the good. … In certain circles in Berlin and elsewhere there is an ugly atmosphere that resembles the pathology of a time in which the notion of “degenerate art” was born. It is an atmosphere of defamation, in which those kinds of architecture and planning that do not fall into a prescribed parameter are excluded from consideration by not being invited to compete or to build. Countless architects who refuse to toe the line have been blacklisted and removed from participation.32

Having just lost both the Potsdamer Platz and the Alexanderplatz competitions, Libeskind surely counted himself as one of these “blacklisted” architects. His implication that Lampugnani’s ideas indicated a preference for fascist aesthetics, and that Stimmann was embodying these very aesthetics in his politics, was provocative and added fuel to the international suspicion that Lampugnani’s and Stimmann’s ideas were, at their root, on the wrong side of history.

Defending Lampugnani: Fritz Neumeyer and the Cooption of Modernist History

Libeskind’s sentiments were supported by other German critics, notably Rudolf Stegers,33 but they were also strongly rebuffed by, among others, architectural historian and critic Fritz Neumeyer, who had been another frequent contributor to exhibition catalogs and other publications on IBA-era Critical Reconstruction with Kleihues and Lampugnani. In October of 1992 he, too, had already published a long editorial in Berlin’s daily Tagesspiegel newspaper, calling for a style that looked to “the conventional, the typical, the Berlinisch.” Like Stimmann, Neumeyer expressed concern that Berlin would become a “gigantic exhibition vitrine” for the

“demonstration of all kinds of architectural styles.”  

Then, in a piece written for (but not published in) *Der Spiegel* in May of 1994 (it subsequently appeared in the Spanish journal *A&V*), Neumeyer neatly shores up Lampugnani’s side of the argument. Titled “The Architecture Debates in Berlin: Backslide into the Cold War,” he argues that Critical Reconstruction is just a “red flag for the bull of architectural criticism,” a chimera that attracts aggressive behavior but that obscures the real stakes of rebuilding the city.

Behind the attempt [by Stimmann] to head off the uncontrolled growth of the city and the self-staging desires of architects and investors, people detect artistic dictatorship and other dark intrigues. The politicization of the aesthetic and the aestheticization of politics have in the meantime come so far that certain architectural styles are alleged to have specific political positions and politics is alleged to be shutting out particular architectural positions.

Neumeyer thinks that these accusations are unfair and overblown, and he blames the media for unfairly playing the Nazi card. In fact, Neumeyer contends, if Lampugnani were not seen as a “foreigner” in Germany (since he is a native Italian), then Berlin’s scandal-hungry daily press “would have quite surely labeled him a ‘skinhead in a tie.’” Thus, instead of delving seriously into matters of architecture and city planning, the conversation about Berlin has, in Neumeyer’s mind, been reduced to two overly simplistic and diametrically opposed ideologies:

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38 “Man darf nur froh sein, daß es ein ‘Ausländer,’ ein Gastarbeiter war, der für die Qualität der Tradition und die Tradition der Qualität das Wort erhoben hat. Ansonsten hätte Lampugnani, der gebürtige Italiener, sich von der Berliner Tagespresse mit ziemlicher Sicherheit den Vorwurf eines ‘Skinhead mit Krawatte’ eingehandelt.” Ibid., 63–64. Neumeyer mentions that the leftist taz [sic] newspaper recently used this label against Wolf Jobst Siedler when he dared to critique a design for a new, mirror-shaped Holocaust memorial.
Berlin is again on the front lines and has, at least in terms of the Architecture Debates, a new Cold War. … The culture of discussion in the field of architecture, and with this the architectural culture itself, falls by the wayside. If one believes the mean-spirited labels with which the parties oppose themselves using the so-called “Berliner Schnauze” [Berlin’s cheeky local dialect], the “Block Wardens” [Blockwarte] and the “Chaotics” [Chaoten] stand on either side of this new Wall. The one party does not want to give up the grid of urban blocks, ground plans and elevations that constitute European city building, and thus they promote a reorientation to traditional urban conventions. The other side idealizes the overscaled, the fragmentary, the colorful mix of contradictory elements that characterizes contemporary world metropolises, and they see in this their planning model for the city of the future.39

Instead of proposing a way of tearing down this new “Berlin Wall,” however, Neumeyer goes on to side with the traditionalists.40 His first argument for this viewpoint is socio-political: the city, after all, “needs rules, just as a society needs a constitution.”41 Secondly, echoing Lampugnani, he denies that particular forms must always be associated with particular histories. He laments that German architectural discourse and criticism is locked into an anachronistic, Cold War way of thinking that is committed to the “towers in the park” model as a synonym for democratic design, whereas “the innocent medium of stone is again made into a ‘thousand-year material’” that supposedly comes with “a spirit to match.”42 After all, he argues, Mussolini also used “transparency” – one of West Germany’s treasured symbols of democratic architecture – as an instrument of his own fascist politics.43 Thus no forms or materials are, in themselves, good or


40 Perhaps his implication is that New Simplicity’s critics are to be equated with East Germany and must undergo a similar “friendly takeover,” though one hesitates to take his metaphor too far.


42 Ibid., 65.

43 Ibid.
evil. As he continues with this line of reasoning, Neumeyer navigates the argument much better than Lampugnani does. Instead of denying architecture’s ability to carry social meaning, and then hypocritically reifying that very ability, Neumeyer avoids this subject altogether, and simply asks readers to distinguish between the rehabilitation of fascist forms and the revival of longer-standing traditions: “in architecture a return to roots and a revival of traditions does not automatically mean a slipping back into conservatism. Renaissance is not reactionary.”44 Thus, he argues, the use of neo-classical formal language by the Nazis was one small divergence from a much longer and larger stream of stylistic development, into which German architects should now feel free to reinsert themselves.45

At this point, like the other combatants in the debates, Neumeyer invokes specific examples of pre-war Modernism to prove his case, but again, in contrast to Lampugnani, he is able to avoid empty statements about whether or not the German Modernist masters constitute the architectural forefathers of one or another current architectural style. Instead, he turns to the popular continental leftist critique of capitalism in order to deny the suitability of Deconstructivist or High-Tech forms for the new Berlin:

It is one of the ironies of architectural history that the utopian glass architecture of Frühlicht [Bruno Taut’s Expressionist periodical] has found its expression today in, of all things, the capitalist cathedrals of commerce. In the arena of the world of sales, what counts is stimulating diversity and that which temptingly glitters. The traditional city cannot keep up with the scales and sensations of the media age. The city thus reaches a new level, as consumer spectacle simulates the urban landscape, in disembodied, high-tech architectural flickerings, with glazed-over plazas and shopping malls whose spatial wonders are mostly only accessible

44 Ibid., 64.
45 As noted in a footnote in Chapter 3 (find in final draft), the pre-war Modernist, mid-century Modernist, and neo-classical styles are not at all clearly differentiated in reality; many German architects practiced all three at one time or another. I have chosen not to complicate my analysis with a look at how these various schools are deeply imbricated in one another, though the discussion of the Reichsbank below alludes to some of this.
during business hours. Those who are against such modernity find themselves immediately denounced as conservative philistines.46

Essentially, then, according to Neumeyer, the glass and steel experiments of Libeskind or Richard Rogers are not just unacceptable because they break with Berlin tradition; they represent a dangerous “selling-out” to capitalism that goes against German intellectuals’ commitment to art as being separate from commerce, as well as the traditional model of the “European city” as providing publicly accessible space amidst private development. Thus, Neumeyer implies (but, wisely, avoids stating explicitly), the only reasonable way forward for Berlin is a return to the architectural traditions of the historical city itself, regardless of whether they were subsequently coopted by the Nazis; as the example of Italy shows, any architecture can be turned towards political ends, so there is no reason to believe the fear-mongering of those who think stone is in essence a fascist material.

**Hans Kollhoff and the Case for “Urban” Stone Architecture**

If Lampugnani and Neumeyer were the most visible of the New Simplicity’s (and thus also Critical Reconstruction’s) theoretical supporters in the Architecture Debates, Hans Kollhoff is undoubtedly the most prominent architect representing this point of view. Although Josef Paul Kleihues was responsible for the highest number of projects underway in Berlin at the time, and sat on the jury for almost every important new contract, Kollhoff’s designs were in more conspicuous locations (Potsdamer Platz and Alexanderplatz), and his solemn, restrained aesthetic embodies Lampugnani’s tenets in a much more literal way than Kleihues’s continued adherence

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to his more eclectic Poetic Rationalism. Kollhoff’s numerous written contributions to the Architecture Debates worked in tandem with his designs to espouse a return to what he termed “urban” European commercial building – which should be clad, Kollhoff argued, in the traditional, “solid” materials of stone or brick. Kollhoff’s position as a proponent of stone architecture in Berlin became one of the cornerstones of Critical Reconstruction’s conservatism.

The restrictive aesthetics of Kollhoff’s post-Wall designs for Berlin took many critics by surprise. He had begun his architecture studies in 1968 at the University of Karlsruhe, spent a year in the atelier of Hans Hollein in Vienna, and in 1975 received a scholarship to pursue post-graduate studies at Cornell. While there, he became a close colleague of Rem Koolhaas, studying and working under Oswald Matthias Ungers. Kollhoff returned to West Berlin to found his own architectural practice in 1978 (running it with partner Helga Timmerman since 1984), and the firm has been very successful, especially in Germany, Switzerland, and the Netherlands. He has also held numerous prestigious academic positions, including one at the ETH Zürich. Kollhoff’s first major project in Berlin was a group of residential buildings on Luisenplatz (1982-1987) in the West Berlin neighborhood of Charlottenburg. Designed as infill on three irregularly-shaped plots, the design is an overt homage to the Modernist masters: taking the form of two Zeilenbau blocks (one bisected by an existing building), they sport massive glass curtain walls that echo the gridded form of Walter Gropius’s iconic Bauhaus façade and Alvar Aalto’s curving block for the dorms at MIT; additionally, they are topped by sweeping, wing-shaped attic rooflines that visually quote Le Corbusier’s expressionist turn in his post-war work at

47 Though Timmerman partnered with him on all of his Berlin designs, she is rarely mentioned in the literature. This exclusion, I argue, points to a larger problem of women’s positions in the architectural profession and discourse.


Chandigarh and elsewhere (figs. 4.1-4.5). These references are subtly blended with elements of the typical Charlottenburg tenement in their brick cladding and semi-enclosed balconies.

In his early work in Berlin, therefore, Kollhoff demonstrated himself to be open to both the material of glass and to a certain amount of formal experimentation that drew on post-war expressionist trends. His later design for the “Piraeus” housing complex, part of the KNSM Island development in Amsterdam (1989-1995), is also startlingly abstract and playful, comprising two large sloping, intersecting forms and using the geometry of the exterior fire escape and balconies as playful adornments (figs. 4.6-4.9). His first submission for the Potsdamer Platz master planning competition in 1991 was based in the urban archipelago model: a series of loosely grouped skyscrapers set in a large, open, landscape of greenery (figs. 4.10-4.12). However, following the controversies over the site, which resulted in his colleague Koolhaas being effectively banned from building in Berlin, Kollhoff revised his approach to architecture for the new capital city: as architectural historian Andreas Ruby observes, Kollhoff “learned his lesson more thoroughly than any other Berlin architect,” resubmitting (after his initial rejection) a design for the square that conformed to the “neo-Prussian” aesthetic of what Lampugnani would term “New Simplicity.”


51 I don’t agree with Ruby entirely. Kollhoff’s Alexanderplatz proposal clearly draws on his earlier work for Berlin Morgen and the Potsdamer Platz competition. As discussed further below, Kollhoff’s understanding of the “urban” is a little different from Kleihues’s or Lampugnani’s understanding of the Berlin block, though he does introduce a much clearer “Berlin block” form as the basis for the skyscrapers at Alexanderplatz, and emphasizes more of the stone cladding.
At the time of the Architecture Debates in 1993-4, Kollhoff was in the midst of several notable projects, including the design for Potsdamer Platz, his contribution to the Hofgarten am Gendarmenmarkt development planned by Kleihues, discussed in Chapter 3, and a submission to the planning competition for the former Reichsbank (discussed below). Most importantly, he had just competed directly with Libeskind in the master plan competition for Alexanderplatz. There is some irony in the fact that the two had already literally crossed paths at Libeskind’s Jewish Museum, where Kollhoff had, during the IBA, done the master planning for an adjacent park and residential area (Wohnpark am Berlin Museum, 1984-1986) (fig. 4.16). 52 In the open green space behind the museum, the simple tubular form of a long, gridded steel arbor surrounded by sparse plantings and concrete walls blends seamlessly with the striking, fragmented Deconstructivism of Libeskind’s design. By the time of the Alexanderplatz competition in 1993, however, the gaping disparity between their two urban visions was starkly apparent. A close look at their designs for this area provides an illuminating subtext to the opposing positions of many of the Architecture Debates’ participants.

As the easternmost square in Mitte and a major focus of East Berlin government planning and construction in the 1960s, Alexanderplatz was one of the first areas of the city to be slated for redevelopment after reunification. Located at the crossroads of several commercial thoroughfares that met just outside the eastern medieval city gate, it had emerged organically as a market square early on in Berlin's history, and by the 1920s had grown into the bustling commercial and transportation hub featured in Alfred Döblin’s famous novel. A 1929 plan

intended to resolve traffic problems was never fully realized, but did result in the construction of two large buildings designed by Peter Behrens on the western side of the square (fig. 4.17-4.19). Following the destruction wrought by World War II, which spared the Behrens buildings but ruined the gigantic Tietz Department Store that filled the majority of the surrounding blocks (figs. 4.20-4.21), the East Berlin government undertook an extensive and highly technical reworking of the area, creating a truly massive public space that could serve as both a recreation and demonstration venue. (The “emptiness” of this vast, windswept area was later the object of vehement critique by post-Wall planners and architects.) New construction on the square, done throughout the 1950s and 1960s, incorporated several office towers, a high-rise hotel, restaurants, and the Warenhaus Centrum (Centrum Emporium), the largest department store in East Germany. In 1993, the Berlin Department of Urban Development and Environment announced a master plan competition for the entire site. Though this was not Stimmann’s department (he worked for the Department of Construction and Housing), he did serve on the jury. After short deliberations and one revisionary round, it awarded first prize to Kollhoff, with Libeskind as the runner-up.

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54 Many of the large buildings around Alexanderplatz had been the headquarters for GDR Kombinate and thus fell to the Treuhandanstalt (THA, discussed in Chapter 2) after reunification. Under pressure from investors, who were especially interested in the property because of its potential for high-rise development, Hassemer wrested control of the site from the city authorities and forced the staging of a competition. Over the intervening years, many of the plots have been sold off; the American Hines is now the only original company still working on developing the site. See Elizabeth A Strom, Building the New Berlin: The Politics of Urban Development in Germany’s Capital City (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2001), 209–210.

55 The jury also included, among others, the architects Jürgen Sawade and Albert Speer (Jr.), Hans Stimmann, Dorothee Dubrau (the head of urban planning for the district of Mitte) and Hassemer. See Kristin Feireiss, ed., Alexanderplatz: Städtebaulicher Ideenwettbewerb, trans. Michael Robinson and Hans H. Harbort (Berlin: Ernst & Sohn, 1994), 244.

56 For a detailed account of the planning process, media coverage, and public involvement, see Lenhart, Berliner Metropoly.
The stated aim of Kollhoff’s design was “to stop the city from drifting apart” by restoring the “block-like structure of the city” (figs. 4.22-4.26). The large open space at the heart of the square was to remain a pedestrian area, surrounded by cafes and restaurants that would give it a lively character during day and night. This open space was to be embellished by a large glazed circular area (replacing the extant, East German fountain) that could double as an “illuminated fountain with a program of waterworks” at night. Infill on the surrounding blocks, responding to Behrens’s two buildings in their height, massing, and the horizontal emphasis of their façades, were to provide a visual and physical base for thirteen soaring high-rises that would spring from the outer street-edges of the development. Some infill on the western side of the S-Bahn tracks, around the iconic Fernsehturm (TV tower) and extensive new construction on the large block to the east (between Alexanderstrasse and Mollstrasse) would restore a dense, gridded structure to the neighborhood. In the perspective renderings, the buildings’ facades are clearly stone, with filigreed detailing, taking some of their visual cues from the art deco skyscrapers of New York City, but also echoing the grandiose Stalinist “wedding-cake” neo-classicism of the nearby Stalinallee, which had been constructed along Socialist Realist lines in the 1950s. Kollhoff also added what he called a “sentimental proposal” to reconstruct the statue of the mythical female figure of Berolina that once stood on the square and is mentioned in Döblin’s novel: the firm’s

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58 Ibid.

description of the design includes a quote from the book’s main character, who is watching the statue being “melted down to make medals.”\textsuperscript{60} This poetic detail suggests that Kollhoff saw his design at least partly as a redemptive gesture that would restore Berlin to its former commercial glory while transcending – rather than reifying – Germany’s militaristic history.

Clearly Kollhoff’s plan did not fully conform to the typical medium-rise “Berlin block” type that Kleihues and Stimmann proposed as infill for the rest of Mitte; along with Kleihues, Kollhoff had long been a supporter of the judicious use of high-rises in Berlin’s rebuilding, envisioning Potsdamer Platz and Alexanderplatz as two skyscraper-adorned gateways into the capital’s commercial center.\textsuperscript{61} Still, in their detailing, distribution, and massing, as well as in the largely orthogonal ground plan, the structures depicted in Kollhoff’s design conform to the stone-clad solemnity of the New Simplicity and Critical Reconstruction. Libeskind’s design, by contrast, could not be more opposed to these approaches in both its aesthetics and its layout. Loaded with a preponderance of poetic and historical references, with names like “The Book,” “The Window,” “The Compass,” “Dostoyevsky Passage,” “Tatlin Elevator,” and “Kafka Lane,” and with visual references to such icons of Constructivist experimentation as the Vesnin Brothers’ Pravda Building, Libeskind’s plan proposed the creation of a new and “tightly compressed center with its own history and identity,” which nonetheless preserved much more of the existing fabric of the East German square than Kollhoff’s design did (figs. 4.27-4.30).\textsuperscript{62} Like Kollhoff, Libeskind incorporated several high-rises, but these were to be clustered to the east rather than evenly encompassing the square. In the perspective views, it becomes clear that Libeskind envisioned a set of highly experimental forms that splinter, fragment, and contradict

\textsuperscript{60} Kollhoff Architects, “Explanatory Report 1,” 85.
\textsuperscript{61} Lampugnani, Berlin morgen, 130–131.
one another. This approach sought to embody the fact that Alexanderplatz “was and still is a place of hit and miss, of uncertain connections, of encounters which fail to take place between east and west, and of other such encounters which are full of promise, a place of successes and failures; and who will have the last laugh may remain an open question.” While the jury appreciated his will to preserve many of the existing structures on the site, they found his “electrical linking of shapes” to constitute “a kind of Disneyland.” They called his reconstruction of the Pravda building “incomprehensible” and, foreshadowing Lampugnani’s manifesto (he was, in fact, on the jury), they stated that “this chaos, which simulates the chaos that is the distinguishing feature of the contemporary city today, is not a suitable basis for a building plan which was intended to place limits on the chaos.” While conceding that the plan “is a mine of ideas which might take shape as individual buildings,” the only redeeming quality the jury seemed to agree upon regarding Libeskind’s design was the fact that the Behrens buildings were left intact. These two much-discussed master plans for the square came to be seen by many critics as illustrations of the opposing sides of the Architecture Debates: Gerwin Zohlen states that Kollhoff and Libeskind danced a “skillful pas de deux” through the debates, representing “the good old conflict of the old guard against the new, the avant-gardistes against the realists.” But their opposition represents much more than a simple competition between the regressive and the experimental: their aesthetic “Cold War” (to use Neumeyer’s term) reflects, ultimately, two fundamentally different visions for the future of Berlin that, in 1993, seemed like two disparate

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63 Ibid.
64 Ibid., 115.
possible paths to the reconstruction of the entire rest of the city. The critic Rudolf Stegers stated, in the national weekly newspaper *Die Zeit*, that Kollhoff’s design seemed “set on liquidation, simplicity, homogeneity, totality,” whereas “Libeskind looks for transformation, complexity, heterogeneity, plurality. … The models are easily imagined as models of a repressive society with Kollhoff, a liberal society with Libeskind.”

Though Libeskind’s symbolically-overburdened design may appear hackneyed or heavy-handed today, at the time it represented the expectations of the global community that Berlin would not only symbolize a futuristic, visionary metropolis, but that it would do so by acknowledging and working through its traumatic past. Kollhoff’s design, on the other hand, attempts to quietly and seamlessly insert Berlin into the ranks of global, capitalist metropolises by mixing high-rise commercial typologies with the European tradition of the medium-rise block form clad in stone – appearing as if, in a way, the years between 1945 and 1989 had never occurred at all.

**Kollhoff’s Argument for Urban Stone Architecture**

Kollhoff’s “about-face” in Berlin was not only aesthetic but rhetorical. Zohlen contends that it was not his buildings but his words that made him notorious, and that he used the platform of the Berlin Architecture Debates to his own advantage, turning into an effective “coup d’état.”

Kollhoff’s written contributions to the debates actually began before Lampugnani’s opening manifesto, in an essay first published in Berlin’s newspaper *Der Tagesspiegel* in October of 1992, reprinted in the journal *Centrum’s* 1993 yearbook. (Also included in this

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67 Zohlen thinks that Stimmann actually fell into line with Kollhoff, rather than the other way around, after the Potsdamer Platz debates. See Zohlen, “Die Gesellschaft der Häuser,” 93.

collection were essays by Kleihues, Libeskind, and Neumeyer. In the essay, titled “Boredom and Public Opinion Making,” Kollhoff begins by lamenting the disregard shown for historical buildings today, arguing for the importance of craftsmanship and quality: traditions of Berlin’s past that, he claims, arose from care, economy, and attention to detail. These characteristics are especially present, he thinks, in buildings that use stone: “Stone as a building material was, in Berlin, something special. … Accordingly, they worked it sparingly and carefully.” But, he complains, “functional brutalism after the war left the dictum of constructive honesty … on the junkpile, instead choosing an ‘honest’ but cold collection of apparatuses off of which our emotional needs unhappily slide.” As in Lampugnani’s manifesto, what seems at first to simply be a plea for “quality” or “good craftsmanship” in architecture becomes instead an argument about the connections between architectural form and the state of contemporary society. And again like Lampugnani, Kollhoff draws on a Simmel-esque critique of the sensory excesses of modern urban life in order to argue that today’s architecture is too fleeting and impermanent:

Why is it that we don’t notice these drawbacks [of lack of craftsmanship]? Do we go through the city with TV-vision, where the limited resolution blurs the details, or because we’re so hungry for the next image that we find the present uninteresting? Or do we already expect the devaluation of the environment that we produce and consume, so that we have become accustomed not to linger, because the next image promises hope? We have become “channel-surfers” in the treatment of our city. … Everything is exchangeable, everything is equally important, everything is just a matter of taste and one’s mood at the moment. Are there even still categories besides “awesome” and “awful”?

69 It also included an essay by Wolf Jobst Siedler. The table of contents is available online at http://www.zvah.com/Centrum-Jahrbuch-Architektur-Stadt-1993-Peter/231286248/buch.


72 “Woran liegt es, daß uns diese Derbheiten nicht mehr auffallen? Gehen wir durch die Stadt mit einem Fernsehblick, bei dem geringe Auflösung das Detail verschluckt oder bei dem die Gier nach dem nächsten Bild das gegenwärtige uninteressant werden läßt? Oder ahnen wir schon die Minderwertigkeit der von uns tagtäglich produzierten und konsumierten Umwelt, so daß wir uns angewöhnt haben, nicht zu verweilen, weil das nächste Bild die Verheißung verspricht? Wir sind ‘Zapper’ geworden im
Kollhoff sees the media as complicit in this populist devaluation of architecture: “architecture has become commonplace. Everyone is an architect. The newspapers constantly steamroll what architecture is. How can you sell papers when you’re not touting the latest fad?” Instead of this parade of fashionable styles, Kollhoff avers, “We should focus on our great and, in its simplicity and solidity, appropriate building tradition,” in order to find “a lineage” or “tendency.”

This tendency, for Kollhoff, can be summarized in the term “urban”: his shorthand for the idea that the “European city” requires a return to a particular (i.e. “urban”) typology – that of the pre-war commercial block – and that, consequently, stone, in its “solidity,” is the only appropriate building material for this task.

The architecture of the city is one of stone. The permanence which Aldo Rossi talks of does not manifest itself in glass and aluminum. If we think urban architecture should do more than simply please the eye but should also transcend its time, Gottfried Semper’s reservations about iron architecture have evidently not lost their relevance. It is in stone that our collective memory is concentrated.

Taken alone, this call for a return to particular typologies and materials could appear as a mere personal preference or a nostalgic wish to return to the forms of the nineteenth century, but Kollhoff chooses instead to align himself with Lampugnani in the problematic defense of Nazi architecture as a set of forms that can be divorced from their historical context. The 1993 Centrum yearbook also included an interview with Kollhoff by the far-left author and architect

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73 “Gleichzeitig ist Architektur ein Allgemeinplatz geworden. Jeder ist Architekt. Die Zeitschriften walzen kontinuierlich platt, was Architektur sei. Wie läßt sich das Blatt verkaufen, wenn nicht jeweils der neueste Schrei ausposaunt wird?” Ibid., 91.

74 „Wir sollten uns auf unsere große und in ihre Einfachheit und Solidität durchaus zeitgemäße Bautradition besinnen und zu einer Linie, einer Tendenz finden …” Ibid., 92.

75 Hans Kollhoff, “Architecture Today: Hans Kollhoff,” Domus, no. 756 (January 1994): 78. It is worth noting the absence of brick from these discussions; brick (“Klinker”) was considered a traditionally “native” Berlin material during the nineteenth century, and also figured heavily in Rossi’s work.
Peter Neitzke, in which Kollhoff defends Lampugnani’s exhibition featuring Nazi architects at the German Architecture Museum:

Insofar as architecture is an art … I can only judge it outside of its political context. Your question implicates the old misunderstanding of the ideological worth of an artistic endeavor. … For me it is ever clearer that one must differentiate between the political positioning of the architects of the Third Reich, or the politically affirmative power of their architecture, and an intra-architectural engagement which was a part of architectural history before the Third Reich, which was repressed after the war for obvious reasons, and which is being taken up today in thoughtful ways.76

Paving the way for Neumeyer and Lampugnani’s arguments during the Architecture Debates, Kollhoff equates the “towers in the park” Modernism of the post-war era with the misplaced desire for a “democratic” architecture that he sees devolving into to the chaotic and empty – and thus potentially harmful – forms of Deconstructivism.77 While Kollhoff insists that he does not support the revival of a Nazi architect like Paul Schmitthenner, who touted the vision of a return to the medieval village in service of a “Blut und Boden” ideology, he does think it is important to link back to German pre-World War II architectural traditions. Like every other author in the debates, Kollhoff then invokes the likes of Behrens, Hans Poelzig, and Alfred Messel, asserting that they belonged to “a tradition that was thinking about the metropolis and urban architecture.”78 But this supposedly innocent return to the Modernist greats is, incomprehensibly in Kollhoff eyes, met with suspicion by critics and the general public:

Every approach that is conscious of tradition, which relates itself to metropolitan architecture, is slapped with a verdict and disqualified as potentially


77 Ibid., 50.

78 Ibid.
undemocratic. A solid building which arises out of the memory of an urban commercial typology and feels itself bound to the conventions of urban life, almost inevitably invites accusations of fascism. Lampugnani’s exhibition therefore appears necessary to me. Indeed, it should have happened earlier, for post-war architecture in Germany is in general a grotesque feat of repression.79

Heinrich Klotz and Accusations of Fascism

Kollhoff’s statements fed into those by Lampugnani and Neumeyer, and in July 1994, directly after Libeskind’s polemic appeared in Arch+, the same journal released an entire issue dedicated to the debates over Berlin’s reconstruction, titled “From Berlin to New Teutonia.” As the moniker implies, the authors included were all critics of Kollhoff, Lampugnani, and their fellow promoters of the New Simplicity.80 The only English text included in this volume was a translation of an interview with Heinrich Klotz, former director of the German Architecture Museum and Lampugnani’s direct predecessor, who had throughout the 1980s advocated for the embrace of a stylistically diverse post-modernism.

The approach espoused by Lampugnani and exemplified clearly by Kollhoff’s designs, Klotz argues in the interview, constitutes “a new rigor which might even imply more echoes of fascist architecture than has even been the case before. For me, this is very disquieting.”81 In Klotz’s eyes, the formal language of New Simplicity “contains an affectation of power (Machtallüre) which we have not known since 1945.”82 Klotz’s argument is very similar to

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80 The issue also featured an article about Behnisch’s new design for the Academy of Arts on Pariser Platz, a critique of the developments at Potsdamer Platz, and features on Kleihues’s Hofgarten am Gendarmenmarkt development as well as Kollhoff’s designs for Alexanderplatz.


82 He and others also sometimes call this style “Prussian Classicism.” Heinrich Klotz, Nikolaus Kuhnert, and Angelika Schnell, “Bloß Nicht Diese Hauptstadt! Heinrich Klotz Im Gespräch Mit ARCH+,” Arch+, no. 122 (June 1994): 23.
Libeskind’s, but with one important difference: whereas Libeskind is suspicious of New Simplicity for its dictatorial politics and its limitations on style, Klotz is more concerned with the rehabilitation of a very particular formal language (i.e. that of “stone” architecture) that, in his mind, can – and, more importantly, should – never be disassociated from the Nazi regime. Just as Habermas and others had argued in the Historikerstreit, Klotz feels that the crimes of the Nazis are such that German history and identity can never be freed from that guilt; rather, Germans must remain continually vigilant with respect to such tendencies, and, while embracing innovation, diversity, and variety, must eschew any return to or revival of those things (including building materials and forms) that were integral to Hitler’s regime.

Klotz states that he is opposed to any ideological or dogmatic approach to architecture: “I don’t like to be too hasty to read political qualities into architecture. Transparency is not always democracy and heavy stone is not the same as fascism.”83 Indeed, he observes, the architectural culture of former West Germany had its own problematic relationship to architectural form and political representation:

The old Federal Republic of Germany … had an ideology of its own, an ideology of lightness, of transparency, of democracy, of open-mindedness. Those were all epithets which had been assigned to the materials and the form in order prove that we wanted to get rid of the representative Third-Reich type of building. … That was okay. [However,] it was not okay that people became dogmatic about it and wanted to forbid everything else. You can’t do that in the name of democracy. … Politics do not mean harmony and renunciation of opposition.84

However, though “architecture is seldom unambiguous in its form,” i.e. Kollhoff and other adherents of the New Simplicity may not be explicitly fascist in their intentions, the “nearest relative” of a recent design by Kollhoff is, Klotz argues, Hitler’s Haus der Deutschen Kunst.85

83 Ibid.
84 Ibid., 87.
85 Ibid., 24. The design he is critiquing is Kollhoff’s idea for an entrance hall at Museum Island, never built.
He also expresses concern over Kollhoff’s designs currently under construction at Potsdamer Platz, for which he served as a jury member: “When I realized he was serious about it, the word ‘fascistic’ came out of my mouth,” he states.86

I was shocked. Kollhoff, an architect I like and who has, in the early years of his career, been responsible for many convincing buildings in the city, buildings one might describe as belonging to a second modernism, a person like him is now turning to tectonics. … In the last analysis that means that power is made visible. … But if the whole city looks like this, if this is the new era, I have less and less reason to travel to Berlin and more and more reason to say: for God’s sake, not this kind of a capital!87

Kollhoff is not Klotz’s only target. Stimmann and Kleihues are also, according to him, guilty of power-mongering in the service of the New Simplicity. With this interview, Klotz adds to the argument, also espoused by Libeskind and shared by Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm (discussed below), that Berlin’s reconstruction is now subject to the rigid dictates and conservative aesthetics of a “cartel” of reactionary planners, theorists, and architects.

Kollhoff published a reply to Klotz the following month in the Frankfurter Rundschau newspaper titled “Fiction or City: Against the Tabooization of an Urban Architecture,” arguing that his designs emphatically did not constitute “a rehabilitation of a conservative Modernism or the lifting of the taboo on Nazi architecture,” but, rather, were a return to the tradition of Weimar Modernism in the form of urban typologies. This kind of urbanism, argues Kollhoff, was wholeheartedly rejected by the Nazis, even as its surface aesthetics were appropriated by them. Kollhoff accuses Klotz of dismissing “urban” architecture wholesale along with Nazi forms: “According to Klotz’s criteria, everyone,” from Max Taut and Behrens to Mies van der Rohe and Poelzig, “is without exception a fascistoid architect. These architects embody nothing less than

86 Klotz, Kuhnert, and Schnell, “For God’s Sake, Not This Kind of a Capital: Heinrich Klotz in Conversation with Arch +,” 87.

87 Ibid.
German urban architecture! If we constrain these with a verdict, if we make taboo this great tradition of modern building,” then, Kollhoff thinks, we continue the destruction of the inner city that began with the bombs of World War II, where voids remain empty and urban life cannot take place.  

Klotz made a rebuttal in the same newspaper a week later, titled “Berlin Blockade: An Answer to Hans Kollhoff,” arguing that, on the contrary, Kollhoff cannot claim to be an heir to Weimar Modernism, since he clads his buildings in stone and creates disciplined façades that, Klotz notes, Kleihues has described as having a “rational clarity and pure simplicity” as well as a “harsh [spröden] character” that is “typical for Berlin and Prussia.” Klotz argues that this is not a question of, as Kollhoff would have it, recreating an urban architectural typology, although he himself is a critic of the enormous size and density of the blocks being sold off and developed in Mitte; instead,  

What throws “Prussian harshness” [Sprödigkeit] into a very particular light is the language of this architecture, its details, which are described as “New Simplicity.” … Whoever Kollhoff’s guarantors of an early Modernism may be, from Mebes to Mies – it not only shows a lack of instinct to decorate the recently rediscovered Berlin block, blown up to the size of a metropolis, with classical details, but to do this with such forms that cannot absolve themselves from historical guilt and misuse. There is one kind of architecture which should be put aside for all time, just as we can no longer use certain terms like “degenerate,” “volkisch,” “Aryan,” etc. in a German context.


90 “Was schließlich die neue ‘preußische Sprödigkeit’ in ein ganz besonderes Licht rückt, ist die Sprache dieser Architektur, sind ihre Details, die als ‘Neue Einfachheit’ bezeichnet werden. … Wer immer Herrn Kollhoffs Garanten einer Frühmoderne sein könnten, von Mebes bis Mies, - es ist eben nicht nur eine Instinktlosigkeit, den soeben wiederentdeckten und zum Großstadtformat aufgeblasenen Berliner Block klassizistisch zu dekorieren, sondern dies in solchen Formen zu tun, die sich
He goes on to, once again, compare Kollhoff’s architecture to the Nazis’ monumental halls; even if Kollhoff says he is looking back to the early Moderns, Klotz says, Nazi architects like Albert Speer and Paul Troost have sullied the language of even Modernist neo-classicism to the point of making it unusable, for this architecture cannot be freed from its “ideological baggage” and therefore simply become useable in an ahistorical manner.\(^9\) The German public, furthermore, is not too stupid to detect the conservative tendencies that underlie such designs: “Germans should not be assumed to be able to swallow something as if it were an innocent detail, which can never again be associated with innocence. Cave canem! We can tell the difference!”\(^9\)

**The Rehabilitation of Nazi Architecture in Mitte**

This exchange between Kollhoff and Klotz demonstrates the easy symbolic slippage that can occur in architectural discourse. Certainly most of the German public was, contrary to Klotz’s declaration, probably not educated enough in the history of architectural styles to be able to differentiate between pre-war Modernist and Nazi buildings, but they were savvy enough to be suspicious of anything that smacked of the “wrong” kind of history. Whatever the arguments of Kollhoff and others in defense of a neo-classical or conservative pre-war Modernist aesthetic, the preservation and further utilization of such iconic Nazi buildings as the Reichsbank, for which Kollhoff designed the master renovation plan, demonstrate, at best, a denial of architecture’s many possible historical connotations, and, at worst, a problematic celebration of fascist forms.

Post-Wall Mitte was not only slated to be Berlin’s newest commercial quarter; it was also to become the main location for state and national government buildings (the federal

\(^9\) Ibid., 126.

\(^9\) “Und den Deutschen sollte nicht zugemutet werden, etwas als unschuldig schönes Detail zu schlucken, das mit Unschuld nie wieder identifiziert werden kann. Cave canem! Wir können unterscheiden!” Ibid., 127.
government’s official move from Bonn to Berlin took place in 1999). Fortunately, there were ample plots of land and numerous buildings that could be repurposed for national government functions. But the existing structures were not treated equally: as will be discussed further in Chapter 5, GDR buildings were, for the most part, demolished, whereas Gründerzeit and Nazi-era buildings were almost always reused without comment, despite their troubled history. One example of this type of reuse is the Reichsbank, a gigantic building constructed between 1933 and 1939 along the Spree River canal, directly across from Schinkel’s Friedrichswerder Church and adjacent to the Prussian Schloss (figs. 4.31-4.32). It was Hitler’s first showcase project and, more importantly, marked the definitive end of the Bauhaus in Germany through the conspicuous rejection of Mies van der Rohe’s competition entry. Following the war, it functioned as the headquarters of the SED, East Germany’s ruling party. In 1994, amidst international criticism, the German federal government decided to readopt and refurbish the building, supposedly for financial reasons, and use it to house the German Foreign Ministry (Auswärtiges Amt). It held a master planning competition for the site, and Kollhoff’s design was chosen as the winner.

Architectural historian Hanno Rauterberg contends that the original Reichsbank building is “not a typical example of the vulgarly monotonous architecture” of the Third Reich: designed by Heinrich Wolff, it “exhibits elements of a conservative Modernism in such details as horizontally divided windows.” Architectural historian Hans Wilderotter agrees that the

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94 Wilderotter discusses how the SED leaders were able to unproblematically appropriate the building because they felt themselves to be on the “good” side of history, i.e. reusing the building as their party seat meant a symbolic “triumph” over the Nazis. Hans Wilderotter, “Das Auswärtige Amt in Berlin,” Baumeister 96, no. 12 (December 1999): 22–31.

95 Ibid. Göring’s former Air Ministry on the other side of Mitte was also similarly reused. The same approach was taken with the Aviation Ministry (designed Ernst Sagebiel, converted in the 1990s by Hentrich Petschnigg & Partner). See Rauterberg, “History - That Was Yesterday,” 316.

Reichsbank is not a “typical” example of Nazi design (indeed, as Barbara Miller Lane has shown, there was no one, unified Nazi architectural style, though Hitler’s “Führerbauten” did demonstrate a particular preference for monumental stone neo-classicism97), which tended to towards a more populist grandeur, but that it is representative of the “conservative Modern.” Nevertheless, he says, the monumentality and restrained classicism of this and other conservative Modernist designs, including some by figures like Behrens and Poelzig, who are generally regarded as progressive architects, “embody a host of similarities with Nazi architecture.”98 Indeed, it is this very aspect of the Modernists’ pre-war work – i.e. their sober, stripped-down references to neo-classicism – which Kollhoff, Klotz, and the other participants in the Architecture Debates continually invoke in order to either exonerate or condemn the German architecture of the 1930s.

According to Wilderotter, many representatives of the German federal government felt that Nazi buildings had to be rehabilitated in order to show that the new nation was open to dealing with its violent history:

Though tearing the building down would have removed the suspicion of a [problematic] “continuity” with the Nazi regime through new or continued use, on the other hand, it would have rightly garnered criticism in that it would have destroyed an available marker of a history which, because it belongs to the most pressing duties of [public] historical culture (Geschichtskultur) in Germany, must be kept in the public conscience (im Bewusstsein gehalten werden muss).99 Kollhoff’s design addresses this perceived need for historical negotiation by emphasizing three “layers” of the past throughout the building. Leaving the exterior virtually untouched except for

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98 Wilderotter, “Das Auswärtige Amt in Berlin.”

99 “Zwar wäre durch einen Abriss dem Verdacht auf Kontinuitätsbildung durch Neubeziehungsweise Weiternutzung die Grundlage entzogen worden; andererseits jedoch hätte er zu Recht den Vorwurf auf sich gezogen, anschauliche Zeugnisse einer Vergangenheit zu vernichten, die, das gehört zu den vordringlichsten Aufgaben der Geschichtskultur der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, im Bewusstsein gehalten werden muss.” Ibid.
a new rooftop garden, Kollhoff focused on the interior, removing a significant amount of the GDR-era additions to reveal the original 1930s wood paneling and other detailing (fig. 4.33). This first historical layer is augmented by two more – arguably very subtle – ones: the preservation of two East German rooms, including the main meeting chambers of the SED (fig. 4.34), and the completely new addition, in collaboration with the artist Gerhard Merz, of large, monochromatic surfaces on certain isolated walls and ceilings in important rooms (figs. 4.35-4.36). The master plan also called for a large additional structure, separated from the former Reichsbank building by an inner courtyard, built along Französische Strasse. This new public front to the complex was eventually constructed according to designs by Berlin architects Thomas Müller and Ivan Reimann (figs. 4.37-4.38).

Because it preserves historical details without reverting to historicism, Wilderotter sees the building as a successful embodiment of “the breaks and continuity of German history,” a “successful political self-representation” of the new nation.  

Kollhoff, however, fails to take up this argument in his writing about the building. Instead, echoing his statements elsewhere, he denies the historical connotations of the structure and suggests instead that it should be seen simply as “a document of style.” As Rauterberg contends, Kollhoff took refuge in a supposedly neutral stance, deliberately refusing to comment on Hitler’s decision that meant the beginning of the end for Mies and other Modernist architects. This odd distinction between form and content, this decoupling of history from its setting, amounts to an attempt to neutralize the architectural structure. It is transported into a sphere in which only aesthetics count and architects are absolved of all accountability.

Despite all these attempts by Kollhoff to both aesthetically reframe a historically-burdened space and to simultaneously claim that it is not burdened at all, Wilderotter contends that the

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100 Ibid.
Reichsbank building is nevertheless still seen as, quite simply, “a Nazi building” by most non-professional observers. The two-story row of columns on its monumental front and the strong relief of its impossibly massive sandstone façade overshadow Modernist elements such as the horizontal distribution of the windows.\(^{102}\) This impression is further heightened by the restrained classicism of Müller and Reimann’s new addition, which is fronted by a series of massive, four-story granite columns (fig. 4.38). Ultimately, as Wilderotter states, “the popular impression is right: in the end the institution of the Reichsbank was a stronghold of the Nazi regime,” and thus this structure is still “cursed” building in many ways.\(^{103}\) Kollhoff’s claims did nothing to successfully counteract this impression; indeed, his careful restoration of many parts of the Nazi-era interior only serves to shore up the idea that he and the other proponents of the New Simplicity and Critical Reconstruction were drawn to a dangerously reviverist version of fascist aesthetics rather than promoting productive architectural dialogue about Germany’s traumatic history.

Contemporary projects like Norman Foster’s renovation of the Reichstag (the German federal parliament building, just a few blocks west of the Reichsbank) showed that such structures could be adapted effectively for government use while also incorporating pointed commentary on the layers of violent history embodied in the structure. In the case of the Reichstag, graffiti added by the invading Russian army in 1945 was restored and openly preserved in the hallways, artwork was added to contextualize the problematically ethnic overtones of the inscription over the entrance, and, most prominently, Foster’s transparent dome

\(^{102}\) The front entrance is not open to the public and is obscured by the new addition along Französische Strasse. This means that the most public element of the Reichsbank building are its eastern and western elevations, which appear as both imposing and unwelcoming to the pedestrian (fig. 4.31).

\(^{103}\) “Gleichwohl ist die populaire Wahrnehmung im Recht, schließlich war die Institution Reichsbank eine Hochburg des NS-Regimes.” Wilderotter, “Das Auswärtige Amt in Berlin.”
symbolized the democratic and open nature of reunited Germany’s government. Kollhoff’s restrained preservation of the historical layers of the Reichsbank building, with the only obvious addition being the abstraction of Merz’s colored walls and ceilings, hardly evokes the same critical engagement with the building’s troubling symbolism.

**Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm: The Devil’s Advocate**

The easy “Cold War” division between participants in the Architecture Debates is problematized by Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm, who refused to join either camp. Instead, he represented a stance that saw city planning as a tool of politics, rather than the other way around, and he staunchly defended the position that architecture should only be regulated in the service of the creation of a middle-class, self-governing populace. These ideas were very influential on Stimmann, who regularly hired Hoffmann-Axthelm as a consultant on city planning measures beginning in 1991.

**Gruppe 9. Dezember and the Charter for the Center of Berlin**

Like Stimmann, Hoffmann-Axthelm had been heavily involved in SPD politics in Berlin during the 1970s, and had often critiqued Kleihues’s IBA-Neubau in his publications. A native West Berliner, he trained as a sociologist and theologian during the 1960s. In the seventies he grew increasingly interested in urban matters, becoming a regular contributor to various journals and newspapers, and he worked closely with Hardt-Waltherr Hämer’s community-oriented IBA-Altbau in Kreuzberg during the 1980s. Immediately following the fall of the Wall, he headed

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the *Gruppe 9. Dezember* ("The December 9th Group"), a ca. fifty-member association of planners and architects from both East and West Berlin who came together to make polemical statements and demands about city planning. In their manifesto, titled "Charter for the Center of Berlin," published in *Bauwelt*'s quarterly volume *Stadtbauwelt* in March of 1991, the group specified twelve succinct demands for the reconstruction of Berlin that sounded much like (indeed, even mentioned the term) Critical Reconstruction: these included the revision of the Modernist, auto-friendly city; the promotion of densification; the eschewal of Mitte as an “experimental field of utopian city building”; an attention to history; strict frontage lines and height limits; and mixed uses.

A companion essay by Hoffmann-Axthelm himself, clearly meant to provide readers with the “correct” reading of the group’s manifesto, stated that the Charter was a direct reaction to the planning failures at Potsdamer Platz, and argued for a return to the “historical” city, not necessarily just in the realm of aesthetics, but also in the form of grassroots governance:

> The insistence on historical structures has to do with neither historicism nor nostalgia. These historical structures are a model. Berlin, in spite of all the destruction, is a city that is already present and characterized by history. We do not need to invent a new city, especially not the metropolis of the third millennium. Moreover, these kinds of inventions are collective endeavors, they do not belong to the city planning office nor its associated official (or senator), but rather they are to be demanded from them. It is more a matter of giving back the historically acquired ability for commerce and regeneration to a city that has been violently damaged many times over.

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108 "Das Insistieren auf historischen Strukturen hat weder mit Historismus noch mit Heimweh zu tun. Die historischen Strukturen sind ein Modell. Berlin ist trotz aller Zerstörtheit eine vorhandene Stadt und eine historisch geprägte. Es muß keine neue Stadt erfunden werden, schon gar nicht die Metropole des dritten Jahrtausends. Im übrigen sind solche Erfindungen
In arguing for historical forms as a part of a new political planning culture, Hoffmann-Axthelm judiciously avoids the question of movements and styles. For Hoffmann-Axthelm, history is not easily reduced to single moments that can then be directly associated with (or dissociated from) particular architectural motifs or forms; rather, architectural movements must be seen in the context of the multifaceted and complex political, social, technological, and economic changes that accompanied and gave rise to them. (In essence, following a Marxist line of reasoning, they are the “superstructure” arising from the “base” of political and economic relationships, and it is this base that interests Hoffmann-Axthelm.) Thus there is no way, he says, to reduce the arguments over Berlin’s future to “Nazi” versus “democratic” aesthetics; indeed, these are the least of Hoffmann-Axthelm’s concerns. For him, history must be judiciously employed in the service of a collectively imagined future, and he is much more concerned with the mechanisms of this communal vision. In order to create a city in which citizens have this power, Hoffmann-Axthelm argues, investors must be firmly hemmed in, government must become an instrument of the common people rather than any individual actor (or corporation), and, most importantly, the single, small-scale parcel of land must become the prime unit of scale for the development of the city. Only if land ownership is distributed in such a way can “those affected” (die Betroffene – a term often used in 1970s and 1980s neighborhood planning initiatives), i.e. everyday urban dwellers in Berlin, create a city that truly fits their needs and desires. Hoffmann-Axthelm ends his commentary by mentioning three other realms of concern for planners which he thinks must
be discussed, and which are later conspicuously absent in the Architecture Debates: immigration and social cohesion, ecology, and transportation.\textsuperscript{109}

\textit{Stimmann’s Leftist Hand}

Hoffmann-Axthelm’s positions embodied much of what Stimmann had formerly advocated in his own opposition to the IBA-\textit{Neubau}, and his admonition that “Berlin does not need to be reinvented” soon became one of Stimmann’s own catchphrases. The particular mix of historicism, zoning regulations, small-scale development, and grassroots planning represented in the “Charter for the Center of Berlin” must have appealed greatly to Stimmann; directly after his appointment as Senate Construction Director in April 1991, he hired Hoffmann-Axthelm as a consultant to contribute reports, including building recommendations, for several areas of Mitte. The first of these was Pariser Platz, home to the iconic Brandenburg Gate and the Academy of Arts (discussed in Chapter 3). This square was seen as the western gateway to the historical inner city of Berlin, often called the “entrière into Berlin’s living room \textit{gute Stube}.”\textsuperscript{110} As a well-known and much-photographed point along the Berlin Wall, it was also a key symbol of the city’s reintegration, and the site of many public reunification celebrations (figs. 4.39-4.40). Though Hoffmann-Axthelm’s commissioned plan for the square, authored in late 1991 in cooperation with architect Bernhard Strecker, was never carried out in its original form (it was later modified and combined with another plan sponsored by the Department of Urban Planning and Environment), Stimmann’s original intention was for Pariser Platz’s reconstruction to act as the origin point for the application of Critical Reconstruction to the entire western portion of Mitte.\textsuperscript{111}

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., 569.

\textsuperscript{110} Bodenschatz and Altrock, \textit{Renaissance der Mitte}, 238.

\textsuperscript{111} Bernhard Strecker and Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm, “Pariser Platz: Kritische Rekonstruktion Des Bereichs” (Senatsverwaltung für Bau- und Wohnungswesen, September 1991). Under pressure from investors, the two departments
As of 1991, Pariser Platz stood almost entirely empty aside from the Brandenburg Gate and a small handful of remaining structures left after the clearance of World War II rubble (figs. 4.41-4.43). Hoffmann-Axthelm and Strecker recommended all new construction around the perimeter of the square, with a maximum building height of 10 meters on the north and south sides of the square and 22 meters on the eastern end, and the western side of left open on either side of the Brandenburg Gate (fig. 4.44). New buildings were to be of the “palazzo” type with punctuated facades of stucco or natural stone, supposedly linking back visually to a building by Schinkel that formerly stood on the southern side of the plaza. However, the authors stated, “the creation of historical replicas should be avoided. Such [literal] reconstructions of historical architecture lead … to such a banalization of image, that this is not commensurate with the desired qualities of the square.”

Echoing the Charter, the authors argue that Critical Reconstruction means the creation of an urban landscape in which “historical spaces and ways of life [Lebensformen] (density, proximity, living in the inner city, walkability, etc.) still have a chance,” and which not only represent the identity of the city, but encapsulate the history of the dialectical process by which architecture has evolved throughout modernity. This means, too, that nothing historical is newly formulated without being useful for the future of the city. The recreation of historical proximity, density, and diversity is

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112 Pabsch, Pariser Platz, Architektur und Technik, 142. The computer simulation of the rebuilt square, Bodenschatz and Altrock argue, shows a clear relationship to the Kleihues/Grassi design from the “Berlin morgen” exhibition of 1990-1991. Bodenschatz and Altrock, Renaissance der Mitte, 238.


114 Ibid., 8.
appropriate when it is both a transportation concept and when it is not only seen as ecologically justifiable, but essential. Critical Reconstruction in this sense means recapitulating the past in order to care for the future, to use historical structures for the formulation of an ecological city structure.\footnote{115} Here, as in the Charter, Hoffmann-Axthelm clearly sees “traditional” Berlin aesthetics as relevant only if they are deployed in service of a plan that takes urban functions – including the economic function of land ownership – into account. For him, Critical Reconstruction is a means to achieve these sociological and political ends, because it looks back to a time (around the turn of the century) when ownership of plots was diversified and the city had a high population density. As will become clear in Chapter 5, this attitude became highly problematic when it was applied more generally to East Berlin through the city master plan that Hoffmann-Axthelm authored along with Stimmann.

\textit{Sparring with Lampugnani in the Architecture Debates: The “End of the Discussion”}

Though he worked for Stimmann, Hoffmann-Axthelm also tended to play devil’s advocate to the Construction Director. He remained highly critical of the aesthetic aims of Critical Reconstruction, as well as Stimmann’s partnerships with private interests and particular architects. At the same time as he was authoring reports for the Senate Department of Construction and Housing, Hoffmann-Axthelm was continuing to publish various critiques of Berlin policy and architecture, and he made several contributions to the Architecture Debates. His main target was Lampugnani, whose manifesto he mercilessly excoriated in an essay bitingly titled “The Challenge of Yesterday” (in response to Lampugnani’s “Challenge of the Everyday”) published in the national weekly newspaper \textit{Die Zeit} in April of 1994 and reprinted in the journal

\footnote{115} “Kritische Rekonstruktion heißt aber auch, daß nichts Historisches neuformuliert wird, ohne daß es nicht auch für die Stadtzukunft brauchbar ist. Die Wiederherstellung historischer Enge, Dichte und Differenziertheit stimmt dann, wenn sie zugleich Verkehrskonzept ist und wenn sie ökologisch nicht nur rechtfertigbar, sondern auch erforderlich ist. Kritische Rekonstruktion in diesem Sinne heißt, Vergangenheit aus der Sorge um die Zukunft zu rekapitulieren, historische Strukturen zu benutzen zur Formulierung einer ökologischen Stadtstruktur.” Ibid.
The main tone of the essay is that of indignant astonishment. According to Lampugnani, Hoffmann-Axthelm writes,

In 1945, the “extremely high quality” (thanks to its aesthetics and craftsmanship) of German architecture was, with the Nazi regime, abruptly broken off, after which only cheap mass-productions [Massenware] were built. This is, in light of the very thoroughly researched building culture of the Nazi regime, such insanity that one really cannot imagine that he is serious. … [Then Lampugnani claims that] those who today build still on honest and solid stone and wood are defamed as fascists, while everything that is slanted and suffers from construction faults is seen as democratic.  

These statements are such exaggerations that, Hoffmann-Axthelm suspects, Lampugnani must have an ulterior motive: namely, acting as the publicist for Kleihues’s conservative aesthetics, in the service of their own capitalist business interests.

Kleihues’s self-styling as an architect of human proportions and Lampugnani’s attendant invocation of aesthetic permanence denote an apparent strategy. And because we find ourselves amongst architects, it is one of ensuring market interests. They are free to do so. But what one cannot condone is that the whole architectural discussion is implicated.

Hoffmann-Axthelm thus joins the ranks of those who accuse various figures in Berlin of belonging to a “cartel” of favored architects who are forced to adhere to a set of rigid standards:

What differentiates Kleihues is that he understands his language of orderly, normal architecture to be a dictate. … If an architect wants to become something in the higher realms of the profession in Berlin, he must present himself accordingly (sich schon ein bisschen einordnen), or else he has little chance in the

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117 In 1945 sei, mit dem Nazireich, die dank Ästhetik und Handwerk ‘extrem hohe Qualität’ der deutschen Architektur abrupt abgebrochen, danach sei nur noch billig Massenware gebaut worden. Das ist, angesichts der wahrlich ausreichend erforschten Baukultur des Nazireiches, ein so extremer Unsinn, daß man sich eigentlich nicht vorstellen kann, er meine das ernst. … Und siehe, im dritten Teil der Polemik erfährt man, worum es geht: Wer heute noch ehrlich und solide in Stein und Holz baue, werde als Fascist diffamiert, während alles, was schräg sei und unter Bauschäden litte, als demokratisch gelte.” Hoffmann-Axthelm, “Die Provokation Des Gestritten,” April 1, 1994, np.

competitions or direct contracts. Kleihues is the most comprehensible pole in a field cemented by power dynamics, which one could call the Berlin Cartel.  

Hoffmann-Axthelm also accuses Lampugnani of appropriating his leftist positions on governance, even though Lampugnani had been diametrically opposed to them during the IBA:

“He takes up, unbelievably, my theses … : land use, density, ecology, block, and so forth. With this he pats all of us who for fifteen years have occupied ourselves with Kreuzberg’s demolition, on the back: it was not all in vain. Only he forgets to tell us that he was also, at the time, on the other side.”  

In other words, he thinks that Lampugnani is hypocritically appropriating and deploying left-critical concepts from seventies-era planning in service of his conservative aesthetics.

Typical for that which Lampugnani is doing here is the title of his essay. The “everyday” was once the catchword of the counterculture of the seventies. Amongst architects this was the attempt to situate the needs of the normal person against the official high gloss architecture. … [Rather], what he means [in his essay], when he turns this left-alternative concept to his own uses, is the passepartout-character of Kleihuesian architecture.

This is Lampugnani’s biggest mistake, Hoffmann-Axthelm argues. For “no one concept of architecture, be it that of urban chaos or Berlin block architecture, can provide the framework from which the material city is built.” Instead, as he has already argued in numerous essays, including the one that accompanied the Charter for the Center of Berlin, Hoffmann-Axthelm declares that “we must create the qualities we seek in the city and in architecture – such as

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119. Was Kleihues unterscheidet, ist, daß er seine Parole von der ordnenden Normalarchitektur offenbar als Führungsauftrag versteht. Wer in Berlin als Architekt in den oberen Etagen des Berufs etwas werden oder zu tun haben will, muß sich schon ein bißchen einordnen, sonst hat er bei Wettbewerben und Direktaufträgen wenig Chancen. Kleihues ist der greifbarste Pol in einem machtdynamisch zementierten Feld, das man das Berliner Kartell nennen kann.” Ibid.

120. Er schließt sich, es ist nicht zu glauben, meinen Thesen aus dem grünen Suhrkamp-Bändchen an: Flächensparsamkeit, Verdichtung, Ökologie, Block und so weiter. Nebenbei schlägt er uns allen, die wir uns fünfzehn Jahre lang im Kreuzberger Abrißstaub abgemüht haben, auf die Schulter: Es sei nicht umsonst gewesen. Er vergißt nur, uns zu erwähnen, und auch, daß er, damals, auf der anderen Seite war.” Ibid.

121. Typisch für das, was Lampugnani hier betreibt, ist der Titel seines Essays. „Allählichkeit“ war ja einmal die Parole der Gegenkultur in den siebziger Jahren. Unter Architekten war das der Versuch, gegen die offizielle Hochglanzarchitektur die Bedürfnisse der normalen Menschen zu stellen … Was er meint, wenn er den linksalternativen Begriff für seine Zwecke umdreht, ist der Passpartout-Charakter der Kleihuesschen Architektur.” Ibid.
permanence, everydayness, beauty, usability and so forth – first as societal qualities, and then set the architects to work.” This prioritization means, fundamentally, a return to the single parcel of land as the building block of the city, “on which, at one time, the builder-owner built his building, cheap or expensive, small or big, factory or tenement, cinema, villa, or all together. If one has such a structural unit, the city can hold any architecture, from the most extravagant to the most traditional.”

Anyone who builds quality architecture, which for Hoffmann-Axthelm includes firms ranging from Coop Himmelblau and Zaha Hadid to Richard Rogers, Norman Foster, or Rem Koolhaas, can and should be allowed to build in Berlin, he says. And though he claims he is not accusing anyone of having fascist tendencies, he still links the stylistic traits of conservative pre-war Modernism with certain reprehensible political movements:

The accusation [of fascism], in my mind, is a form of insanity. That stone architects however imitate in general the style of the period is unmistakable. One only has to compare the designs of the thirties with today’s – one can barely come nearer at the distance of two generations. It is the authoritarian architectural tendencies at the beginning of the thirties – the late Poelzig, the everyday residential building in the Nazi empire, Asplund in Sweden, the classical turn in the Soviet Union, Perret in France, the Milan metaphysicists around Muzio – who are making a comeback today, as if it were still about building a societal destiny, rather than to satisfy requirements for insulation.

For him, then, the erroneous and megalomaniacal qualities of both Nazi architecture and the “New Simplicity” have to do with the fact that their proponents believe in architecture’s ability to change that “societal destiny.” Hoffmann-Axthelm, on the other hand, is willing to accept any

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122 “Es geht darum, daß nicht eine bestimmte Architekturauffassung, sei es die des Stadtchaos, sei es die der Berliner Blockarchitektur, den Rahmen abgeben kann, in dem die materielle Stadt gebaut ist. Der Rahmen muß woanders herkommen, und er muß so liberal beschaffen sein, daß er für jegliche Architektur Platz hat. … Wir müssen die gesellschaftlichen Qualitäten wie Dauer, Alltäglichkeit, Schönheit, Brauchbarkeit und so weiter, die wir von Stadt und Architektur fordern, auch als gesellschaftliche Qualitäten schaffen – und dann die Architekten an die Arbeit setzen.” Ibid.

style of building that arises from the “right” structural relationships between property ownership and city governance. His utilization of the discourse of Critical Reconstruction is solely in service of achieving this end: his version of this method has little to do with materials or the formal qualities of façades, and is rather focused on restoring small-scale development, healthy density, and a mix of uses to the city center.

The Berlin Architecture Cartel

Though he clearly knows that Stimmann is also committed to his way of thinking, (indeed, it is most likely that Stimmann adopted these ideas directly from Hoffmann-Axthelm himself), Hoffmann-Axthelm is not above accusing him of being part of the supposed Berlin architecture “cartel”:

Berlin has in the person of Senate Building Director Hans Stimmann an administrative commissioner for architecture who, because of his job description, must see his way through construction capital, politics, and architects. So he has entered into a coalition. Its tabernacle is Berlin stone architecture, an ideological construct from various sources. An architectural triumvirate, Kleihues at the front, Jürgen Sawade as associate, and Hans Kollhoff as junior partner, have come to live with Stimmann under this roof. This coalition now has a truce with the big investors, whose requirements would be unpleasant if dictated from above. What Lampugnani wrote in Der Spiegel is thus nothing less than a manifesto of this architectural cartel. It is not about culture and politics, but about market interests.\textsuperscript{124}

Despite his own use of Critical Reconstruction as a concept, Hoffmann-Axthelm therefore simultaneously represents the far-left critique of this method’s aesthetics and way of doing business. Under Stimmann and his “triumvirate,” he argues, Berlin has gained “an architectonic desire without grounding in politics,” and it is thus at risk of not only mismanaging its own

transformation, but backsliding into a planning culture that is both dangerously authoritarian – perhaps even fascist – and slave to corporate, capitalist interests:

The quasi-monopoly of this architectural party will lead, if it is put through, not only to the accumulation of a certain kind of architecture in the north German metropolises, but to the creation of a culturally and politically concerning image. … They are nostalgics for uniformed times, and moreover they cluster around an excellent businessman. 125

While Kleihues and Stimmann refrained from replying to Hoffmann-Axthelm’s statements, Lampugnani immediately published a rebuttal in Die Zeit with the optimistic headline “The Berlin Architects’ Debates: Classic or Modern? The Director of the German Architecture Museum Answers. End of the Discussion.” 126 His tone is almost desperate in its defensiveness:

A flat façade with many rows of identical rectangular windows is thought of as boring. … Can you imagine how much work that [designing such a façade] is? And how much creativity it demands? Much more than to artistically arrange a pair of pastel colored plaster half-columns or to weld two steel beams crookedly together. 127

The kind of “simplicity, convention, permanence, and appropriateness” that the New Simplicity espouses, Lampugnani writes, emphatically does not appeal to market interests, which prefer flashy, ephemeral experiments. “They are the opposite of that of which you accuse them: a

125 “Das Quasimonopol der Architekturpartei führte, würde es weiter durchgesetzt, nicht nur zur Anhäufung einer bestimmten Sorte Architektur in den norddeutschen Großstädten, sondern zur Herstellung eines kulturell wie politisch gleich bedenklichen Bildes … Es sind Nostalgiker uniformierter Zeiten, und im übrigen scharen sie sich um einen exzellenten Geschäftsmann.” Ibid.


utopia which goes against the Zeitgeist.” Lampugnani then points out (correctly) that he organized not only the diverse and inclusive “Berlin Tomorrow” event, to whose exhibition catalog Hoffmann-Axthelm himself contributed an essay, but that he also served as the editor for Domus, which supported many of the architects Hoffmann-Axthelm claims Lampugnani abhors. Lampugnani also takes issue with the idea of a cartel, arguing that he does not have anything to do with market interests, but simply wants to “spread his philosophy,” to “articulate his theoretical position” and offer it up for much-needed discussion.129

This response was not, as Lampugnani had hoped, the “end of the discussion”; Hoffmann-Axthelm published a reply in the June 1994 “From Berlin to New Teutonia” issue of Arch+ mentioned above, under the title, “The City Needs Rules, Architecture Needs Fantasy.”130 Here he reiterates his position that architecture in itself does not constitute an effective aid to the problems of the city: “In a situation where the social instrument of the city is breaking apart, the solution cannot be simply about how a few architecturally irresponsible singular pieces are decorated, with glass or stone.” Rather, the problem lies in planning and zoning, in “stuffing the entire city center full of offices and push ever more urban functions out into the green space” surrounding the city.131 And because facades really do not matter for the city in the long run, this whole set of debates is, in Hoffmann-Axthelm’s eyes, a circus staged in service of “contracts,

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128 “Sie sind das Gegenteil dessen, was Sie ihnen unterstellen: eine Utopie, die es gegen den Zeitgeist, die ökonomischen Verhältnisse und das von Ihnen beschworene gesund Volksempfinden zu vertreten gilt.” Ibid., 52.

129 Ibid., 54.


professorships, and being able to influence public opinion,” and with the explicit goal of limiting Berlin’s new architecture to a style that verges on the fascist:

> It was the exact aim of my protest to point out that the legitimization of conservative architecture of the twenties through the forties, including the Nazi period, is not a subject of academic debate, but, in a fatally instrumental way, has influence on the decisions that are being made in Berlin by architects, institutions, and investors.\footnote{Ibid., 12.}

Even Lampugnani’s other main critic cannot escape rebuke: Hoffmann-Axthelm sees Libeskind’s argument as equally weak, since it relies on aesthetics rather than socio-political frameworks. “Nothing would be achieved by replacing contemporary Berlin architecture with another, more experimental type. The problem is not architecture, but the ability of the city to develop principles of ordering urban development.”\footnote{Hoffmann-Axthelm, “Die Stadt braucht Regeln, die Architektur Phantasie,” 12.}

Thus, Hoffmann-Axthelm concedes, Stimmann’s approach seems to be the only workable way forward, even though it serves corporate interests, because Stimmann at least represents a bulwark against a completely aesthetic view of planning: “If he weren’t there, it would in fact not make way for reasonable planning, but for the destruction of the city that has been so commonplace” in the past.\footnote{Gäbe es ihn nicht, würde das nämlich keineswegs den Weg für planerische Vernunft freimachen, sondern nur für die übliche Stadtzerstörung.” Ibid.}

With his commitment to small-scale, community-based planning and advocacy, as well as a solid knowledge of architectural history and a prolific body of writing under his belt, Hoffmann-Axthelm contributes a truly leftist viewpoint to the Architecture Debates. Though employed regularly by Stimmann, he adamantly refuses public allegiance to anyone, seeming to consider Stimmann as the “least worst” of a group of planners and architects who are willfully

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\footnote{“Vielmehr war es ja gerade der Kern meines Protestes, darauf hinzuweisen, daß die Legitimierung der konservativen Architektur der zwanziger bis vierziger Jahre einschließlich NS keine akademische Debatte ist, sondern auf eine fatal nützliche Weise eingeht in die Ausscheidungskämpfe, die in Berlin unter Architekten, Verwaltungen und Investoren ausgetragen werden.” Ibid., 12. Ibid.}

\footnote{“Es ware nicht das geringste damit gewonnen, die augenblickliche Berliner Architektur durch eine andere, experimentellere zu ersetzen. Das Problem ist nicht die Architektur, sondern die Fähigkeit einer Stadt, städtebauliche Ordnungsvorstellungen zu entwickeln.” Hoffmann-Axthelm, “Die Stadt braucht Regeln, die Architektur Phantasie,” 12.}

\footnote{“Gäbe es ihn nicht, würde das nämlich keineswegs den Weg für planerische Vernunft freimachen, sondern nur für die übliche Stadtzerstörung.” Ibid.}
ignoring what he values most: namely land use policy and structures of governance. As discussed in Chapter 3, Stimmann was interested in following Hoffmann-Axthelm’s line of thinking, but was severely limited by pressures from both investors and the government bodies that oversaw land sales. Thus, he pursued Kleihues’s suggested path of creating individuated buildings on single blocks, funded by just a few large-scale developers, and utilized the aesthetic strictures of Critical Reconstruction to attempt rein in their flashy, overly-capitalist visions. As we shall see in Chapter 5, Stimmann’s and Hoffmann-Axthelm’s goals aligned more clearly after 1996, when they worked together to author the *Planwerk Innenstadt*.

**Conclusion: The Architecture Debates and the Cracks in the Post-Modern Façade**

Though it played only a side role in the debates themselves, these exchanges pushed Critical Reconstruction onto center stage in terms of the public’s ideas about Berlin’s rebuilding. This result was due in large part to the fact that, while remaining staunchly allied with the leftist, socio-economic interests of the type represented by Hoffmann-Axthelm and relying on Kleihues’s original work from the 1980s, Stimmann also freely and openly adopted the conservative aesthetic ideas and arguments of Lampugnani and Kollhoff. For example, Stimmann, collaborating with architectural historian Annegret Burg in 2006, averred:

> Office and commercial buildings must free themselves from an all too frequent triviality. They must be more than just a vehicle for fleeting messages and a surrogate reflection of consumer images; they must regain their urban dignity, developing into a city architecture with carefully composed spatial and tectonic relationships, both in terms of inner structure and, on a larger scale, as building volumes in the wide urban environment. Special attention must be given to the transition areas between inside and outside – the entrance, the foyer, the façade – and to those elements in a building which interact with the town – the arcade, the covered mall, the tower, the corner and the inner structure. If these factors are overlooked, then the urban image will come to be dominated by everyday, or even run-of-the-mill consumer architecture, driven more by a need to reflect transitory
visual fashions and façade treatments than a concern for a longer-lasting overall urban quality and architectural composition.\textsuperscript{135}

Stimmann’s and Critical Reconstruction’s most lasting contribution to the new Berlin, however, was undoubtedly the partnership with large-scale investors and developers and the marked preference to dole out these mammoth contracts to a small number of favored architects. Thus the oft-repeated accusation of the existence of a “cartel” is completely valid; indeed it was often corroborated by Stimmann himself, though he resented the term. Authors like Gert Kähler, therefore, who voice a “suspicion” that market interests were behind such decisions, are missing the point.\textsuperscript{136} Such critiques belie a firmly ingrained set of beliefs in the architectural community, reaching back to the strong influence of the continental philosophy of the 1960s, that somehow design in a European context should remain separate from commerce. Clearly, in a situation like the one in post-Wall Berlin, the continued leadership of an architectural avant-garde that remained separate from the “popular,” commercial world, was logistically and technically impossible. As Hoffmann-Axthelm rightly noted at the time, Stimmann had to make a series of unpleasant but necessary compromises in the service of public-private partnerships.

Counterintuitively, however, another remnant of Modernist and mid-twentieth-century architectural thinking that surfaces in the Architecture Debates is the idea that the architect is not just a designer of buildings, but of society itself. As Lampugnani’s essay suggests, while remaining comfortably distanced from commercial interests, architects thought they should delve deeply into the everyday lives of their users in order to remedy those conditions which they see as plaguing society – “chaos,” “noise,” lack of attention span, and so on. The participants in the


debates, and, by association, Critical Reconstruction as well, thus found themselves in the midst of a set of requirements for architecture that the medium and discipline were conceptually, aesthetically, and politically unable to fulfill.

*Turning Tides in Post-Modern Architecture*

This crisis of architectural representation was not unique to Critical Reconstruction and Berlin; it was, in many ways, built into the post-modern movement itself. Architects since the 1960s had been wrestling with the question of how to take history and context into account without cheapening it (an aim seen clearly in Rossi’s work, for instance); others had simply accepted that the representative qualities of architecture made it intrinsically shallow, and sought answers in the self-reflexive play of signs, a position exemplified by Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown. Still others saw outright historicism as a valid way of creating “place,” as in the work of Léon Krier. As discussed in Chapter 1, Kleihues’s Critical Reconstruction had been an attempt to map a course for German architects within this range of possible responses – one that would allow them to access and respond to history without explicitly reproducing or referring to it. Stimmann’s attempt to codify Critical Reconstruction, then, can be seen as an exposure of the infeasibility of this project. His appropriation of Kleihues’s theory came at a time, furthermore, when these various strands of post-modernism were beginning to lose favor – even if the architects themselves were still considered prominent practitioners. By the early 1990s, a younger generation of architects, historians, and theorists were turning the conversation towards more formal and explicitly theoretical concerns. Koolhaas and OMA, Peter Eisenman, Frank Gehry, Hadid, and Libeskind, for instance, offered equally ambitious approaches to Rossi, Venturi, or Kleihues, but were less intent on providing clear answers to issues such as how one
should treat regional history and context. Rather than searching for a solution to the problem of architectural representation, they began to ask different questions.

Some of the differences between Stimmann and Kleihues also exemplify the generational divisions that some scholars observe within mid-century West German society. As discussed in Chapter 1, Kleihues, who was born in 1933, belonged to what has been called the “skeptical generation,” who vividly remembered the war and were reticent to discuss it. Those who were about ten years younger, however – the generation to which Stimmann, born in 1941, belonged – resented this silence. Known in Germany as the “68ers,” this cohort came to prominence during the widespread student protests of the late 1960s. Their demands and viewpoints ranged widely, but they were generally associated with a critique of capitalist or consumer society, with the approach of grassroots activism, and with a cultural shift away from what were seen as traditional “German” values of punctuality, propriety, and order. They also had no qualms about openly discussing the Holocaust, and they often resented their parents’ and older siblings’ silence on the topic.\footnote{Ingo Cornils, “Successful Failure? The Impact of the Student Movement on the Federal Republic of Germany,” in \textit{Recasting German Identity: Culture, Politics, and Literature in the Berlin Republic}, by Stuart Taberner and Frank Finlay (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2002), 107.} By 1998, when Gerhard Schröder (SPD, born in 1944) became Chancellor, the ‘68ers were clearly the leading generation in German society and politics, but many (very much including Schröder himself) had also become far more centrist. Their younger peers now saw them as sellouts, disconnected from the “real” problems of society, who, as German scholar Ingo Cornils puts it, had “imbued them [the younger generation] with a rebellious spirit whilst taking off to Tuscany and the fleshpots of tenured university posts.”\footnote{Ibid., 108. In 2006, as part of a study abroad program, I attended an informal talk with the editor of Berlin’s \textit{taz} newspaper, Christian Semler, who had been a member of the radical left movement in the late 1960s. In talking about the rise of the 68ers, he mentioned how, while he and his colleagues had formerly set car bombs and protested capitalism as young activists, they now all drove Mercedes and lived in houses with lawns.}
Stimmann and Hoffmann-Axthelm in many ways embody this problematic: their focus, during the 1980s, on grassroots organization in city planning, which had led them to critique Kleihues’s approach as purely “aesthetic,” was quickly revised once they found themselves in positions of power. In order to steer a course through the shoals of institutional, political, and economic confusion in reunited Berlin, they found that they needed, first and foremost, to attract and help guide big real estate investors. As shown throughout this study, it was mainly out of necessity that they became closely allied with these corporate interests, but this put them in a difficult position politically. Paired with their inability to successfully address how their formal preferences related to German identity and history, this alliance with capitalist interests made them look not only like sellouts, but also like conservatives.\footnote{The divide between Kleihues’s and Stimmann’s versions of Critical Reconstruction may also point to the uneasy alliance between urban planning as it is practiced in architecture, where the focus is on urban design, and urban planning as a political or administrative practice, where the focus reaches far beyond the formal qualities of a city. This division parallels a similar split between architecture and engineering, which has its roots in the age of industrialization. The lines between these various professions and practices are by no means clear, and are deserving of further study in the case of Berlin specifically.}

Berlin’s financial infrastructure began to crumble in 1993 with the collapse of one of its major banks.\footnote{See Janet Ward, Post-Wall Berlin: Borders, Space and Identity (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 292.} By 1995, real estate investment in the city had changed from a barrage to a trickle, and many large-scale projects, including Kollhoff’s master plan for Alexanderplatz, had to be shelved.\footnote{There are still no new skyscrapers on this plaza, but a few smaller commercial buildings have sprung up over the years, and the major American investor Hines is currently considering the construction of a high rise at the south end of the square.} Following the 1995 elections, when SPD Construction Senator Wolfgang Nagel lost his seat, Stimmann was removed from the office of Construction Director, moving to work under the new Senator for Urban Development, Peter Strieder (SPD). Thus, after 1995, the discourse surrounding Critical Reconstruction moved away from the question of façades and fascism, leaning more toward a negotiation of the East German city and its troubled past. This
shift also meant that the scope of the debate, which had heretofore mainly included architects and theorists from the former West Germany and the Western international community, grew to include critics, politicians, and historians from the former GDR. This new phase will be discussed in Chapter 5.
CHAPTER 5

Gentrifying the GDR: Critical Reconstruction as a Colonial Move

Debates over the national symbolism of Berlin’s built landscape took place on two different fronts after the fall of the Wall. While one side of the discussion focused on the legacy of the Nazi era and the potential “normalization” of that regime’s crimes, represented most forcefully in the Architecture Debates, another equally important strand of the conversation had to do with the marginalization of East German cultural identity. This process was a sensitive and difficult topic in the midst of what many observers argued was less a “reunification” than a “takeover” of the former GDR (German Democratic Republic, or East Germany) by the West.¹ Many East Berliners felt that the built history and memory of their former nation was being consciousness and systematically erased in the capital: Western planners replaced many Eastern buildings in the formerly Communist districts of the city; many East Berlin streets were given back their pre-socialist – or even anti-socialist – names; prominent monuments (such as those honoring Lenin or other leading Soviet or Communist figures) were removed or “renovated” to downplay their prominence; and numerous GDR buildings in the city center were demolished.² As cultural critic Andreas Huyssen observed, East Germans tended to see this as more than just “tinkering with the communist city-text.” Rather, they experienced it as “a strategy of power and humiliation, a final burst of Cold War ideology, pursued via a politics of signs.”³


This chapter looks at the ways that Critical Reconstruction was complicit in the marginalization of East German history and collective memory through its destructive interventions in the built environment. The first half of the chapter examines how, amidst the ideological struggles over the cultural legacy of the East, the proposed removals or renovations of buildings tended to become flashpoints that could mobilize local residents and attract media attention for short periods of time, but, in most cases, such battles were ultimately lost to the more powerful interests of investment companies and developers. This phenomenon is exemplified by the remodeling of the prominent East German Centrum department store on Alexanderplatz, completed between 2004 and 2006 according to plans by Critical Reconstruction’s original author, Josef Paul Kleihues. A close look at this case reveals efforts on the part of planners, the architect, and corporate investors to reshape East Berlin as a place that would appeal to contemporary bourgeois consumers. Though officials made repeated efforts to involve the public in the planning process, their final decisions constituted a complete denial of the community’s calls for the building’s preservation.

The second half of the chapter looks at the destruction of the GDR landscape through more general city planning measures, specifically the Planwerk Innenstadt (“Inner-City Plan”) proposed by Hans Stimmann and authored chiefly in collaboration with the urban critic Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm. This section shows that, whereas during the 1980s, Stimmann and Hoffmann-Axthelm had both been vocal critics of Kleihues’s IBA model of Critical Reconstruction because it constituted a purely “aesthetic” mode of city planning that supposedly ignored the needs of everyday citizens, in the post-Wall era, their own Planwerk Innenstadt used Critical Reconstruction to actually legitimate a disregard for these same community interests.

Want to Preserve the Past, but Without the Memories,” in New German Architecture: A Reflexive Modernism, by Ullrich Schwarz (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2002), 314; Strom, Building the New Berlin, 72–73.
In both cases, Critical Reconstruction’s sidelining and destruction of GDR architecture was discursively justified through the rhetoric of the “void”: the idea that East Berlin represented various kinds of emptiness – social, political, aesthetic, and urban – that needed to be “filled” by new construction and new residents. A central argument of this chapter is that this move was essentially colonial: this purported “lack” was used to justify the top-down dictation of large-scale plans and dramatic changes to the landscape of the former GDR capital. In terms of specific buildings, GDR residents and their architecture were viewed as incapable of possessing a legitimate “history” that would make particular structures worthy of preservation, a logic that undergirded the decision to remove or renovate certain prominent buildings and urban spaces. However problematic or even loathed by residents, many of these structures were important touchstones for former East Berliners’ collective memory and history. The most problematic aspect of this urban erasure was that the logic used by Stimmann, Hoffmann-Axthelm, and other planners to justify their removal was a strange correlate of that which had been used to support the renovation and preservation of former Nazi buildings. In the case of Nazi architecture, planners argued that despite – or even because of – their association with the crimes of the regime, the structures were key witnesses to this part of Germany’s troubled history and thus needed to remain in the public consciousness. GDR buildings, on the other hand, were not accorded this status as witnesses to history; rather, by being portrayed as having no history at all – and, in conjunction, being depicted as hindrances to “good” urban development – they were instead allowed to disappear under new construction.

This elision of East German history, identity, and memory in the built environment paralleled what was happening in the social and political spheres in reunified Germany, where East Germans were expected to simply suddenly conform to West German ways of life and
governance, and where their memories of life in the GDR were characterized by dominant discourse condescendingly as “nostalgic” rather than “historical.” In terms of city planning specifically, particularly in Hoffmann-Axthelm’s contributions to the Planwerk Innenstadt, East Berliners were also portrayed as lacking the requisite skills and political attitudes to adequately self-govern. Hoffmann-Axthelm believed that since they did not have the economic “ties to the land” that, according to his logic, small-scale ownership of individual parcels would produce, city planners and developers needed to therapeutically intervene in the cityscape in order to create neighborhoods that would attract middle-class, educated property owners who could adequately advocate for themselves. Despite the plethora of East Berlin citizens’ groups that formed in response to the city’s plans, the rhetoric of the Planwerk Innenstadt and its authors continually infantilized this population, using their supposed inabilities to justify the appropriation and development of properties in ways they saw fit. However, as demonstrated in Chapters 2 and 3, this most often meant actually cooperating with large-scale investors rather than restoring small-scale ownership conditions.

This chapter thus demonstrates that, despite Stimmann’s and Hoffmann-Axthelm’s political affiliations with the left, by 1999, when the Planwerk Innenstadt was officially approved by the Berlin government, Critical Reconstruction had essentially become an elitist and politically conservative tool of neo-liberal, capitalist development that willingly ignored both important historical traces of mid-twentieth-century architecture in the former Communist cityscape, and citizens’ calls to preserve that architecture. As discussed in the previous chapter, the Critical Reconstructionists’ penchant for preserving and, in many cases, lauding Nazi and Stalinist architecture had already pigeonholed them as supporters of conservative – even neo-fascist – styles and planning philosophies. This conservatism was further underscored by
Hoffmann-Axthelm’s proposal of the theoretical relationship between “ties to the land” and residents’ ability to self-govern, which can also be seen as a problematic echo of the ethnocentric ideologies of the Nazis. Nevertheless, Stimmann, Hoffmann-Axthelm, and the other proponents of Critical Reconstruction appear to have remained blind to the conservative pitfalls of their policies and rhetoric, continuing to view themselves as social democrats who cared about the lives of “everyday” citizens. This blind spot, I argue, stems from the fact that their deliberate targeting of GDR architecture and urban planning had very little to do with an actual or direct negotiation of history, identity, or memory. In other words, they did not see themselves first and foremost as creators of national symbols via architecture. Instead, I contend, their willful destruction of East Berlin architecture had much more to do with two more mundane and profession-specific facets of post-modern architecture and planning culture: the backlash against the “towers in the park” model of functionalist, mid-century Modernism, and the fetishization of the model of the “European city” as the basis for a liberal, bourgeois society. While Stimmann, Hoffmann-Axthelm, Kleihues, and other planners and investors certainly failed to integrate the wishes and voices of the various neighborhood constituents in East Berlin into their planning policy, their marginalization of what might be termed these citizens’ “urban collective memory” was as in many ways as unwitting as it was, ultimately, politically and economically inept.

The Concept of the Void as a Colonial Tool in Berlin

Berlin as a City of Voids

Planners’ interventions in East Berlin were supported by the widespread characterization (in the popular media as well as in publications and statements by planners) of central East Berlin as “empty” in myriad ways. Western city planners often referred to East Berlin as an
“ideational wasteland,” a “tabula rasa” without history. With its history of destruction, Berlin has long been characterized as containing various kinds of “voids.” In the early twentieth century, the philosopher Ernst Bloch noted the social void created by what he and others saw as the collapse of bourgeois, nineteenth-century culture after the First World War. This was followed by the creation of physical voids by Nazi demolition crews in service of Albert Speer’s plans for Hitler’s new capital city, and Allied bombs added to these voids soon after, as wartime destruction devastated much of the city center. But for the proponents of Critical Reconstruction, the most important and extreme source of destruction was not World War II, but post-war “Sanierung” measures – literally translated as “renovation,” but denoting clearance and rebuilding according to the mid-century Modernist principles of dispersed, auto-friendly urban planning and functionalist architecture – a familiar post-modern critique made by architects and planners around the globe at the time. In Berlin specifically, however, yet another layer of voids was created by the Berlin Wall, beginning with its construction in 1961 (which resulted in large swaths of demolition and clearance, most famously at Potsdamer Platz), and continuing with its removal after 1989.

After the Wall fell, as anthropologist Gisa Weszkalnys observes, talk about what Berlin would become in the post-Wall era was thus very often talk about “how to fill Berlin’s emptiness.” For some authors (mainly those outside of Berlin), Berlin’s voids constituted spaces that were physically empty but symbolically laden, and which should ideally be preserved as a kind of urban memorial to the tragedies and violence of Berlin’s previous half-century. Some felt

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that this approach was a particularly appealing solution for Potsdamer Platz. Huyssen famously suggested in his seminal 1997 essay “The Voids of Berlin” that this empty area should be preserved as what Berliners “affectionately” called their “‘wonderful city steppes,’ their ‘prairie of history.’” For Huyssen, this space was “a void saturated with invisible history, with memories of architecture both built and unbuilt. It gave rise to the desire to leave it as it was, the memorial as empty page right in the center of the reunified city.” He quoted a proposal by Daniel Libeskind, who originally suggested

a wilderness, one kilometer long, within which everything can stay as it is. The street simply ends in the bushes. Wonderful. After all, this area is the result of today's divine natural law: nobody wanted it, nobody planned it, and yet it is firmly implanted in all our minds. And there in our minds, this image of the Potsdamer Platz void will remain for decades.

Huyssen feared that these “invisible” memories, which he saw as key for the understanding of German history as expressed in Berlin’s built landscape, would be erased if the area were redeveloped.

As should be clear from the previous chapter, however, Berlin’s leading city planners and the proponents of Critical Reconstruction emphatically did not see things this way. Instead, they viewed Berlin’s center as littered with terrible, gaping holes that desperately needed to be refilled. This tendency toward horror vacui was expressed in the Department of Urban Development and Environment’s program for “Baulückenmanagement” (the “management of construction gaps”) whereby every empty lot in the city center was given a “passport” documenting its characteristics and its projected future uses. Planners often referred to such areas

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9 Quoted in ibid., 73.

10 Huyssen’s and Libeskind’s suggestions are not necessarily less inhumane or objectifying; both assume that the space is socially devoid and unclaimed, and they hope to “colonize” it with their ideas of how things should be remembered.
in the city center as “wastelands” or “deserts,” or simply as “Leerstellen” – “empty spaces.” As urban historian Stefanie Hennecke contends, even planners’ use of the word “reconstruction” seemingly denotes the absence of adequate built substance.

This supposed lack was often also expressed as the city needing a “heart”: a “cultural and emotional middle point” based in a “founding place,” not only for Berliners, but for the entire nation as a “political point of reference.” This objective paired nicely with Stimmann’s and other Critical Reconstructionists’ commitment to the “historical,” “European city,” based on the model of the Altstadt or Stadtkrone as the centerpiece of the city (something that, as discussed in Chapter 3, Berlin had never actually possessed). The discourse of the “heart” is a direct expression of their belief that certain older architectural forms would have both a palliative and a growth-promoting effect on the formerly divided population by creating for them a sense of shared history on which they, presumably, could rebuild a new, unified city and nation. The Planwerk Innenstadt, for example, proposed that the central district of Mitte become a “core” for the city that would anchor all subsequent development by providing it with a “visible” touchstone.

Weszkalnys and others also argue that this rhetoric helped to construe Berlin as “belonging to a specific pedigree of cities thought to have evolved within Europe over centuries,” corresponding with the notion of the city as situated at the heart of the European

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12 Hennecke, Die kritische Rekonstruktion als Leitbild, 261. Kleihues talks about his choice of terms in Josef Paul Kleihues, “Städtebau ist Erinnerung,” in Internationale Bauausstellung Berlin 1984/87: die Neubaugebiete - Dokumente, Projekte, ed. Josef Paul Kleihues (Stuttgart: Gerd Hatje, 1993), 17. He argues that the term “Critical” modifies the idea of “reconstruction,” allowing it to mean something new, rather than a rehashing of older structures or styles. The fact that Hennecke can make this critique shows how far the Critical Reconstruction of Stimmann and Hoffmann-Axthelm had drifted from Kleihues’s original theories.

13 Hennecke, Die kritische Rekonstruktion als Leitbild, 198.

14 Ibid., 194.
Union, and, importantly, as existing in opposition to the eastern European “other.” This discourse, she argues, reifies Cold War oppositions of Europe as “Western” – rational, democratic, politically stable and urban, and distinct from an irrational, communist, rural East. Using this logic, the results of socialist urban planning are easily construed as “something alien, imposed on the supposedly ‘organic’ structures of the European city.” The model of the continental “European city” also offered Berlin a way to market itself as a desirable location for companies and residents amidst an ever more competitive global economy. As noted in Chapter 2, planners and government leaders in the late twentieth century increasingly felt pressure to structure their cities to emphasize supposedly unique, “local” qualities in order to attract investment and promote growth. Even if Berlin had never possessed a true, “historical” city core in the ways that other urban spaces did, it seemed that now was the perfect time to create one.

Much of Berlin’s GDR architecture did not fit this bill. Having been constructed in the 1960s and 1970s, it was considered too recent to be deemed “historical,” too international and quotidian to be “local,” and, quite simply, too kitschy to be appealing to investors or clients. For the Critical Reconstructionists, especially, this style of architecture and planning constituted the worst kind of spatial void in Berlin: dispersed, car-friendly planning, with wide avenues, sweeping green spaces, and unadorned white towers of offices and apartments. “The European and especially the West German urban landscape,” stated Critical Reconstruction proponent Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani, for example, “has clearly been destroyed less by the war then by the planners who, because of their abstract, biased, and global conception of a city which in their view is an addition of quantitative functions, have turned [these spaces] mostly into cheerless

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15 Weszkalnys, Berlin, Alexanderplatz, 53.

16 These efforts are underscored by the massive amount of effort and money that the city of Berlin spent on marketing during the 1990s. These initiatives are examined at length in Till, The New Berlin; and Claire Colomb, Staging the New Berlin: Place Marketing and the Politics of Urban Reinvention Post-1989 (Hoboken: Routledge, 2011).
and desolate places.” Stimmann and Hoffmann-Axthelm had also long been critics of this style of planning, calling it the “anti-city,” a “disaster” of planning that had utterly failed to deliver on its promises. And although Critical Reconstruction’s various advocates were equally critical of post-war Modernism in both East and West Berlin, the state’s ownership of land in the former East allowed them much more influence on that part of the city. As a result, mid-century Modernist GDR architecture became Critical Reconstruction’s main target of destruction.

This impression was furthered by the frequent characterization of East Berlin architecture, especially Alexanderplatz, as a “totalitarian” space that was somehow devoid of symbols of democracy. Essays in the official publications concerning the 1993 planning competition for Alexanderplatz emphasize the “socialist” nature of the square, calling it the product of “a contemptible, bloodless, post-war Modernism” that resulted in “a yawning emptiness.” Critics likened it to the “no man’s land of Potsdamer Platz after the fall of the Berlin Wall,” and “the result of highly debatable totalitarian planning in the 1960s and 1970s under the socialist regime.” The historical importance of Alexanderplatz as one of the main sites of the resistance movement that led to the Wende was also ignored in all official rhetoric. In this way, as Weszkalnys notes, many spaces in East Berlin “were reconceptualized as [having] a specific kind of emptiness typical of the socialist system.” Her ethnography of the re-planning of

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20 Weszkalnys, Berlin, Alexanderplatz, 65.
Alexanderplatz in the early 1990s reveals multiple instances of this attitude. For example, she recounts,

The need for restructuring Alexanderplatz, as an East German SenStadt [Senate Department for Urban Development and Environment] administrator explained, had been an outcome of Germany’s reunification. “This oasis of socialist planning,” he suggested, “doesn’t match the requirements of contemporary society. Even though some of the existing buildings have been recently renovated, they are not designed for the long-term future.” In light of the various guiding images for Berlin – the metropolis, the global city, or the European city – Alexanderplatz had come to appear inadequate.\(^2\)

In addition to having spatial voids, East Berlin was frequently portrayed as socially empty. As noted above, Hoffmann-Axthelm, in particular, was convinced that because it lacked the conditions of small-scale land ownership, East Berlin possessed no middle class and was devoid of citizens who were capable of self-governance. This demeaning and paternalistic belief drew on general Western conceptions of East Germans as inferior. As Weszkalnys demonstrates in her work, even the term “Ostalgie,” a marriage of the term “East” (“Ost”) and “nostalgia” (“Nostalgie”), contributes to the portrayal of East Berliners as emotional and irrational: the emphasis on a foolish “nostalgia” for a “lost past,” rather than the sensible possession of a legitimate “history,” rhetorically deprives East Germans of the capability to comprehend their past and legitimizes the more “official” understanding of history put forward by Critical Reconstruction’s proponents.\(^2\) Alexanderplatz in particular was often depicted as a social void because it harbored the “wrong” kind of people, such as immigrants, vagrants, and criminals. Numerous news reports throughout the 1990s represented Alexanderplatz as dangerous, further

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\(^{21}\) Ibid.

\(^{22}\) Ibid., 75. The popular film Good Bye, Lenin! (2003), in which an East German teen tries to recreate the day-to-day life of the GDR in order not to traumatize his bedridden mother with the realization that the Wall has fallen, is a prime example of this attitude.
underscoring the need for its renovation and renewal as a space of capitalist leisure geared
towards a bourgeois public who would possess the “right” kinds of values and lifestyles.²³

**Voids and Colonial Discourse**

Scholars who work in the transdisciplinary field of post-colonial studies have identified
several tactics commonly used by colonizing societies in order to suppress and subjugate native
colonial populations. In his seminal work *Orientalism* (1979), for example, literary scholar
Edward Said argues that Western Europeans have a history of discursively constructing
colonized cultures as backward, without history, illiterate, emotional, and even violent – in other
words, as lacking the trappings of a supposedly “civilized” Western society – in order to
legitimize the appropriation of their lands and labor.²⁴ Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith notes
how “primitive” peoples are often portrayed as not being able to use their minds or intellects:
“We could not invent things, we could not create institutions or history, we could not imagine,
we could not produce anything of value, we did not know how to use land and other
resources.”²⁵ The logic of colonization depends on the idea that, since the people of a colonized
nation are incapable of self-governance or of economic prosperity, colonizers are not only free to
pursue the seizure and “proper” utilization of resources, but they see themselves as morally
*responsible* for doing so. Having subjugated a people, colonizers, as literary scholar Henry
Schwarz argues, then “tend to implant modern structures on their territories,” including capitalist

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²³ Ibid., 72.
²⁴ See Edward W Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979). Along with works by Frantz Fanon and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Said’s work is commonly regarded as one of the foundational texts in the field of post-colonial studies.
economic practices, Western European political structures, and, importantly, the writing of “official” historical accounts.26

Though East Germany was, in many ways, already “modern” when the Wall fell, and its residents were mainly ethnic Germans who would not normally be considered “indigenous” in the post-colonial sense, East Germans were made subject to many of these practices by the mainly West German-led reunified government after 1990. As noted above, the merging of the two countries was not based on mutual compromise, but on the imposition of West German political and economic structures on the East. Of course, given the failure of the Soviet system, much of this change was both practically necessary and welcomed by former East Germans, however difficult it made the transition. Unemployment skyrocketed in the Eastern states after reunification, and many areas have still not caught up economically with the former Western states after more than 25 years. But as many historians of Germany’s reunification have noted, along with this political and economic takeover came the assumption that East Germany would also be culturally and socially subsumed by the West. Despite their forty years of individual development as a nation, East Germans were regularly portrayed as being without “actual” history, as emotionally swayed by a “nostalgia” for the anachronistic ways of life that they had had during the time of division, and as being unable to self-govern because they lacked experience with land ownership. This attitude is neatly summed up in a quote from none other than Karl Marx, which serves as the epigraph to Said’s book: “They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented.”27 This line from one of the progenitors of socialist thought is, when applied to the case of reunified Berlin, both ironic and very fitting, in that the


27 See the commentary on this passage in ibid., 11.
planners who most thoroughly perpetrated this form of colonial marginalization on the former
Communist residents and landscape were themselves members of the radical left who held to the
utopian belief that they were responsible for creating a new, more just and prosperous society
that would benefit the “everyday” residents of the city.28

The supposed “voids” in East Berlin were often rendered tangible through visuals,
particularly maps, which appeared to plainly illustrate the “emptiness” of the city and to project
its “completion” through infill. Such maps appeared frequently in government publications (both
ones produced internally and ones produced for “public” consumption, such as pamphlets and
books), on the Berlin.de website, and in city-sponsored exhibitions.29 Here it is useful to once
again draw on the work of geographer David Harvey, who, in his 1990 book The Condition of
Postmodernity, traces the history of map-making as a tool of political power that allows for the
“conquest and control of space” by portraying it as something easily “malleable, and therefore
capable of domination through human action.”30 The map view, he argues, also allows for the
reductive “homogenization and reification of the rich diversity of spatial stories,” and the
production of the invisibility of the map-maker, who, because his or her gaze is constructed from

28 Schwartz takes issue with Said’s Orientalism, arguing the it “divided the world into opposing camps – the Orient vs.
the Orientalists – that reproduced the rhetoric of the Cold War, now mirrored back onto the colonizing projects of England and
France. … It did this in a dramatically ‘totalizing’ fashion, making the colonial relationship the most determining one in the life
of any individual so implicated. The Orientalists, according to Said, produced the Orient as an object of study and fascination, but
mainly one of control. This was reminiscent of the stereotypes hurled back and forth by U.S. and Soviet camps during the
period.” Ibid. While this binary model clearly elides many of the complexities – in Germany as well as elsewhere – of colonial
interactions, in the case of Alexanderplatz and the Planwerk Innenstadt, the Cold War opposition inherent in Said’s model is
arguably quite fitting.

29 One of Stimmann’s initiatives was to create a physical model of the inner city for display to the public. This model
and several others are still on permanent display at the city’s planning offices. See Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und
public interest in Berlin’s history and built environment is also illustrated by the blossoming of bookstores, museums, and other
institutions around this topic. The most conspicuous of these is Berlin Story, a bookshop devoted exclusively to Berlin history.
The shop also sponsors a yearly “history festival,” has a museum and also oversees a restored World War II bunker. See “Wir

30 David Harvey, The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change (Oxford: Blackwell,
1990), 254. Numerous other scholars have contributed work on the relationship between landscape visualization and colonial
the very beginning as outside the realm of vision, remains aloof and unimplicated in the scene.  

This type of map view thus allows the planner both total control and total invisibility in the shaping of spaces. In doing so, as Harvey emphasizes, the map or plan necessarily cuts out nuances and details, rendering space legible through the erasure of its lived realities. As will be discussed in detail below, these characteristics pervade the visuals used by Stimmann and other planners to remake East Berlin, especially the aesthetically reductive map form of the Planwerk Innenstadt.

Gentrification and the “Urban Frontier”

Another useful framework for understanding what happened in central East Berlin under Critical Reconstruction is provided by the concept of “gentrification.” First introduced by the sociologist Ruth Glass to describe the process of inner-city renewal by upper-class residents in London in the 1960s, it has become a common term for describing neighborhood change in terms of social class, typically describing the ways in which more wealthy residents or businesses displace working-class ones.  

Coinciding with the post-modern return to the “historical” or “European city” discussed in the previous chapters, gentrification grew from a relatively limited and sporadic phenomenon in the mid-1960s to a global phenomenon in the 1990s, supported and sponsored by city planning and marketing departments as well as corporate real estate interests. But despite its positive connotations for particular planners or constituents, the term implies not simply the refashioning of a given district from an architectural or urban design perspective, but the concomitant marginalization and, often, displacement, of working-class populations.

Geographer Neil Smith describes it as “the class remake of the central urban landscape” that

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represents “a struggle not just for new and old urban spaces but for the symbolic political power to determine the urban future.”

As sociologist Sharon Zukin argues, gentrification can be seen as a form of urban colonialism, and as such it dovetails perfectly with the discourse of the “void,” as described above. Amplifying arguments also made by Smith, Zukin points to the “pioneer” mentality that underlies gentrification:

Regardless of topography, building stock, and even existing populations, gentrification persists as a collective effort to appropriate the center for elements of a new urban middle class. The notion of gentrifiers as “urban pioneers” is properly viewed as an ideological justification of middle-class appropriation. Just as white settlers in the nineteenth century forced Native Americans from their traditional grounds, so gentrifiers, developers, and new commercial uses have cleared the downtown “frontier” of existing populations. This appropriation is coordinated, logically enough, with a local expansion of jobs and facilities in businesses services.

Zukin also sees gentrification as a mode of specifically privileging cultural consumers, rather than existing working-class or small-scale manufacturing interests.

Gentrification joins the economic claim to space with a cultural claim that gives priority to the demands of historic preservationists and arts producers. In this view, “historic” buildings can only be appreciated to their maximum value if they are explained, analyzed, and understood as part of an aesthetic discourse, such as the history of architecture and art. Such buildings rightfully “belong” to people who have the resources to search for the original building plans and study their house in the context of the architect’s career. They belong to residents who restore mahogany paneling and buy copies of nineteenth-century faucets instead of those who prefer aluminum siding. Gentrifiers’ capital for attaching themselves to history gives them license to “reclaim” the downtown for their own uses. … By means of the building stock, they identify with an earlier group of builders rather than with the existing lower class population, with the “ladies’ Mile” of early-twentieth-century department stores instead of the discount stores that have replaced them.

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35 Zukin, “Gentrification as Market and Place,” 41.
Clearly, Critical Reconstruction, seen in this context, was a strong force behind the gentrification of central Berlin. Relying on the idea that East Berlin, in particular, was a “frontier” devoid of the “proper” uses or residents, Stimmann and the other proponents of this method made a concerted effort to convert its landscape into a center of cultural consumption. As such, it constituted what I would call a “soft” or “subversive” form of colonialism that attempted to mask its classist and Western-centric intentions with claims about the need for economic growth and the supposedly objective importance of Berlin’s “historical” urban forms.

Erasing the GDR’s Modernist Buildings

The Schloss as a Structuring Element of GDR Memory Discourse

Few observers of Berlin’s post-Wall rebuilding could miss the contentious dispute over the demolition of the Palast der Republik, which, alongside Libeskind’s Jewish Museum, was undoubtedly the most internationally-discussed facet of the city’s reconstruction. Standing at the eastern end of Berlin’s via triumphalis, this gigantic building inhabited the site of the former baroque Prussian imperial “city palace,” or “Stadtschloss” (commonly referred to simply as the “Schloss”). This earlier structure had sustained considerable damage during World War II, and in 1950 its remains were dynamited by the East German regime (fig. 5.1). The space was paved and used as a parade ground until the early 1970s, when Erich Honecker’s government sponsored the construction of a massive building in the style of “high-gloss international

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36 This removal was done despite protests from prominent GDR architects and historians. The government cited Allied bombing damage, lack of funds for reconstruction, and the monarchist history of the building as reasons for its demolition. By demolishing the palace and turning into a parade ground, GDR officials were making a strong ideological gesture against both the history of Prussia and liberal-democratic capitalism. One of the palace’s portals was preserved and reused in neighboring Sekretariat building; it contained the balcony from which Karl Liebknecht had prematurely declared Communist victory in 1918. See Brian Ladd, The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 57–58.
Modernism” that was named the Palast der Republik – an allusion to the historical significance of the space, but also to the GDR’s opposition to the idea of monarchy and supposed status as a democratic “republic” (fig. 5.2). It was a multipurpose building, with spaces for parliamentary and party meetings, but it was chiefly meant as a site of entertainment and consumerism for GDR citizens, housing three restaurants, a post office, a bowling alley, a movie theater, a concert hall, and numerous shops.

This shift in use from national parade ground to space of private consumption was an explicit gesture meant to suggest that the leaders of the GDR, however misguided or hypocritically, were interested in citizens’ everyday welfare and happiness. As with most realities of life in the GDR, the Palast’s users were not deluded by these propagandistic gestures; though the site became a tourist destination for East Germans, and its events, especially concerts, were heavily attended, the building quickly acquired nicknames such as “Ballast der Republik,” “Palazzo Prozzi” (“Chateau Show”) and “Erich’s Lamp Shop.” These names reveal the capacity that East Germans had developed for “doublethink,” i.e. separating state ideology from private life and fulfillment: for them, the Palast symbolized the GDR’s hypocrisy, but it also presented them with opportunities for personal enjoyment, which they eagerly accepted. Even after unification, the Palast remained an ambivalent symbol, but one, nevertheless, around which groups eventually rallied in order to preserve the memory of their heritage, however fraught.

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38 Honecker promoted an interest in the historical significance of the area as connected to the nation’s German and Prussian roots. He was also responsible for restoring a prominent nearby statue of Frederick the Great, followed later by Schinkel’s Altes Museum and other important monuments. Thus the Palast der Republik’s designers, a collective of architects led by Heinz Graffunder, paid particular attention to how it would integrate with the surrounding buildings, as Emily Pugh notes. Pugh, “The Berlin Wall and the Urban Space and Experience of East and West Berlin, 1961-1989,” 175, 285.

39 Ibid., 184; Andreas Ulrich, Palast Der Republik: Ein Rückblick (München: Prestel, 2006), 33.

40 Strom notes that figures such as Ernst Thälmann, subject of another popular monument that the city wanted to demolish, were “undoubtedly more popular now than [they ever were] in the GDR.” Strom, Building the New Berlin, 68.
When, in 1993, the building was declared contaminated with asbestos and the reunited federal government voted to tear it down for health reasons, the decision was met with heated protest by citizens’ groups, intellectuals, and politicians, and a decade of public debate ensued. The final parliamentary decision to demolish the Palast der Republik and replace it with a replica of the Schloss was made in 2003 in accordance with the recommendation of a “commission of experts.” The new building, now finally under construction as of 2013, will house the “ethnological” collection of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, which comprises objects from non-Western cultures including Africa, Latin America, East Asia, India, and Polynesia. The new palace will thus complete “Museum Island,” the cluster of museums to the north of the Schlossplatz, one of Berlin’s biggest tourist attractions.

Like the extant Nazi buildings in the city center, the Palast der Republik represented a violent and repressive regime, a fact that had never been lost on East Berliners. Yet many of them rallied around this formerly despised building as a reminder of that very regime and of the forty-year history, society, and culture that it represented. The assertions of historians like Brian Ladd, who characterizes the Schloss debate as being based in “competing nostalgias,” thus do East Berliners an injustice. Their bid to preserve the structure, I would argue, did not grow out of a simple wish to continue to live out a set of outdated and innocent ignorance mores, or to whitewash a troubled history with kitschy remembrances, but out of a wish to draw attention to the contradictions of their own history and to publicly think through and situate this history amidst a new socio-political moment. Perhaps because of a lack of international pressure to

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publicly contextualize or memorialize this part of Germany’s past in any meaningful way (as there was with regard to the Holocaust and the Nazi regime), as architectural historian Florian Hertweck contends, “the motives for a reconstruction of the Berlin palace façade … are above all based in a supposedly collective need to find cultural normality” through simply refusing to deal with the history of the GDR.44

The Marginalization of Public Input at Alexanderplatz

This problematic elision of East Germany’s built heritage in the service of a new “normality” took place at Alexanderplatz, as well. As discussed in Chapter 4, Alexanderplatz had grown up naturally as a market square on the eastern edge of Berlin’s center, and by the 1920s it was a major transportation and commercial hub. One of the most notable buildings on the pre-war square was the Warenhaus Tietz, a massive department store built around the turn of the century by the Tietz family.45 In the typical style of the day, the store’s skylights and open floorplans provided a theatrical space where goods were “staged” amidst an atmosphere of opulence.46 The two office buildings added to the square by Peter Behrens in the late 1920s created a pedestrian plaza bordered on the other side by the façade of the Tietz store, creating an intentional spatial dialogue between the three structures (fig. 4.19). World War II bombing resulted in the ruination of the Tietz store and most of the surrounding area, and the subsequent division of the city landed Alexanderplatz in the zone of Communist East Berlin. Then, in the 1960s, the GDR government sponsored the renovation of the space as a large public square that


45 It was at one point the largest department store in Europe. Gerwin Zohlen, “Passages, Emporium, Department Store,” in Galeria Kaufhof Berlin-Alexanderplatz: Josef Paul Kleihues, by Kleihues + Kleihues (Berlin: Jovis verlag, 2007), 11.

46 Zohlen also draws attention to the fact that this opulence was intended to offset the notion that department stores were only for “the milieu of ‘domestics’ who wanted to buy necessities cheaply.” Ibid. An interesting comparison today might be found in the subtle differences between the business approaches as those of Wal-Mart and Target stores, where the same emphasis on economy is pursued through very different types of branding and in-store arrangement of goods.
could serve as both a recreation and demonstration venue, complete with a “Fountain of International Friendship” and a “World Time Clock” that physically expressed the GDR’s embeddedness in international socialism (figs. 5.3-5.4). But the square’s refurbishment was meant to symbolize consumption and commerce, as well: the open pedestrian space was surrounded by a cluster of buildings that included several office towers, a high-rise hotel, restaurants, and, echoing the former presence of the Tietz store, the Warenhaus Centrum, the largest department store in East Germany (fig. 5.5).

Barely two decades after the square’s completion under the GDR plan, the fall of the Berlin Wall marked the beginning of a whole new era in the square’s development. As Wezkalnys notes, “Alexanderplatz became an apt vehicle for talking about the demise of the GDR state and the future it once embodied.” A statement by the Department of Urban Development and Environment during the 1993 master plan competition (discussed in Chapter 4) declared that Alexanderplatz was to be reconstituted as a symbol of Berlin’s “inner unification.” This lofty goal was validated by the widespread portrayal of post-Wall Alexanderplatz as a spatial void: an unwelcoming wasteland that embodied the worst kind of socialist design that appealed only to backward East Germans who were not able to embrace the West. It was also seen as a social void, full of the “wrong” kinds of people – “dangerous gypsies, eastern European con men, violent Yugoslavian youth gangs, and illegal moneychangers.”

As recounted in Chapter 4, the master plan competition for the square was won by Hans Kollhoff, whose design featured stone-clad commercial buildings surrounded by a ring of high-
rises with detailing that echoed both American art deco and late-nineteenth century commercial European architecture (figs. 4.22-4.26). This decision was followed by several years of negotiations with private investors and the public.\textsuperscript{51} The investors funded a publicity campaign that included newspaper supplements, public discussions, storefront exhibitions, leaflets, and an “Alex-Info-Bus” where people could receive details on the plans. Residents and users of the square were also invited by planners to “mitgestalten” ("co-design") and “mitbestimmen” ("have a say") in the design process through questionnaires and mail-in response forms, with the promise that officials and developers would incorporate these suggestions. The pamphlets stated, “Your design suggestions and the results of the survey will be evaluated and will flower into the planning, for nothing ought to be built over Berliners’ heads.”\textsuperscript{52} The planning process also resulted in the grassroots organization of citizens’ groups such as the “Bürgervertretung Alexanderplatz” ("Citizens’ Representation Alexanderplatz"). This group did not oppose the idea of changing the square, but rather “development on a grand scale,” and they acted as a critical voice throughout the negotiations.\textsuperscript{53} However, the promised “flowering” of public opinion into actual design solutions never actually took place; instead, as Wezkalnys clearly documents, public comments and critiques were meticulously filed away but never used to make changes to the plans. Instead, officials seemed to trust themselves in their role as the “experts” that are so often favored in German planning culture, assuming that they simply “knew better” than the public did.\textsuperscript{54} Because their input was solicited and yet completely ignored, many of those

\textsuperscript{51} The public reaction to the Kollhoff plans was resoundingly negative; Strom recounts that there were screaming matches between Kollhoff, Hassemer, and citizens at various public meetings. See Strom, \textit{Building the New Berlin}, 212. Karin Lenhart offers an extremely detailed description of the various proceedings. See Karin Lenhart, \textit{Berliner Metropoly: Stadtentwicklungspolitik Im Berliner Bezirk Mitte Nach Der Wende} (Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 2001).

\textsuperscript{52} Weszkalnys, \textit{Berlin, Alexanderplatz}, 115.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 126.

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 116; Strom, \textit{Building the New Berlin}, 146.
participating in these public discussions and surveys rightly felt themselves to be “exploited to legitimate the decisions of influential politicians.”\textsuperscript{55}

The planners’ choice to ignore public input was bolstered by the perceived lack of cultural or historical savvy amongst former East Germans. Weszkalnys reports that administrators frequently thought of these citizens in terms of

the image of an activist who was East German first and citizen [of reunited Germany] second, who had lived in the area for years, if not decades, and who was now anxious not to lose his privileged living space. Sometimes, such a person was believed to be backward-looking socialist or an elderly member of the [\textit{Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus}, the successor to the East German Communist party] the socialist party, rejecting everything “Western” and wishing “to preserve Alexanderplatz as a GDR museum.”\textsuperscript{56}

Another particularly telling example of this attitude appears in a text produced by the section of the Department of Urban Development dedicated to evaluating citizens’ letters:

[The letters] mirror, aside from a general rejection of radical changes, worries about a loss of identity. … Alexanderplatz is regarded by “East Berliners” as the center of East Berlin. The redesign of East Berlin’s center in the sixties and seventies is understood as part of both an individual and a collective history of the citizens of the former GDR. … [But] the rebuilding of Alexanderplatz in the sixties and seventies also consciously destroyed and changed numerous old structures. … [The proposed design] attaches itself to the layers of the older urban design history. … Decisions concerning how to deal with existing buildings are never right or wrong; rather they are oriented towards different design objectives.\textsuperscript{57}

This view was shared by the various proponents of Critical Reconstruction: that mid-century Modernism, especially as it was expressed in the architecture of East Germany, was both in itself ahistorical, and was the result of a heedless destruction of “actual” historical structures from earlier in the century. This double lack – a lack of historical import paired with a lack of

\textsuperscript{55} Weszkalnys, \textit{Berlin, Alexanderplatz}, 36; see also Lenhart, \textit{Berliner Metropoly}. Weszkalnys also discusses the creation of the “\textit{Stadtforum von Unten}” (“City Forum From Below”), a citizens’ counterpoint to the official \textit{Stadtforum}. See Weszkalnys, \textit{Berlin, Alexanderplatz}, 37.

\textsuperscript{56} Weszkalnys, \textit{Berlin, Alexanderplatz}, 128.

\textsuperscript{57} Quoted in ibid.
supposed respect for history – was used to justify the reconstruction of “layers of the older urban design history” through the demolition of the existing GDR buildings and the adherence to the styles outlined in Kollhoff’s master plan. Paired with the idea that the individuals and groups who opposed this development represented a social “lack” in terms of their political and cultural knowledge (that they were “nostalgic,” backward, or even die-hard communists, and that they were unable to understand what constituted a legitimate “history”), the Critical Reconstruction of Alexanderplatz seemed, in the planners’ eyes, to be a necessary step towards the creation of a cityscape that reflected reunited Germany’s (Western-centric) cohesion and prowess.

**Kleihues’s Redesign of the Centrum Department Store**

In a manner similar to the Palast der Republik, the East Berlin government’s redesign of Alexanderplatz during the 1960s and 1970s had been intended to reinforce the image of the state as a provider of material contentment to its own inhabitants, and this image was embodied especially well by the Centrum store, constructed between 1967 and 1970 (figs. 5.5-5.14). Designed by a collective of architects headed by Josef Kaiser, the Centrum was a simple box sheathed in a distinctive, honeycomb-patterned aluminum façade that became one of the most remarkable and memorable facets of Alexanderplatz. Inside the store, state-of-the-art fluorescent lights illuminated the four open sales floors, surrounding dual service cores housing elevators, escalators, and restrooms. The Centrum housed cafes and restaurants, and it created a dialogue with the open square through an exterior mezzanine level that provided shoppers and diners with views of the activities on the plaza (figs. 5.5 and 5.14). The store thus represented both technological advancement and aesthetic savvy in a building that also connoted a certain standard of living. Its air of leisure and consumerism was directed both inwardly, at the GDR’s

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citizens, and outwardly, representing the advancement of the GDR’s society and government to international visitors and acting as a “show window to the West.” As Joachim Palutzki remarks in his history of East German architecture, the Centrum building in particular was intended to furnish “proof that the international standard of consumption could also be reached under socialist conditions.” (For instance, it was, according to a former employee, the only place in the GDR where one could buy coveted denim jeans.) Fittingly, the building’s formal language clearly mirrors Western commercial designs from the same period (fig. 5.15). The plan also took the square’s earlier history into account, harking back to Weimar-era plans for the square (never completed), and Behrens’s buildings, having survived the war, also provided a clear physical basis for the Centrum in their height and massing (fig. 5.16).

The Centrum chain was bought out by the large West German Kaufhof Corporation in 1990, and the company hired Josef Paul Kleihues to redesign the Alexanderplatz store, which was renamed “Galeria Kaufhof.” The most controversial aspect of the design was the complete removal of the striking honeycomb façade, which, after significant construction delays, was removed beginning in 2004. (The Kaufhof corporation planned to complete the renovations—while keeping the store open—in time for Berlin’s hosting of the World Cup in 2006. The stripping of the façade elicited a “cry of outrage” from the public, but despite demonstrations, online petitions, and calls for preservation from members of the Berlin parliament, the head of

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59 Weszkalnys, Berlin, Alexanderplatz, 70.
60 Palutzki, Architektur in Der DDR, 258.
62 The Centrum chain was explicitly designed with a different, striking façade in each location. The Dresden and Ostbahnhof (Berlin) locations were also very well known.
the Kaufhof corporation declared the façade “too deteriorated to be restored” (figs. 5.17-5.18). The art and architecture collective atelier für alles [sic] was one of the most prominent agitators in favor of preserving the façade. They saw its destruction as part of the “rampant destruction, deprecation, and elimination of GDR Modernism” across the former East Germany, and noted its importance both for residents (for whom the façade had long been a part of daily life), and local institutions such as historical museums, who saw it as a key artifact to be preserved. Many observers rightly attributed the conflict over the façade to a shift in generational tastes: the national paper Die Welt noted that while the “parent generation” was tearing down the Centrum façade, younger people were creating a cult out of reusing and reconstructing East German mid-century Modernist architecture to create things like trendy clubs – even on Alexanderplatz itself. “As it did to many other architects, [the Centrum’s] unique aesthetic really appealed to us,” write atelier für alles members Tilman Weitz and Olaf Gerecke. “Buildings whose appearance is so angular and distinctive have become quite rare. Even for one-time visitors to the square, the Centrum building is still today one of the main images [they remember].” The authors are clear that their appreciation for the building has nothing to do with “Ostalgie,” since their group comprises designers from both former East and West, and in any case they were all “too young to connect the GDR with the image of an enemy, political intrigues, or a lost


In response to the *atelier für alles* initiative, the construction company in charge of removing the façade did allow about half of the remains to be auctioned, and many of the two-meter pieces were subsequently acquired by local institutions, artists, and residents.\(^7^1\) The company’s promise to use the remaining pieces to cover the elevated walkway between the department store and the neighboring Park Hotel, however, was never fulfilled.\(^7^2\)

Kleihues’s design made absolutely no effort to preserve or even allude to any aspects of the GDR design. As the original author of the theory of Critical Reconstruction, Kleihues encouraged a return to historical forms while making use of cutting-edge materials and techniques. His firm stated that the design of the new Kaufhof makes reference to the “great department store tradition at Alexanderplatz” exemplified by the former Warenhaus Tietz, and simultaneously continues the “European urban planning tradition” by linking to the the idea of “urban architecture,” i.e. the dense urban configurations envisioned by Martin Wagner in the 1920s (figs. 5.19-5.21).\(^7^3\) The design uses the structural shell of the Centrum store, but fundamentally reconfigures both the interior and the façade. Like the Tietz department store of the 1920s, Kleihues’s design comprises a clearly marked entrance and a façade punctuated by vertical strips of windows, and it includes shop windows along the bottom two floors that tie it directly to the foot traffic on the square. Kleihues’s design also looks “historical” in that it responds in a very literal way to Behrens’s structures, using a matching travertine for its

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\(^7^0\) “Als Ost-West gemischte Gruppe waren wir außerdem wohl einfach zu jung, um mit der DDR noch Feindbild, Politromanze oder verlorene Kindheit zu verbinden.” Ibid.

\(^7^1\) These included the Berlin DDR Museum, as well as *atelier für alles* member Tilman Weitz, who created floor lamps out of them. Artist Heike Klussmann has made several works using the façade elements, as well as works that document the auctioning and demolition process. See Heike Klussmann, “Heike Klussmann,” July 29, 2015, www.klussmann.org.


\(^7^3\) Kleihues + Kleihues, *Galeria Kaufhof Berlin-Alexanderplatz: Josef Paul Kleihues* (Berlin: Jovis, 2007), 29. There was added historical continuity in that the Kaufhof corporation was actually the “grandchild” of the Tietz family business. The Kaufhof firm has since gone under, and the store was acquired by the Canadian chain Hudson’s Bay. See Maris Hubschmid, “Kanadier Haben Im Bieterwettbewerb Die Nase Vorn,” *Der Tagesspiegel*, June 16, 2015.
façade. The interior of the new store also recalls the historic opulence and carefully choreographed circulation of classic department stores through a large atrium that pierces the building from top to bottom, letting in natural light, and the theatrical staging of commerce encouraged by escalators that smoothly shuttle visitors from floor to floor, affording them a series of views through the space at both the products and other shoppers. Gold-colored metallic accents against gleaming white surfaces create a luxurious color palette, and though the aesthetic is pared down, emphasizing smooth surfaces and geometric forms, the design clearly echoes neo-classical rationalism in its axiality and grandeur. Nothing could be further from the experience of the Centrum, with its horizontally oriented, isolated, and fluorescent-lit sales floors.

The new design for the store foregrounds the experiential quality of shopping as spectacle: a spectacle that involves, at least in the minds of architects and planners, a particular kind of spatial encounter with history, through visual references to the past and through the recreation of the kind of luxurious space of the turn-of-the-century department store, which itself emphasized spectacle. A large atrium pierces the building from top to bottom, letting in natural light, a precedent set by the very first department store, Paris’s *Au Bon Marché*, which was emulated in many turn-of-the-century designs in Berlin and elsewhere. As a quintessentially industrial and wholly novel building type in the late nineteenth century, the department store presented an escape from everyday life into realms of comparative fantasy by enabling customers to browse through items amidst opulent surroundings. Emile Zola’s novel *Au Bonheur des Dames* (1883) famously summed up the reverence inspired by these new commercial venues by calling them “cathedrals of consumption.” In the case of the Kaufhof, Kleihues was consciously referencing this historical typology in order not only to evoke a similar aura of

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74 Zohlen, “Passages, Emporium, Department Store,” 32.
extravagance, but, on top of that, to suggest a historical provenance for the space that lent it yet more import and grandeur. In removing the memorable aluminum exterior and referencing the early history of department store architecture on the interior of the building, Kleihues and his clients thus seem to have both complied with Berlin planners’ wishes to counteract “socialist” or Modernist planning, and made what they viewed as a necessary and commercially savvy update to the store’s image.

The many threads of built history at Alexanderplatz illustrate architecture’s role as bearer of representational meaning or “identity,” and the role of public discourse in framing that identity by attaching meanings to form; however, the nature of that meaning is often slippery or counterintuitive. Listening to current planning rhetoric, one might conclude that the Centrum’s association with specifically “socialist” planning made it unappealing to its new owners; certainly the logic of the “socialist void” figured heavily in the publications and statements by city planners. However, this rhetoric was applied unevenly: there are examples of successful adaptive reuse of landmarked GDR buildings even on Alexanderplatz itself. For instance, the Haus des Lehrers (“House of the Teacher,” a name honoring a destroyed pre-war building that was home to the Teachers’ Guild), designed in 1962 by the well-known East German architect Hermann Henselmann, has been successfully converted into fashionable office and convention spaces (figs. 5.22-5.23). The “socialist” associations of such a structure does not seem to have hindered its transition into a useful and marketable space. Thus, despite the bandying of the term “totalitarian” in relationship to Alexanderplatz, its “socialist” political associations were ultimately probably not the prime impetus for the demolition or renovation of GDR-era buildings; rather, it was the Centrum’s and other buildings’ perceived lack of “historical” value

or, even more simply, their overt outdatedness, that precipitated their removal. Here, “history,” in its most simplistic form – a travertine façade – has become simply another tool of commerce. There was no profit to be found in preserving the Centrum as a marker of East German “history,” and, unlike that which was felt over the Nazi past, there was little international or national pressure to aggressively memorialize or “work through” the legacies of the GDR in the built environment. Critical Reconstruction, in this case, conveniently provided the Kaufhof corporation with a trendy and opulent new design that referenced the glory days of department stores a century ago and erased the kitschy, fluorescent-lit memories of the Centrum, shoring up the company’s desired image for the store as a “cathedral of consumption” rather than a potentially laughable relic of the recent past. After all, what could an East German building have to do with capitalist commerce? Just as East Berliners themselves were looked down on by planners as “backward” or “Ostalgic,” so too was the architecture of their capital city swept away as if it were a mere aberration, so that the threads of what officials considered “legitimate” history – i.e. structures from the time before World War II – could be picked up again, or, in this case, be practically re-fabricated.

Remaking East Berlin via the Planwerk Innenstadt

What Kleihues and the Kaufhof Corporation achieved on Alexanderplatz was attempted on a much larger and more conceptual scale in Stimmann’s planning work from 1996 to 1999. Having held the position of Senate Construction Director since 1991, Stimmann was forced to vacate the post in 1995 when his supervisor Wolfgang Nagel lost his seat in the Berlin Senate. Stimmann was then reinstated as State Secretary for Planning under Senator Peter Strieder (SPD), the newly elected Senator for Urban Development, Environmental Protection, and
Technology (the post formerly held by CDU politician Volker Hassemer, with whom Stimmann had competed and uneasily collaborated since 1991). Stimmann used this new position as a platform to draft – and ultimately pass into law – the Planwerk Innenstadt ("Inner-city Plan," often referred to simply as "the Planwerk"), authored chiefly in collaboration with Hoffmann-Axthelm (fig. 5.24). Its stated goal was "to create a total, identity-supporting urban planning concept for the inner city area" while encouraging densification "on the basis of historical [urban] structures, where the emphasis would be on the eastern center." The plan also expanded the power of city officials to make decisions over land sales: as Senate Construction Director from 1991-1995, Stimmann’s reach had been limited to the district of Mitte, and the Planwerk greatly expanded his influence, which would now encompass several of Berlin’s central districts. Though this area spanned both East and West Berlin neighborhoods, the majority of the saleable – and thus development-ready – land lay in the East, since so much of that property had formerly been owned by the GDR government.

The creation of the Planwerk did not stem from a simple desire on Stimmann’s part for power or influence; it was, rather, as Hennecke argues, an ambitious “socio-political project” grounded in the belief that a shift in land ownership policies paired with the formal approach of

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76 See Chapter 2 for a breakdown of the various Senate departments by date. Stimmann returned to the office of Senate Construction Director in 2001 when the two departments were combined, and retired for good in 2006. See Hans Stimmann, Von der Sozialutopie zum städtischen Haus: Texte und Interviews von Hans Stimmann, ed. Jörn Düwel and Michael Mönninger (Berlin: DOM, 2011), 39.

77 The plan was introduced to the public and the government in November 1996 via the Stadtforum ("City Forum"). After much discussion, the Planwerk was finally adopted into law by the Berlin parliament in May of 1999. See Hennecke, Die kritische Rekonstruktion als Leitbild, 1. The plan had three additional co-authors: Critical Reconstruction proponent Fritz Neumeyer and architect Manfred Ortmann for the “City-West” portion of the plans, and architect Bernd Albers in collaboration with Hoffmann-Axthelm for the eastern portion. However, they do not figure heavily in the public discussions over the Planwerk, nor do the plans reflect their influence to the same degree that they do Stimmann’s and Hoffmann-Axthelm’s. See Lenhart, Berliner Metropoly, 105; Hennecke, Die kritische Rekonstruktion als Leitbild, 126.


79 Hennecke, Die kritische Rekonstruktion als Leitbild, 267; Strom, Building the New Berlin, 110.
Critical Reconstruction would attract educated, middle-class, politically-active residents to central Berlin, and that these people would become an important and necessary driving force behind a successful reunited city and nation.\(^80\) The implication, of course, was that the area covered by the Planwerk – especially the eastern half of the central region of Berlin – was at present devoid of such residents, even though, as stated in the plans, 300,000 people already lived or worked there.\(^81\) In a manner very similar to what took place at Alexanderplatz and the Schlossplatz, the three-year process whereby the Planwerk was vetted, edited, and then eventually passed into law was one of supposed public involvement, but in actuality its authors took little of this public input into account – partly because they felt that the public lacked the required expertise to make good planning decisions, and partly because their private-public partnership development model meant that their most important constituents and discussants were investors, not residents.\(^82\) Thus, debates about the Planwerk in the Stadtforum (a body created by Senator Hassemeier in the early 1990s as a way to “involve” the public in planning, but also critiqued by many as a group that existed simply for public show\(^83\)) and on the floor of Berlin’s state parliament, where the plans were vehemently opposed by the PDS (the former East German Communist party), resulted in only a few minor changes. Specific neighborhood plans were somewhat reworked via a set of intensive, regional “workshops” (“Werkstatten”) before

\(^{80}\) Hennecke, Die kritische Rekonstruktion als Leitbild, 127.


\(^{83}\) Critics Werner Sewing and Rudolf Stegers were among these; see Werner Sewing, “Berlinische Architektur,” Arch plus, no. 122 (June 1994): 60–69; and Rudolf Stegers, Der Streit um den Potsdamer Platz: Eine Chronik in vier Teilen (Berlin: Deutsche Werkbund, 1990).
being officially approved by the Berlin Senate in 1999, but for the most part these did not succeed in preserving specific GDR buildings or ensembles slated for demolition or renovation.\textsuperscript{84}

However, as many observers have noted, the “official” approval of the Planwerk ultimately meant very little for the concrete future of the city; its power was much more political and rhetorical than physically effectual. Political scientist Elizabeth Strom, for instance, rightly observes that the Planwerk does not guarantee whether anyone wants to buy [the land] under those conditions, and whether once it is bought it will actually be developed as the planners hope. … For this to truly happen, Berlin’s planners will have to become very adept at managing real estate and its development … [and] this has not, historically, been an area in which Berlin’s planning officials have excelled.\textsuperscript{85}

Indeed, since its approval, the plan has experienced significant delays, as well as continued changes.\textsuperscript{86} Given that Berlin has been in the grip of a major recession for the last two decades, the plan has had few of the sweeping effects that Stimmann and Hoffmann-Axthelm envisioned. Rather, it has functioned more distinctly as a discursive tool that, in its marginalization of East Berlin history, identity, and local interests in favor of a particular attachment to the aesthetics of the “European city” and small-scale, bourgeois land ownership, has become the ultimate expression of its authors’ highly conservative, capitalist, and colonialist ideals.

\textit{The Content of the Planwerk: Visualizing Voids, Projecting Wholeness}

Stimmann and others who had been involved in planning politics in Berlin since the 1970s had witnessed the SPD’s planning tactics during that era, which were based in quantitative data analysis and top-down planning techniques, resulting in reams of text that, Stimmann and

\textsuperscript{84} Strom, \textit{Building the New Berlin}, 110; Senatsverwaltung für Inneres, “Planwerk Innenstadt,” 3134. The main changes to this version were substantially fewer proposed changes to traffic patterns. Ibid., 113.

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid.

others recognized, was as inaccessible to the public as it was ineffective for guiding policy. A graphic plan, Hennecke observes, “had the potential, in Stimmann’s eyes, to accomplish the necessary translation of general societal goals into the real space of city life.” Stimmann therefore joined the ranks of post-modern urban designers like Kleihues and many others (such as Aldo Rossi) who had developed a rhetoric the relied heavily on images beginning in the late 1960s, deftly deploying plans, drawings, maps, and photographs in tandem with text in order to support their arguments and theories.

Accordingly, the Planwerk is not primarily a text, but a series of visual documents, primarily in large-scale map form (the German word “Plan” actually means both “map” and “plan”). The main image – literally called the Leitbild, or “guiding image” – is a map of the city center that, in a manner very similar to Kleihues’s 1984 plan for the IBA (fig. 1.25, discussed in Chapter 1), shows the built substance of the city in grey, existing plans in orange, and proposed infill in red (fig. 5.24). The target development area, which falls roughly inside the former boundary of Berlin’s historical baroque Excise Wall, covers about 30 square kilometers and includes the districts of Mitte, Friedrichshain, Kreuzberg, Tiergarten, Schöneberg, and Charlottenburg.

With its easy color-coding and simple lines, the Planwerk, though quite large in scale, initially appears clear and readable. However, any attempt to use it to understand the city’s plans instantly mystifies the reader, in that it cannot actually function alone: unless one is a city...
planner oneself, or intimately involved in the planning process, one has to rely (ironically, perhaps, given Stimmann’s critique of written plans) on the accompanying text or on further research in order to understand how the plans will affect the city. This is because the Planwerk includes no street names, no district borders, and does not mark inner-city train lines or other mass transit routes; the former path of the Berlin Wall, i.e. the division between East and West, is also completely invisible. An interactive version of the map on the city’s website shows the eight “sectors” slated for more detailed discussion in the neighborhood “workshops” highlighted in red, but includes no further details regarding what streets, plazas, or other identifying landmarks are included.\textsuperscript{91} Visually, then, the Planwerk exudes the desired “cohesion” and “wholeness” of Berlin in much the same way that Harvey describes in his critique of colonial map-making. The map’s elision of district divisions and other familiar markers, reducing the urban landscape to an ensemble of shapes and colors, presents the physical re-joining of the two halves of the city as a \textit{fait accompli}.

Because of the lack of identifying information on the Leitbild itself, we are left to rely on other various texts, images, and statements by planners in order to understand exactly what the image is attempting to communicate. Far from operating on its own, the Planwerk works dialectically with these other media to create an overall impression of what it will accomplish. The planning goals stated in the published materials include “sustainable city development through densification,”; “reurbanization” and the “mixing of functions” based on the Leitbild of the “European city”; the improvement of public transit and traffic infrastructure (especially hard to see on the map, since public transit is not marked); better inner-city parks and green spaces; “modernization and completion” of existing structures, especially through building types that are

“eigentumsfähig” ("able to be privately owned"); “a new formulation of Berlin’s city form through a common identity-supporting inner city and with critical respect for all historical layers of city development”; and the knitting together of individually planned parts of the city. But understanding the Planwerk in this way, too, is a dubious undertaking. For instance, the text states that areas “not characterized by an urban mix of functions and inner-city densities” exist in the districts of Tiergarten, Kreuzberg (both former West), Mitte, and Friedrichshain (former East), where “monofunctional Siedlungen” and open spaces like Alexanderplatz characterize large swaths of the city. However, if one superimposes street names and district lines onto the map, it immediately becomes clear that this proposed redevelopment and infill is not equally distributed between former East and West, nor amongst the various districts; the overwhelming majority of it is slated for the eastern portion of Mitte, in areas where GDR development had followed mid-century Modernist planning models, and where property ownership was now in the hands of the state.

The Planwerk was often accompanied (for instance, on the Berlin planning department’s website) by a series of chronological maps called the Schwarzpläne (figure-ground plans), showing the unbuilt areas of the city as white voids, with built regions in black (figs. 5.25-5.29). A tool used by many post-modern urban theorists (including Kleihues), these maps provide an easy illustration of how urban density has decreased since the 1940s, thus presenting historical “evidence” for the need for redevelopment. Stimmann relied on the visual rhetoric of the Schwarzpläne throughout his earlier tenure as Senate Construction Director (1991-1995), and

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92 Senatsverwaltung für Innenes, “Planwerk Innenstadt,” 3132.
93 Ibid.
94 Hennecke notes that these types of plans first appeared in the Pariser Platz and Städtebauliche Strukturplan reports commissioned by Stimmann in the early 1990s, captioned with phrases including the word “Störung” (“destruction”). See Hennecke, Die kritische Rekonstruktion als Leitbild, 151–152.
they continued to be used throughout the 1990s on Berlin’s city planning website, in publications about new construction, and they were even included as part of Germany’s installation at the 2000 Venice Biennale.\textsuperscript{95} Stimmann’s own written statements shored up the visual rhetoric of voids that the \textit{Schwarzpläne} clearly utilized. Invoking the city-as-text metaphor employed by post-structuralist thinkers like Michel de Certeau, Henri Lefebvre, Roland Barthes, and many others, as well as the idea of the city as a site of memory made popular by Rossi, Stimmann stated that these maps reveal “the memory of the city,” articulating in easy-to-read black and white the “letters” that “build words and sentences and tell stories.”\textsuperscript{96}

Reading the urban texture means understanding the city as text. The planner, \textit{Städtebauer} (“city designer”) and architect, therefore, needs to continually edit his city, examine it for orthographic mistakes, add new chapters in some places and cut in others, view the text from the perspective of current societal and political \textit{Leitbilder} (‘guiding images’) without writing it completely anew. The city builder is the editor of the urban texture.\textsuperscript{97}

As Harvey suggests, Stimmann here presents the \textit{Schwarzpläne} as offering a god’s-eye-view of the city, over which the planner can then wield his power to “edit.”

In addition to \textit{Schwarzpläne}, photos and perspectival visualizations were also used to illustrate the supposed need for redevelopment at particular sites. For instance, in the report on the Spittelmarkt, a square in southeastern Mitte that was redeveloped by the GDR government in the 1960s, photos from the turn of the century were used alongside contemporary ones in order to, as Hennecke argues, “act as proof of the ‘inappropriateness’ of the current built substance.” Captions describe the crossing avenue of Leipziger Strasse as once constituting the “most elegant

\textsuperscript{95} Ibid., 154.


\textsuperscript{97} Quoted in Weszkalnys, \textit{Berlin, Alexanderplatz}, 51.
street in Berlin” with “spectacular shops,” now degraded by the “absolute dominance” of traffic. As the planning materials stated,

The Planwerk exists in the city-building tradition of the European city and relates itself to the historical traces of the destroyed Berlin ground plan (Stadtgrundriß), without obscuring the history of this destruction. The goal is not a nostalgic return to that which is irretrievably lost, but a dialogical and also tension-filled completion of the existing structures which are now assessed as inadequate (often results of post-war city planning measures), oriented towards contemporary needs for urban visiting, dwelling, and quality of life.

As Hennecke argues, the Schwarzpläne and their accompanying interpretive statements (including also, often, captions that describe them as depicting “destruction”) make the case that the city has been ruined by post-war building and planning measures: “The illustrations mislead (verführen) [the reader] to the knee-jerk conclusion (Kurzschluss) that every demolition was a destructive undertaking and only the ‘filling back up’ [of these voids] would be an appropriate answer.”

The accompanying text to the Planwerk states that “demolitions should generally be avoided. [But] at the same time it should be ensured that the traces of the historical image of the city that were lost in post-war developments … should be taken up again, in consideration of today’s requirements (Ansprüche) for quality of life (Lebensqualität).” To this end, the Planwerk supposedly “uses the method of Critical Reconstruction in order to uncover the lost

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98 Hennecke, Die kritische Rekonstruktion als Leitbild, 156.
100 Hennecke, Die kritische Rekonstruktion als Leitbild, 153–154.
traces of city development in the inner city.” But this “uncovering” ultimately does mean demolitions – of existing GDR architecture. Urban historian Harald Bodenschatz argues that, in this respect, Critical Reconstruction revealed itself as a “crusade against GDR city planning,” which was written off a priori as having meant “destruction” of the city structure (Stadtgrundriss). Again, as in the case of the Centrum at Alexanderplatz, mid-century GDR Modernism was simply written off as having no historical value. Critical Reconstruction, here, meant editing out as much of that Modernist legacy as possible in order to restore the “true” DNA of the pre-war street plan and building typologies.

Thus, despite statements to the effect that “the superimposition of different historical layers … includes the history of wartime destruction and the reconstruction of the post-war period” and that “no historical phase should be negated,” the Planwerk slated several areas in the eastern portion of Mitte for complete redevelopment. One of these was the Fischerinsel neighborhood on the southern portion of what is now known as Museum Island, the site of the original medieval settlement in Berlin. It had been subject to slum-clearance measures in the late nineteenth century, and, in GDR times, had been redeveloped with several high-rise towers set amongst ample green space. The Planwerk proposed block-edge infill, focused along the major avenue of Gertraudenstrasse, and the “renewed identifiability (Kenntlichmachung) of the historical core” of Cölln (the name of one of Berlin’s two original medieval villages) through traffic-quieting measures and added architectural references to the medieval Petrikirche (Church

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102 Ibid., 3133.
103 Quoted in Hennecke, Die kritische Rekonstruktion als Leitbild, 151.
of St. Peter) that used to stand on the site. One of the most contentious facets of the plan was the proposed removal of the “Maple-Leaf” (Ahornblatt) Restaurant, built by the GDR in the early 1970s and named for its distinctive star-shaped plan that culminated in a set of peaked rooflines (fig. 5.30). Used as a dance club after the fall of the Wall, it was eventually demolished and replaced by a hotel, against vehement protests by the Berlin Architects’ Chamber. The city stated that this replacement was necessary “in order to achieve a convincing formulation of the Cölln city core.”

Like the Centrum store, the Maple-Leaf Restaurant was neither universally liked nor appreciated by either former residents of the GDR or by contemporary critics, but it – and the neighborhood surrounding it – nevertheless represented an important and longstanding aspect of Berlin’s architectural and urban development. However, Critical Reconstruction’s basis in the reaction against mid-century Modernist planning meant, essentially, no chance for the preservation of these buildings; an attention to the supposed “layers of history” on the site meant an aggressively negative stance toward buildings like the Maple-Leaf, which had themselves, according to the proponents of Critical Reconstruction, committed the error of erasing earlier structures. No matter that the gigantic Reichsbank building, which lay just a block to the north, had also erased earlier traces of the medieval city; because of its restrained neo-classical Modernism and its ties to Nazi history, it was subjected to rehabilitation rather than demolition.


106 There was a long debate in which many supported the idea of simply topping this building with a skyscraper (since the main complaint was about density), but this plan failed. See ibid.; Michael S. Falser, Zwischen Identität Und Authentizität: Zur Politischen Geschichte Der Denkmalpflege in Deutschland (Dresden: Thelem, 2008); and Benedikt Hotze, “‘Ahornblatt Muss Erhalten Werden’: Fachleute Einstimmig Gegen Abriss Eines Modernen Baudenkmals in Berlin,” BauNetz, January 22, 2000, http://www.baunetz.de/meldungen/Meldungen_Fachleute_einstimmig_gegen_Abriss_eines現代en_Baudenkmals_in_Berlin_6431.html.

Mid-century structures and ensembles that represented densities that were too low, forms that were too experimental, looked kitschy or outdated, or which did not sufficiently hug the edges of the street, were deemed blights on the cityscape. As mentioned above, such structures existed in both East and West Berlin, and the Planwerk looked to remedy this kind of planning on both sides of the former Wall. But existing private property ownership in the West made it much more difficult for the city to achieve these ends there, resulting in a lopsided and seemingly GDR-focused campaign to “remedy” the results of the supposed mid-century “destruction” of the historical cityscape through yet more (this time purportedly salutary) demolitions of and incursions on the urban fabric.

**The Planwerk as a Mechanism of Social Change**

This one-sided focus on the remains of GDR planning and construction – motivated by both the realities of state property ownership and an aesthetic reaction against mid-century planning and architecture – blended with the socio-political theories of Hoffmann-Axthelm, which were also adopted wholeheartedly by Stimmann, to create a discursive position for the Planwerk that reduced former GDR residents to, essentially, colonial subjects. Even the Leitbild’s accompanying text points to the reunification of not just the city structure, but its social fabric, targeting the proverbial “Wall in the head”: the continued cultural division between former East and West Germans.\(^{108}\) But the difference between the two populations was more than cultural, in the sense of different tastes, preferences, styles, or ways of interacting; it was also very much a set of differences based in social class. Thus along with the wish for a cohesive merging of two formerly separate populations, the Planwerk’s text also expresses an anxiety over

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\(^{108}\) Senatsverwaltung für Inneres, “Planwerk Innenstadt,” 3132.
the potential suburbanization of the city through the flight of wealthier, more highly-educated residents to larger, more luxurious housing outside the urban center:

If we are to stop the emigration of integrative [social] layers (Schichten) out of the inner city, then the residential landscape must be appropriate for families, children, old, and young, public space must again be brought back into consciousness as a worthy space, possibilities for wealth accrual (Eigentumsbildung) must be created and requirements for mobility be satisfied.¹⁰⁹

This view jibes with more general and longstanding discussions within the architectural and urban planning professions over “shrinking cities” and deurbanization that was seen widely in North American and European cities in the 1970s and early 1980s. Post-modern architects and theorists such as Stimmann, Hoffmann-Axthelm, and Kleihues had been among those voices advocating for a restoration of and return to the mixed-use inner city as a place to live. But the Planwerk’s goal of attracting middle-class residents also stemmed directly from the prolific writings and theories of Hoffmann-Axthelm, who, since the 1980s, had been formulating his own idea of participatory organization based on “local processes of mediation,” i.e. door-to-door, intimately engaged planning. Through this method, he believed, residents themselves would learn to advocate for their own interests and, eventually, make it possible for the city to do away with top-down planning altogether.¹¹⁰ However, he recognized that this goal would only be possible if residents and owners were educated in the “right” way of advocating for themselves; this task necessitated that the city planner act as a “therapist-pedagog” who could teach them these skills. This mode of self-governance was also only possible if the “right” mix of property owners and residents existed in a neighborhood – if residents had what he called

¹⁰⁹ “Wenn der Abwanderungsprozess integrativer Schichten aus der Innenstadt gestoppt werden soll, muss sich das Wohnumfeld den Bedürfnissen von Familien, Kindern, Alten und Jungen anpassen, müssen die öffentlichen Räume wieder als wertvolle Orte ins Bewusstsein gerückt werden, die nicht verwahrlosten dürfen, müssen Möglichkeiten der Eigentumsbildung ausgebaut werden und die Mobilitätsbedürfnisse stadtverträglich befriedigt werden.” Ibid., 3133.

¹¹⁰ Hennecke, Die kritische Rekonstruktion als Leitbild, 91.
“Bodenbindung,” or “attachment to land.” Therefore the cornerstone of Hoffmann-Axthelm’s theories became the idea of the individual, small-scale parcel of land, owned by a private party: something he related to the “historical” Berlin of the nineteenth century and earlier, before the advent of large-scale, state-sponsored development à la Modernism. The Planwerk takes up this goal of “initiating a new urban-civic consciousness (stadtbürgerliches Bewusstsein)” by encouraging – in word, at least – small-scale real-estate investment at the level of individual plots of land.

Hoffmann-Axthelm’s theory has the goal of eventually liberating the general populace from government oversight, by fostering the growth of an educated, self-governing citizenry. However, the darker implication of this aim is the idea that the existing social and economic structures in the former East Berlin are so malformed that they must be cleared away – literally and figuratively – in order to start afresh with a new set of residents and ownership structures.

This reasoning paired perfectly with the aesthetic tenets of Critical Reconstruction, which looked to restore pre-war traffic patterns, lots, and zoning (thus enabling Hoffmann-Axthelm’s focus on the individual parcel), and to do away with mid-century planning and architecture, especially in former East Berlin. Furthermore, as Hennecke also points out, with the idea of Bodenbindung, Hoffmann-Axthelm’s theories demonstrate a problematic reliance on the notion of “rootedness” in land itself (he uses the word “Verwürzelung,” a term that has its own tainted history in conservative German political discourse).

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111 Ibid., 107.
112 Hoffmann-Axthelm misses the fact that land ownership conditions were never this ideal, neither in the nineteenth century nor earlier. He was as nostalgic for a fictional “lost era” as the GDR residents supposedly were.
113 Senatsverwaltung für Inneres, “Planwerk Innenstadt,” 3131.
114 Hennecke, Die kritische Rekonstruktion als Leitbild, 167.
115 In the pre-war period, it was used by Nazis and others in the critique of Modernist thought. Ibid., 119.
German tradition of architecture. By taking up the threads of “good” architectural styles – styles that represented the “best moments of Germany’s history” (i.e. the era of Schinkel and Weimar Modernism), Kleihues thought Critical Reconstruction could help restore the nation’s prowess as a center of cutting-edge design. This focus on indigeneity, however, easily slides into, at best, cultural nationalism, and at worst, ethnocentrism. When paired with the idea of intervening in the social fabric and creating a new national identity, as in Hoffmann-Axthelm’s formulation of Critical Reconstruction via the Planwerk, it has the potential to look downright xenophobic: as if only the “right” kind of people can produce the “right” kind of society through their attachment to the land, using the “right” kind of architecture and planning which arises organically from German history and identity. Seen in the larger context of Critical Reconstruction’s reliance on the “European city” model, as well as its many methods of “Othering” the residents and architecture of the former East, Hoffmann-Axthelm’s theories reveal themselves as, if not intentionally, then by their myriad associations, deeply ethnocentric and troublingly colonialist with regard to the former GDR.

**Critical Reconstruction and the Planwerk Innenstadt as a Colonial Move**

Stimmann’s shift in roles within the Berlin planning administration in 1995 allowed him to implement Critical Reconstruction on a larger scale than he had as Senate Construction Director, where he had only wielded influence over particular parcels and sites, and in many cases had to compete with other planning departments for jurisdiction. As a state secretary under the Senator for Urban Development, he was able to address the entire inner city at once. The Planwerk was, at its root, a totalizing act, resting on the belief that planners (led by Stimmann

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and Hoffmann-Axthelm) could – and should – intervene in the city at this macro level in order to, as the accompanying text stated, create an urban environment that was “appropriate” for certain kinds of residents, to create “possibilities for wealth accrual,” and to reunite the city not only physically, but socially, economically, politically, and culturally. The supposed involvement of the public in these plans – which was imperative, since Stimmann’s and Hoffmann-Axthelm’s logic rested on the idea that residents should govern themselves – served, in reality, to obscure their implicit wish for near total control over city planning decisions: their plans to create a self-governing urban public simultaneously denied that same public the very ability to self-govern. Just as it had at Alexanderplatz, public involvement in the process of the Planwerk’s development was essentially a way to legitimize their own plans, since they could listen to residents without actually changing the content of the Planwerk in any substantial way.

There was considerable critique of the Planwerk by former East German architectural professionals and politicians in both parliamentary discussions and in the media. Architectural historian Simone Hain called the “media staging” of the Planwerk “an attack on democratic principles and the republican constitution of society.” The Berlin PDS also criticized the Planwerk in parliamentary sessions as trying to circumvent the “democratic planning process.” The ironic result of this protest was that their language was, in a brazen show of hypocrisy on the parts of the leading centrist parties, turned around and used to direct parliamentary discussion of the Planwerk itself as a supposedly democratic city planning tool. As Hennecke puts it, “if the

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118 Hennecke dedicates a whole section of her book to the use of the idea of consensus in the Planwerk Innenstadt approval process. See Hennecke, Die kritische Rekonstruktion als Leitbild, 234–236.
119 “Daher betrachte ich die mediale Inszenierung dieses Planwerkes als Angriff auf demokratische Prinzipien und die republikanische Verfassung der Gesellschaft.” Quoted in Ibid., 280.
allusion to a ‘democratic process’ in the PDS parliamentary motion was meant to point to an alternative to what they saw as the undemocratic process of the Planwerk, that very same line was changed, in the course of subsequent motions by the SPD and CDU fractions, into a label for the ‘democratic process’ of the Planwerk.\textsuperscript{120}

The Planwerk’s disregard for dissenting voices was underpinned by Stimmann’s and Hoffmann-Axtelm’s view of residents of the former East as subjects needing to be educated in proper self-governance. As Hoffmann-Axthelm had written along with Bernhard Strecke r in an earlier report on the city, “The main problem is the situation created by GDR planning. Here the emptying-out of the urban landscape and the concept of an entirely new city meant the complete public ownership of the reconstruction. There was, in essence, only one developer” – the state. This problem resulted, they argued, in a city based on abstract notions of “function” rather than “individual social powers,” with no “responsible parties” (Träger, also translatable as “bearers”). “National Socialism, the emigration and destruction of Berlin’s Jewish population, and the history of division with its isolation and disappropriation in East Berlin have largely destroyed the urban middle class (Bürgertum, also often translated as “bourgeoisie”).”\textsuperscript{121} Stimmann also adopted this rhetoric, declaring in a podium discussion that East Berlin’s lack of a bourgeois class with “elevated tastes” meant that there were no “appropriate interlocutors” with whom city


planners and developers could discuss aesthetic or other planning issues.\textsuperscript{122} East Berlin was thus construed as a social “void” that could only rightly be filled with the results of Critical Reconstruction, which would attract a bourgeois public who could then advocate for neighborhood interests. Essentially, this deeply colonial discourse implied that former East Berliners were simply interlopers in their own homes – that they did not own them, nor did they possess the skills to change them in the right ways; the only people who had the skills to “correctly” inhabit these spaces were the educated middle-class from the former West.

Because of the reliance on the tenets of Critical Reconstruction, the \textit{Planwerk}’s filling of voids looked to be physical as well as social. Here, the overt visual politics of both the \textit{Leitbild} and the \textit{Schwarzpläne} served as the markers of their own success – the filling in of the literal “blanks” in the cityscape meant the remediation of former “mistakes” in planning. In Stimmann’s words, the “text” of the city needed to be rewritten.\textsuperscript{123} As Hain commented, “this plan is based on a concept of history which sees the post-war historical period as abnormal, ahistorical and ultimately destructive. It thus … ignores forty years of an urban double existence – which was after all of major historical and international importance.”\textsuperscript{124} The PDS called regularly for the protection of mid-century planning ensembles and buildings such as the Maple-Leaf Restaurant through landmarking, but their requests were denied in favor of Critical Reconstruction. As Hennecke rightly observes, the developments of mid-century Modernism are

\textsuperscript{122} Quoted in ibid., 169. Hennecke also notes how architectural historian and critic Klaus Hartung also talked about central Berlin becoming a “void” of immigrants, the elderly, and the former East Germans.

\textsuperscript{123} Weszkalnys describes the Planwerk as being the marker of its own success, since every new construction seems to complete the image. Weszkalnys, \textit{Berlin, Alexanderplatz}, 49.

\textsuperscript{124} Quoted in ibid., 55.
seen by the Critical Reconstructionists as a “mistake” which hinders “normal” and “continuity-centered” development.125

As discussed in Chapter 3, Stimmann and Hoffmann-Axthelm had both been critics of Kleihues’s Critical Reconstruction during the 1980s, and yet, in the post-Wall era, they both suddenly threw their political weight entirely behind it. While it might be tempting to interpret Stimmann’s and Hoffmann-Axthelm’s turnabout as a purely cynical move calculated to manipulate the city planning apparatus and wield control over investors, it is also important to recall that neither of them had ever previously opposed dense, block-edge development *per se*. This was not a drastic shift in their stylistic preferences. Rather, it constituted a significant shift in their planning models, from one that had focused on the process of community involvement to one that more clearly emphasized aesthetic restrictions and top-down zoning decisions as the solution to Berlin’s problems. Their about-face with regard to Kleihues’s theory, I argue, was the result of their realization that Critical Reconstruction was exactly what they needed, from a practical perspective, in order to achieve their planning goals. It allowed them to create maximum revenue for the city by utilizing as much of the state-owned land in the former East as possible for development, and to guide investors toward particular typologies and densities in order to both limit “flashy experiments” and to attract the “right” kind of bourgeois public to live and work in the city center. Critical Reconstruction’s focus on moderately dense, mixed-use, block-edge development, as well as its loose references to “historical” (i.e. pre-war) architecture, was both economically viable and conveniently trendy. Within this model, mid-century Modernism, particularly those examples associated with the GDR, was declared unviable for theoretical, political, or aesthetic reasons: it not only represented a history that Stimmann and

125 Critic Bruno Flierl argued that even the proposed infill of greens pace in between mid-century GDR buildings constituted a kind of destruction, since it erased the original spatial character of the ensembles. Hennecke, *Die kritische Rekonstruktion als Leitbild*, 149–150.
others were not willing (or forced) to engage with, but, most importantly, it was a style that was, basically, commercially unfashionable.

**Conclusion: Gentrifying the GDR**

Since the early 1990s, Berlin has been in the grip of a major recession: in 2003 its long-time mayor, Klaus Wowereit, coined the phrase “Arm aber sexy” (“poor but sexy”) to describe its dire financial situation, and it soon became the city’s unofficial motto. The physical outcomes of the *Planwerk Innenstadt* have therefore been less drastic than its authors first dreamed. Still, seen alongside individual examples like Kleihues’s Kaufhof renovation and the demolition of the Maple-Leaf Restaurant, as well as the rhetoric of its authors and other planners, critics, and politicians who support the idea of Critical Reconstruction, it is clear that the *Planwerk* has functioned as a way to marginalize the voices and “collective urban memory” of East Berliners.

Justified as a left-leaning move toward the creation of a functional and socially cohesive urban society, the *Planwerk* and Critical Reconstruction were in actuality extremely conservative ideas that sought to repress anything that did not fit their image of the “historical” or “European city.” In essence, Critical Reconstruction became tool of the most direct kind of gentrification, a classist and colonial claiming of a space deemed “empty” of the “proper” kinds of residents, to the detriment of the existing population. Rather than engaging with the complexities of the mid-century Modernist cityscape and the memory of the GDR, the *Planwerk* tried to erase and replace them with a new utopia based in bourgeois ideals of cultural consumption. And, though they formerly had been critics of Kleihues, Stimmann and Hoffmann-Axthelm in particular ended up not only harking back to Kleihues’s call for a “good” German architecture, but they proposed this as the required basis for a new society that is properly educated and “tied to the
land.” Seen alongside the Architecture Debates, which helped to characterize Critical Reconstruction as harboring conservative or even fascist tendencies in its restrictive aesthetics, this all begins to look a little too close to problematic facets of German history, specifically the Nazi period.

However, although it is tempting to paint Stimmann and Hoffmann-Axthelm as “fascist” in their formal preferences, their discursive treatment of East Berliners, and in their desire to consolidate political power, such a comparison is much too reductive. These problematic facets of their policy are not unique to Berlin, to Germany, or to Europe, but are blind spots inherent in the work of planners in cities across the globe. Given their particular situation in reunited Germany during the 1990s, however, Stimmann and Hoffmann-Axthelm had an added responsibility to discursively situate themselves not only as distinctively anti-Nazi, but as symbolically representative of reunited Berlin and Germany in a way that was politically viable. Though they certainly could have done a better job of managing this aspect of their work, it was also an impossibly tall order. Stimmann’s and Hoffmann-Axthelm’s struggles – and failures – to recreate Berlin’s urban landscape in the way they desired therefore points to the larger pitfalls of urban planning in the post-modern era: the impossibility of getting architecture or other city forms to “mean” something specific, and to achieve particular political or social ends through that meaning. As Rossi articulated so well decades earlier in The Architecture of the City, buildings and urban ensembles emphatically signify, but people become attached to them in different ways; they evoke different memories and have different connotations for every individual. Sites where these diverse significations conflict become contested ones where residents, officials, and members of institutions battle for the right to their own interpretations.126

126 Two very well-known American examples of this conflict, both in Lower Manhattan, are the fight over Richard Serra’s Tilted Arc, and the planning process for the reconstruction of the World Trade Center after 9/11. See Harriet F. Senie,
The formulation of the Planwerk Innenstadt happened, for instance, alongside another decade-long political battle in Berlin: the decision on the design for the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe on a block-sized plot next to the Brandenburg Gate. The eventual selection of a design by Peter Eisenman, with the addition – opposed by the architect – of an underground “information center,” was a messy process involving all manner of problematic statements and sub-optimal compromises by government officials, the projects’ sponsors, and the contestants and judges in its multiple design competitions. Though Eisenman’s field of concrete stele has been generally well-received by the public and by the architectural community, it still entailed the drastic reduction of a complex history into a singular architectural form, and that form still potentially generates a whole range of “improper” readings and uses (the city has hired security guards to attempt to curb unwanted behavior, which frequently consists of kids playing tag or jumping between the rectangular slabs). Ultimately, then, while Stimmann and Hoffmann-Axthelm can certainly be taken to task for many of the specifics of their views and operations, as I have done above, we must also acknowledge the enormity of the task they took on: the mediation of history through the semiotics of the built environment. This language of architectural signs proved impossible to control.

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127 See James Edward Young, At Memory’s Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); Klaus Bonnet, Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas Künstlerischer Wettbewerb; Kurzdokumentation (Berlin, 1995); Ute Heimrod, Günter Schlusche, and Horst Seferens, Der Denkmalstreit—das Denkmal?: die Debatte um das “Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas”: eine Dokumentation (Bodenheim: PHILO, 1999); Amnon Barzel, Leonie Baumann, and Anne Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst, Der Wettbewerb für das “Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas”: eine Streitschrift (Dresden; Berlin: Verlag der Kunst; Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst, 1995).
CONCLUSION

Critical Reconstruction in the Post-Modern Age

This project began in 2004 when, while studying abroad in Berlin, I became interested in what exactly Critical Reconstruction was and how it was being used to reconstruct the city’s tortured landscape. But the further I delved into the literature, the more confusing it all became. How could Kleihues, who had designed the glass-fronted Triangel building on Friedrichstrasse, have authored a theory that only allowed for stone façades? And if he saw Critical Reconstruction as the marriage of Modernist rationalism and personal poetry, how did that conception relate to Stimmann’s claims about representing Berlin’s history? Why was Stimmann in charge of city planning, and not Kleihues? Why were only a small number of architects seemingly designing all the new buildings? Why did those buildings look so anonymous and, for lack of a better word, boring? And why was everyone debating with each other so vehemently over what amounted to malls and empty office space?

As a colleague of mine observed, Critical Reconstruction is confusing because “it means so many different things to so many different people.” Indeed, it is baffling precisely because it is not simply one city planning approach, but a constantly shifting discursive formation that includes the many statements, debates, designs, scandals, documents, images, data, and stories exchanged among planners, architects, the media, and the public. As such, though it was actually only one of the approaches being applied in the city center (Stimmann only ever ran one of the city’s two planning departments, and the federal government also controlled much of the land in Mitte), it became the most visible way in which architectural theory and discourse, in addition to buildings themselves, publicly intersected with questions of memory and identity in Berlin.
Critical Reconstruction’s numerous problems and failures, as I have shown in the previous five chapters, thus point most clearly to the difficulties inherent in using architectural form to mold a society or to make specific statements about its identity.

**Post-Modernism and the Global Turn**

**Berlin as a Global City**

Throughout the Cold War era, West Germany had been at pains to represent itself politically and culturally as integrated with the larger trans-Atlantic “West.” This goal affected the structure of its governing institutions, its cultural affiliations (the adoption of the International architectural style, for instance, as discussed in Chapter 1), and the formation of a self-critical historical narrative with regard to the crimes of the Nazis. More than four decades after the war, in the 1990s, the new, reunited Germany still struggled with these questions, but now it did so in very different global context. No longer a bulwark against the threat of Communism, Germany (and Berlin in particular) now needed to assert its prowess as both an independent economic power and as part of the emerging coalition of the European Union. International attention was focused tightly on the country’s new epicenter, the formerly divided capital, as representative of how Germany would operate amidst this new global order.

However, as historian Janet Ward has so astutely observed, whereas cities may once have stood in for nations, globalization has also made it so that any actual given city may no longer hold the national significance that it once did: “Hence the reclamation of Berlin’s capital status and the re-branding of Berlin’s image on the urban, regional, and international levels have been
(at times uneasy) partners since reunification.”¹ The designation of Berlin as capital, in other words, was not enough to make it a global metropolis or even a national or regional hub; it still had to compete for investment and for residents on the global market. “The process of re-capitalizing a city for its national audience nowadays,” Ward contends, “involves at least a staging of the globalizing turn in order to catch up with other leading capitals and global cities.”² But to look “global,” as discussed in Chapter 3, cities ironically have to also find an appealing and unique “local” identity. Stimmann’s Critical Reconstruction sought to resolve this local-global tension in its call for the reproduction of certain formal qualities of “traditional” Berlin architecture married with typologies and zoning meant to attract international investors – large-scale malls, office complexes, and small numbers of high-end apartments. Though Hoffmann-Axthelm and even Stimmann himself gave lip service to the idea of the “small parcel,” or middle-class property ownership, this model proved impossible given the state of Berlin’s real estate market and the realities of global commerce. The goal was to put Berlin back on the map as the seat not only of the government, as Bonn had been, but as an economic and cultural hub, as it had been in the 1920s, and this ambition meant a necessary partnership with big business.

**Monumentality and the Modernist Project**

By the end of the 1980s, post-modernism in the narrow sense – formal play, pastiche, pop – was losing momentum, and was being surpassed by other approaches to design, especially Deconstructivist architecture, which received special attention in the MoMA show of the same name in 1988.³ Cultural critic Andreas Huyssen sees this shift as coinciding with a theoretical

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² Ibid., 280.

turn from the idea of the “city as text” to the treatment of the “city as spectacle”: from a largely academic or intellectual conversation to one driven by raw capitalist interests and mass tourism.\(^4\) Indeed, the 1990s saw the rise of the “starchitect” as a key way that the public understood and interacted with architecture as a profession, with signature buildings such as Frank Gehry’s Guggenheim Bilbao or, later, OMA’s Seattle Public Library drawing unprecedented media attention and becoming tourist attractions in their own right. Libeskind’s Jewish Museum in Berlin, designed in 1989, is in fact one of the first examples of such a building in the post-Cold War era. Such a preference for spectacularity is of course not uniquely post- (or post-post-) modern. The seminal post-war Modernist document “Nine Points on Monumentality,” published in 1943 by architectural historian Sigfried Giedion, architect José Luis Sert, and painter Fernand Léger, also encouraged the use of new materials, of light and color, and of the synthesis of the arts, to create freestanding monuments that would embody communities’ values, shared narratives, and aspirations. Perhaps one reason that the “starchitectural” monuments of the 1990s have been the subject of critique – by the Critical Reconstructionists as well as others – is that those shared values now seem to have to do mostly with the flows and importance of global capital, rather than with more traditional local or national ideals.

As discussed throughout this dissertation, Stimmann implemented Critical Reconstruction explicitly to counteract the growing tendency toward spectacularity in commercial architecture. However, another look back at the “Nine Points” reveals close ties between the Critical Reconstructionist project and the concept of monumentality as formulated by Giedion, Sert, and Léger:

Monuments are human landmarks which men have created as symbols for their

ideals, for their aims, and for their actions. They are intended to outlive the period which originated them, and constitute a heritage for future generations. … They have to satisfy the eternal demand of the people for translation of their collective force into symbols. … A new step lies ahead. Postwar changes in the whole economic structure of nations may bring with them the organization of community life in the city which has been practically neglected up to date. The people want the buildings that represent their social and community life to give more than functional fulfillment. They want their aspiration for monumentality, JOY, pride, and excitement to be satisfied. … [But] those who govern and administer the countries … are not able to recognize the creative forces of our period, which alone could build the monuments or public buildings that should be integrated into new urban centers which can form a true expression for our epoch.

This “true expression” of Berlin’s new identity in built form was exactly that to which Stimmann and others – especially architects like Kollhoff – aspired. Monumentality, then, clearly played an important role in Stimmann’s Critical Reconstruction, but the changing role of monumentality itself amidst the global architectural scene – as mainly an expression of corporate, rather than community, interests – created a difficult point of tension for him.

An additional theoretical aspect links Critical Reconstruction with the likes of Giedion. Both Stimmann’s and Kleihues’s versions of Critical Reconstruction were very “Modernist” in their totalizing tendencies and, in the case of Stimmann’s, in its social aims. As became clear in the Architecture Debates, whether or not they could prove beyond a doubt that Critical Reconstruction only tied back to pre-war Modernism, its authors saw themselves as seriously invested in the same ideals as figures like Giedion and Le Corbusier had been: top-down planning, an insistence on rationality, and ambitious, universalizing theories, all of which were intended to support the growth of an ideal society. Critical Reconstruction as a case study obviously points to the absurdity of such a utopian project. More importantly, though, Critical

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Reconstruction’s status as in many ways “Modernist” reveals that at least some strands of post-modernism were really a continuation, rather than a rejection, of Modernism itself.

In 1979, the philosopher Jean-François Lyotard described post-modernity as a state in which the “metanarratives” or “grand narratives,” which had previously been used to legitimate things like scientific research in the service of Enlightenment progress, would be thrown into question, critiqued, and deconstructed.6 Certainly many facets of post-modern architectural theory (such as those put forward, for instance, by Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, or by Peter Eisenman) took this reasoning to heart, focusing instead on formal or semiotic elements of architecture, on pastiche, or on the treatment of forms as a “language” to be manipulated, played with, or questioned. But there were still quite a few thinkers, including Kleihues, who, despite their acknowledgement that CIAM Modernism must be superseded, still retained an implicit faith in architecture as a larger societal project. Thus, the failure of Critical Reconstruction in Berlin allows us to see both the futile utopianism of Kleihues’s and Stimmann’s approaches and the ways in which post-modernism was not necessarily a reaction against Modernism so much as an extension of it. Indeed, even today, architecture and planning in themselves may never escape the Modernist conundrum: they will always strive to both serve and to represent the functions and users that they are built to house, and they may always fall short of this lofty goal.

Critical Reconstruction as a Discourse

Words, Images, and Buildings

In his well-known essay “The Voids of Berlin,” Huyssen argues that in the Berlin Architecture Debates, the perceived “dichotomy of stone age versus cyber age is misleading: the

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fight is over image and image alone on both sides of the issue. The new nationally coded simplicity” – by which he means the New Simplicity or Critical Reconstruction – “is just as image-driven” as the spectacular “ecstasies” of architects like Libeskind.\(^7\) In other words, Huyssen claims, what mattered in the reconstruction of Berlin were not the actual forms of new buildings, but what those buildings connoted, both for other architects and for the public. For him, because global capital was the driving force behind these new constructions, they were ultimately only empty symbols of financial power and mass consumption, whether they were made from stone or glass. However, as discussed throughout this dissertation, Stimmann and his colleagues were still called upon to justify this commercial architecture with regard to reunited Germany’s national identity. Berlin in the 1990s, then, was a space where architecture’s ability to signify was being stretched to its limit. Stimmann needed the new cityscape to be at once “monumental” in the “Nine Points” sense, appropriate for a global city, and to signify the country’s own self-reflexivity about its violent and divided past. Perhaps the real problem was not that the built results of Critical Reconstruction were empty “images,” as Huyssen asserted, but that what they sought to represent was simply too complex, too nuanced, and too contradictory for architecture itself to embody.

And so the planners and architects involved in Berlin’s rebuilding relied on discursive as well as physical constructions to “rebuild” the city. Since classical times, architects have sought to create, explain, or critique the built environment using the conceptual tool of language; indeed, amidst multiple recessions, language – in the form of theory – has become one of the main ways that post-modern architects have contributed to the world of design. Throughout the Architecture Debates, architects and critics attempted to shape Berlin’s built future, as well as the

\(^7\) Huyssen, “The Voids of Berlin,” 68.
public’s opinion about that future, using these same rhetorical tools. But as I have demonstrated, they were not able to do this successfully, sometimes because the arguments themselves were unsound, and at other times because their words begin to mean something else when read alongside the actual designs. Words and buildings cannot and do not always operate in the same manner, but they do intersect in influential and sometimes unexpected ways. Architectural forms can be recast by discourse and can function in the service of divergent or even diametrically opposed arguments. One example of this divergence, as I have shown, is the repeated mobilization of pre-war Modernist design to justify authors’ theoretical positions during the Architecture Debates.\(^8\) The various buildings I have discussed also demonstrate how architecture can work to contradict or undermine the words of the architects. Viewers may continue to see the Reichsbank, for instance, as a “Nazi” building even if Kollhoff wants them to contextualize this history through his redesign of the space. Another kind of contradiction appears in the many buildings by Kleihues himself, which continually resist the rigid strictures of Stimmann’s Critical Reconstruction, and which I found so confusing as I began my research.

One could argue that this disconnect between buildings and ideas has to do with the fact that architecture has its own history and professional knowledge base that makes it – perhaps necessarily – inaccessible to the uninitiated. And if one of post-modern architecture’s stated goals was to communicate to that same, uninitiated, public audience, then the application of Critical Reconstruction in Berlin reveals the ultimate futility of this aim. For, as I have shown, even architecture that explicitly attempts to supply its users with a preponderance of historical meaning often must be “explained” using text. Perhaps the most telling example can be found,

ironically, in what became cast as the most explicitly *non*-Critical Reconstruction building⁹: Libeskind’s Jewish Museum, where large printed placards direct users as to how they should experience the symbolically-laden architecture. Given a situation in which all architecture is willingly “read” by the public, but where this activity often results in misreadings, anything that smacks of the “wrong” side of history in Berlin has been ultimately condemned as too conservative – and the subtle arguments of the architects and planners responsible are not enough to counteract this impression.

**German Identity in the Global Spotlight**

In terms of its economic aspirations, Berlin was no different from many other cities in the West where the post-modern rediscovery of historic urban centers was driving up prices and spurring rampant, high-end construction in formerly blighted downtowns (San Francisco and New York are two other prominent examples). However, planners in the United States or elsewhere in the EU did not have to deal with the difficult burden of correctly representing German history on top of the already challenging task of guiding such development. As discussed throughout this dissertation, ideas of German collective memory and national or cultural identity were points of intense discussion and debate even before the Wall fell. This was most clearly illustrated by the *Historikerstreit* in the 1980s, where conservative thinkers and politicians argued for the “normalization” of Nazi history – its relativization with regard to other crimes, such as those of Stalin, and for, if not an acquittal, then at least a release of current German citizens from the responsibility of dealing with the crimes of the Nazis from the perspective of the “perpetrators.” This wish for closure was summed up in the idea of a *Schlussstrich*: a “closing line” drawn under that chapter of German history. The fall of the Wall

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⁹ We must remember, though, that it was first approved as part of Kleihues’s IBA in the 1980s.
only served to reinvigorate these debates as the country strived to culturally and economically integrate an East German population that had been brought up with a very different World War II narrative, one that painted them as the victims of Nazi violence, rather than the criminals. Neo-Nazi was on the rise in many former Eastern states, and the large population of Turkish immigrants who had moved to Germany after the war added even more complexity to discussions about what it meant to be “German.” And even today, more than twenty-five years after the Wende, issues of how to remember and talk about the Holocaust and how to integrate immigrants are regularly discussed and debated in the German media.10

But what does a Schlussstrich look like in the built environment? Does it look like the revival and reconstruction of forms associated with the Nazis? What about those of the GDR – are East German buildings “totalitarian,” kitschy, or both? Even if buildings did harbor violent memories or messages, are people today even able to recognize those forms as such? And can forms themselves be held responsible for the crimes of the regimes that appropriated them? The answer depends on how those buildings are discursively situated and collectively remembered, and the destruction or preservation of particular buildings has the potential to send strong messages to certain groups of people. The fact that the discourse around architecture and urbanism is in many ways image-based, then, does not mean that buildings themselves don’t have real effects. Architecture, in fact, does matter profoundly. It may not be able to completely recreate a society or reprogram a population. But it is certainly, as Rossi argued in The

10 In 2015, on the seventieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, for instance, the ARD network (a public broadcasting network similar to NPR in the U.S. or the BBC in the U.K.) published a video commentary by television journalist Anja Reschke on its official Facebook page. In it, she admonished people who might say things like “Auschwitz, Holocaust. I can’t take it anymore. It has to end sometime.” (“Auschwitz, Holocaust. Ich kann’s nicht mehr hören. Es muss doch mal Schluss sein.”) Describing her recent viewing of footage from the liberation of Auschwitz, Reschke argued, “There is no closing line in history!” (“Es gibt keinen Schlussstrich in der Geschichte!”) As of February 2016, the video has over six million views, 5,400 comments, and almost 70,000 shares. Anja Reschke and ARD, “Kommentar,” ARD Official Facebook Page, January 27, 2015, https://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=1015254666441389.
Architecture of the City, something to which people can and do attach meaning, through which they form bonds, and about which they can feel a sense of community and belonging. Like it or not, Critical Reconstruction’s “conservative” architecture is now Berlin’s physical inheritance. Thus, in a similar manner to the Historikerstreit, in which the argument petered out but the result was a kind of de facto “normalization” of Nazi history, the debates about new architecture in the center of reunited Berlin never reached a formal conclusion. Their presence, though, has achieved a kind of “smoothing out” of that history anyway; they are now simply a part of Berliners’ everyday lives. Two decades after the fall of the Wall, Berlin’s new city planning officials are focused mainly on issues like economic inequality, jobs, and environmental sustainability, rather than the stylistic architectural identity of the city. But a few traces of the intense conflicts of the 1990s remain: in the center of Mitte, the much-debated reconstruction of the Stadtschloss is just now beginning to take shape. And just a little further to the East, along the Spree River, corporate partnerships and the role of large-scale capitalist development continue to be points of intense conflict and community activism. Berlin, in reality, will continue to, and indeed already has, “become” something different after Kleihues and Stimmann made their marks on it.
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